**Welcome Letter, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science**

Dear Hannah,

My name is Tom and I would like to welcome you at our department of Mathematics and Computer Science at the Freie Universität Berlin. For the following months I will be your tutor and contact person. If any questions, issues or problems arise concerning your studies at our department, you can contact me at any time.

By now, our central office for exchange students has probably already been in contact with you. They will take care of all the general administrative stuff like the immatriculation process, the confirmation of stay and will also host some general events for all exchange students of the Freie Universität Berlin. From the day of the Campus Tour on where I will be your guide as well, the International Office of the department of Mathematic and Computer Science will take over and we will be your contact number one in all kinds of issues regarding your studies. In this mail I want to give you a brief overview about the upcoming semester and facilities at the Freie Universität Berlin.

**Important Buildings and Offices at our Campus**

Rost- und Silberlaube (main building with the big dining-hall and main libraries)

Habelschwerdter Allee 45 / Fabeckstrasse 23-25, 14195 Berlin

International Student Mobility- Welcome Services (central office for exchange students)

Iltisstr. 4, 14195 Berlin

Tuesdays 9.30-12.30 and 14:00-17:00

Thursdays 9:30-12:30 and 14.00-17.00

International Office of the Department Mathematics and Computer Science

Room 142, Arnimallee 7, 14195 Berlin

Ulrike Geiger (secretary), contact: [international@mi.fu-berlin.de](mailto:international@mi.fu-berlin.de)

Tom Burgert (tutor), contact: [tom.burgert@fu-berlin.de](mailto:tom.burgert@fu-berlin.de)

Prüfungsbüro (only for manual registration and cancelation of course)

Raum 1.1.14a/b, Arnimallee 14 (Physics building!)

The Prüfungsbüro is in charge of the administration of all courses booked in the online system. In case you have to do a manual registration or cancelation of a course you need to go to the „Prüfungsbüro“ and drop your manual formula in their post box. Since the office is not in one of the buildings of our department, I will show you the office on the Campus Tour. The manual registration is only necessary after the period for online registration is over.

**Libraries at Freie Universität**

In case you enjoy learning at the library, the FU has lots of different libraries to offer. We have two main libraries which are both in walking distance from our department and connected to the main building the „Rost- und Silberlaube“:

* Campus Library for Sciences, Cultural Studies, Education, Mathematics, Computer Science and Psychology of the Freie Universität Berlin - Fabeckstr. 23-25, 14195 Berlin
* Philological Library of the Freie Universität Berlin - Habelschwerdter Allee 45,14195 Berlin

In Berlin most of the students spend many hours learning, working and writing there thesis in hundreds of public libraries. As a student you can just go to any library you want, it does not matter if it belongs to your university or not. So if you live far away from the campus of the FU there is always the chance of visiting libraries of other universities all over Berlin.

To find more information about the libraries we have here at FU you can do so under the following link: <http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/bibliotheken/bibliothekenfuehrer/bereiche/index.html>

**Canteens at Freie Universität**

We have around 8 official canteens spread over our campus. During the Campus Tour I will show you the main canteen which serves food to thousands of hungry students every day. It is located in our main building the „Rost- und Silberlaube“, too. There is a special canteen card for paying the meal. Everyone can eat at those canteens, but when you show your student pass and prove you are a student you will get the cheapest prices for the meals.

All canteens of Berlin are organized by an organization called „Studierendenwerk Berlin“. That means you can get a cheap meal at any canteen all around Berlin, you just need to show your student pass. To find out what canteens there are at FU and in other locations you can visit the website of the „Studierendenwerk Berlin“: <https://www.stw.berlin/en/dining-facilities.html>.

**Course catalog**

To get an overview about all courses offered, our department has it’s own online course catalog with more detailed information. To not get confused (!), there is also a central online course catalog for the whole FU. Though we highly recommend you working with our own one, since it provides more information. You can find our course catalog here:

Courses Computer Science:

<https://kvv.imp.fu-berlin.de/mvs2/module/studyRegulation?department.faculty=19&department=193&_studyRegulations=1&studyRegulations=086c_k150&studyRegulations=089c_MA120&semester=8&language=&dataConfig=&formatConfig=>

Courses Mathematics:

<https://kvv.imp.fu-berlin.de/mvs2/module/studyRegulation?department.faculty=19&department=192&_studyRegulations=1&studyRegulations=084d_k120&studyRegulations=280b_MA120&studyRegulations=496a_MA120&semester=8&language=&dataConfig=&formatConfig=>

You just need to choose your department Computer Science, Mathematics or Bioinformatics and then you can see all the courses offered in the Winter semester 2017/18. When you click on the little „plus“ at the end of the modules box you can display more information about the topics of the course. Keep in mind that you can select the study regulations to avoid having many modules listed various times. In the links we have already selected the most recent study regulations.

