

«How to DK»

A guide for student and Mittelbau-representatives in the Department Conference (DK)

What is the DK and what are its duties

The Department Conference is the most senior governing body within the academic department for the opinion formation and decision-making. It deals with all academic, organizational, and financial matters concerning the Department. Its decisions are binding for all members of the Department.

The DK is composed of all professors of the Department and representatives of all the academic groups (students, scientific staff, administrative and technical staff) and some ex officio members. The number of representatives is defined in the bylaws of the Department and is subject to change.

Agenda and related documents

Typically, you will receive these documents only a few days in advance, i.e. on the Thursday preceding the DK. Do reserve some time in your agenda for preparation and also for discussion of the agenda items within your group and possibly with the Diversity Delegate and members of the Department staff (for questions and further background).

How discussions take place at the DK

The basic idea is that the DK representatives come well prepared to the DK which means that they not only studied the agenda and read the related documents (provided in advance), but also had an exchange with their fellow representatives to form an opinion on the topics of concern to them.

Since the DK is far too large a body to hold fundamental discussions about topics of key importance, the different academic groups must arrive well-organised at the DK and with a consolidated position. Of course, they can prefer different opinions but in the interest of time and clarity, it helps if one representative presents the pros and cons per agenda item.

Votes

The DK constitutes a quorum (i.e. can decide) if half of the voting members are present. It decides with a simple majority.

Your task as a representative

Good preparation is key if you want to understand what the agenda items are about and be part of the discussion.

Term of office

This is determined by the rules of your academic group. As a rule, you should serve for at least a full academic year, as it takes some time to get acquainted with both the proceedings and the topics. A term of two years or more would be ideal.

Formal requirements

The representatives of the groups are elected by the groups' electoral procedures. Substitutes are admissible but must be elected. The term starts with the academic year (August). As the first DK usually takes place End of September or early October, elections of the academic groups should take place at the very beginning of the autumn semester.

Agenda items for the Department Conference can be proposed by all members with voting rights. They must be submitted in writing to the Head of Department or the Department Coordinator at least 14 days before the date of the Department Conference. In urgent cases, agenda items may be added at the beginning of the Department Conference, provided that a majority of the members present agree.

Benefits as student / Mittelbau representative

- Better understanding of the GESS-Department and the ETH Zurich context;

- Participation in a core process at the Department level and involvement in the opinion-forming and decision-making;
- Enlargement of your network;
- Social events: DK-dinner at the end of the year, occasional apéros;
- Depending on the study program, a number of ETCS can be earned. This also applies to doctoral studies (only regular studies).

Further information:

[D-GESS: organisation and structure](#)

[Bylaws D-GESS](#) / [Geschäftsordnung D-GESS](#)

[Organisation ordinance ETH Zurich](#) / [Organisationsverordnung der ETH Zürich](#)

The selection committee / Berufungskommission

Composition and duties of the selection committee

The profile paper for every professorship position includes suggestions for the composition of the selection committee. The committee comprises a diverse group of experts (internal and external) and also includes two student representatives and one representative of the scientific staff. The members are then appointed by the President of ETH Zurich.

The selection committee reviews the applications and decides which candidates to invite and examine more closely. Usually, four to six people are shortlisted, including – if possible – at least two women. Following public presentations, confidential interviews, and a subsequent in-depth discussion, the committee provides the ETH President with a recommendation for appointment, ranking its preferred candidates. This list should include, whenever possible, at least one female candidate.

An outline of the process can be found [here](#). A detailed description of the entire procedure can be found on the [appointment process](#) web page.

Time requirements

This can vary considerably and depends on many factors such as the number of candidates, number of presentations, interviews, discussions, and further activities of the selection committee. As a rule of thumb, ...

How long does the process take

This can vary, too. If you decide to make yourself available for a selection committee, you should have at least one full year at ETH Zurich ahead of you, since it can take quite a long, first until the composition of the selection committee and the profile paper are finalized, and second, until the window for applications ends and the committee meets for the first time.

Benefits

- Insight and participation in one of the core processes of ETH Zurich
- Better understanding of ETH Zurich and enlargement of your network
- Depending on the study program, a number of ETCS can be earned. This also applies to doctoral studies (only regular studies).

Principles of communication between Student and Mittelbau associations and the Department

General considerations

Email conversations and conversations in a language that is not one's mother tongue involve the risk of misunderstandings. In-person exchanges allow for a more advanced dialogue, help to better understand each other, and build trust.

Goodwill and trust are key for a prospering department culture and mutual appreciation. In many cases, an informal chat can help to clarify motives and positions and thus to avoid prejudging statements.

Whom do we send emails to

It is helpful to have a concrete person to talk to or write to instead of the whole group. This person will typically be the president of the association, the chair or spokesperson of a working group etc.

Time to respond

As we are all busy and have many things to attend to, it can spare us many frustrating experiences if we clearly define the timeframe/deadline for responses. It also helps to specify if an issue is of particular importance or urgency.

As a rule, if we cannot answer an email or meet a deadline, it is a matter of courtesy to quickly respond as early as possible that the reaction will be delayed.

Department staff

Our doors are always open, also for spontaneous and informal exchanges. In many cases, it would be much easier to stop by our offices than to write an email. If there is only a conversation as basis for agreements, there should follow a protocol or "as we just discussed" mail afterward to prevent misunderstandings.