**Registration of the Courses**

Here at our department we use two systems for the coursing at the same time. The Campus Management System (CM), which is the grading system for the whole FU and the Kommentiertes Vorlesungsverzeichnis (KVV), which was set up by our department only in order to provide all the relevant information about a course in particular. It is a platform for timetables, resources, announcement and online submission of the homework. Since the registration of the courses needs to be done in both systems the International Office offers sessions in which I will guide you through all the necessary steps of the registration process.

**Courses at other Universities in Berlin**

In case you are not satisfied by the variety of course offered at our department because of the offered subject in particular or your German is just not good enough to follow the lectures, there is always the option of taking courses at other universities in Berlin and include them into your learning agreement. We do have some courses in English, but especially the Technische Universität offers almost half of it’s courses in English. To provide you with more information on that possibility, there is an extra session offered by the International Office regarding courses at the TU.

**Finding a Seminar Room at our Department**

The Mathematics and Computer Science department has three main buildings. All of them are located directly next to each other:

* Institute for Computer Science Takustr. 9, 14195 Berlin - **T9**
* Institute for Mathematics Arnimallee 7, (and 3), 14195 Berlin - **A7, A3**
* „PI Building“, Arnimallee 6, 14195 Berlin - **A6**

The common code for a room is the three-digit room number plus the abbreviation of the corresponding building. Usually the first digit of the room indicates at which floor you can find the room.

**Opening Hours of the Buildings**

All buildings of our department are open during weekdays from 7:00 - 19:00. You can always stay longer than 19:00 inside, though you will not be able to re-enter again after the closing time.

**Finding a Place to Stay in Berlin**

In recent years finding a permanent room to stay in Berlin has seriously become increasingly difficult. Though there are many options to find a temporary one. The main website for all rooms in shared flats is called „WG-gesucht“. A WG is the abbreviation of „Wohngemeinschaft“, the German word for flat share. It is very common that Berliners who do an exchange year sublet their rooms while they are not here. When applying for a room on „WG-Gesucht“ it is common that you write a little text about you, a few more lines than just stating that you are searching for a room. Most people speak very good in English, so you do not have to worry about applying in English. Remember putting rent type to short term, it makes it easier to find a room. Those rooms are usually furnished, too.

<https://www.wg-gesucht.de/en/wg-zimmer-in-Berlin.8.0.1.0.html>

Another option will be renting a room in a student housing. A good overview about all rooms available in student housing you can find on the website of „Studierendenwerk Berlin“

<https://www.stw.berlin/en/housing.html>.

The FU has it’s own student housing, too. The only downside is, that it is a bit further away from the city center. Here you can check it out: <http://www.studentendorf-berlin.com/?lang=en>.

There are some groups on Facebook, too, which try to serve as a platform for finding a new room in Berlin. It’s worth checking it out, but in my opinion „WG-gesucht“ is the better option.

**University Sports - Hochschulsport**

Every semester the FU has a great offer of all kinds of sports you can think of. It is all organized via the organization „Hochschulsport“. From Oriental Contemporary Dance to Parkour, from Qigong to Sailing, from Meditation to Ballet and of course classics like Tennis, Football, Basketball or Yoga - there is a sports for everyone and many new ones to discover. We will have a session on the registration of that, too. All sport courses last usually a semester and have very fair prices for a students budget. <http://www.hochschulsport.fu-berlin.de/en/sportprogramm/index.html>

**Language Courses at FU**

The central office for all exchange students will supply you with more information on that topic. All of our language courses do not cost anything. You can take the opportunity to learn as much German as you want. For exchange students that arrive earlier and want to learn German, there is an intensive pre-course of 6 weeks. Further information you will receive from our central office. Keep that offer in mind when booking your flights to Berlin.

**Preparing yourself for the Exams**

The most important and valuable link for all students at our department is the one from our „unofficial“ archive for old exams. It is all set up and maintained by students. You can only access it when you are connected to the FU servers by WiFi or by a VPN: <http://klausuren.spline.de>

**Types of Courses**

The most common type of courses is either a seminar or the combination of lecture and tutorial.

Lecture: The lecture is a weekly presentation of the current topic hold by the professor in charge of the course. A participation is recommended but not compulsory. It is mostly theoretical. At the end of the lectures when the student has passed the tutorial classes, he is allowed to take the final exam which defines the final grade of the course.

Tutorial: The tutorial class usually accompanies the lectures. Every week there is a homework sheet to hand in which covers the current topics of the lectures. The tutorials are usually divided into two parts. In the first half the homework sheet from last week will be discussed - the students will receive their corrected homework and present their results to the class. In the second half the students can ask the tutor questions about the current homework sheet, sometimes he will present some examples or give advices on the new sheet. Here the presence is mandatory and students are **only** allowed be absent 2 times! In order to pass the tutorial and take the exam the students have to present (at least) one time their results, pass all homework sheets by an average of at least 60% and have to attend at all but two tutorial classes.

Seminar: During a seminar the classes will be hold by the students. Usually the professor gives an introduction to the subject of the course and assigns the presentation topics to the students. In the following classes each topic will be presented by a student or a group of students, in case there are more students present than talks available. Sometimes the professor requires a written assignment about the presentation topic along with the talk. The final grade then will be influenced 50% by the presentation and 50% by the assignment.

Software Project: In software project courses the students work in big groups on a large software project. Most of the projects have their own style and really depend on the professor in charge of the project. Some are available during the lecture period, some are a more compact intensive project during two weeks after the lecture period.

Intensive Courses: There are some main courses which can be attended in an intensive course during the lecture free period. They usually last 3-4 weeks and have the lectures in the morning, the tutorial classes during midday and the afternoon reserved for working on the homework sheets. Most of them will be in German!

**Übungszettel (Homework sheet)**

During your stay at our department you will probably hear the German word „Übungszettel“ a lot. It is the practical homework which accompanies the lectures. Usually there is one homework per week which has to be handed in every week at a certain time. The tutorial classes will help you to solve the homework sheet. In order to be allowed to take the final exam one needs to have an average of 60% or better in all homework sheets together. Sometimes it can take up to 4 or 5 hours to finish an „Übungszettel. It is a big part of the courses as well as the best preparation for the final exam. Solving all tasks usually helps students a lot in order to pass the exam.

**Important Dates and Deadlines during the Semester**

Semester duration: October 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018

Teaching activity (lecture period): October 16, 2017 - February 17, 2018

Christmas holidays: December 27, 2017 - January 6, 2018

Feast Days: October 3, 2017 (Day of German Unity) & October 31, 2017 (Reformation Day)

Online Registration Phase for all Modules: October 2, 2017 - November 3, 2017 (On October 13, 2017 at 12:00 there will be the assignment for all courses with restricted capacity)

Foreign Language Test: In case you want to take another foreign language course which is not German you need to do an assessment test to evaluate your language level, most tests will be in the first week of October. More information: <http://www.sprachenzentrum.fu-berlin.de/en/index.html>

Campus Tour: 06.10.17 from 10:00

**Sessions offered by the International Office of our Department**

* 06.10.17 Friday, Campus Tour and Welcome Session from 10:00
* 09.10.17 Monday, Registration Sessions I 10:00-13:00
* 09.10.17 Monday, Registration Sessions II 13:00-16:00
* 11.10.17 Wednesday,Registration Session III 15:00-16:00
* 11.10.17 Wednesday, TU Courses 16:00-18:00
* 16.10.17 Monday, University Sports 16:00-18:00
* 02.11.17 Thursday, Registration Session IV (optional) 16:00-18:00
* 31.01.18 Wednesday, Exam Preparation (optional) 16:00-18:00
* 07.02.18 Wednesday, Transcript of Records 16:00-18:00

As soon as the rooms are fixed we will post an updated version of this. The participation of all of the offered sessions is optional and not mandatory. Though, it is recommended to join at least one Registration Session in order to book all favored courses at our department and the Transcript of Records Session for obtaining the final certificate.

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I hope you are already looking forward to your exchange semester in Berlin. It is a great city to live in in your 20s. Berlin is a young, creative and very diverse city with more than 171.000 students. You will probably have a great time here. I wish you all the best!

In case you have any more question, you can ask me at any time! I will be there for the biggest part of your semester.

See you at the Campus Tour!

[Picture of Tom!?]

Tom