

Career in Academia (in Germany)

Ralf Klessen

Zentrum für Astronomie Heidelberg



Overview

- the German system: then, now and soon...
- necessary steps to get a job
 - how to know about jobs?
 - how to apply for jobs?
 - how to survive an interview?
 - how to accept a job - the art of negotiations
- alternatives to academia - backup plans

German system

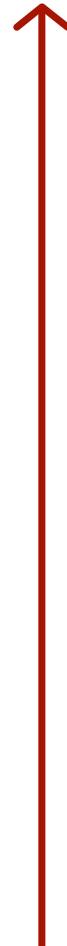
classical university career:

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student



Habilitation - Privatdozent

Promotion

Diplom / Magister

German system

classical university career:

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student



Ruf / appointment

Anstellung / employment

Anstellung / employment (if at all)

Immatrikulation / inscription

German system

classical university career:

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student

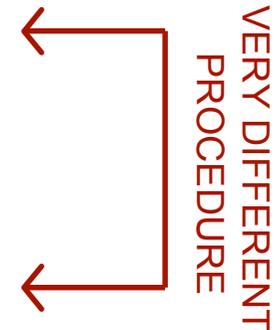


Ruf / appointment

Anstellung / employment

Anstellung / employment (if at all)

Immatrikulation / inscription



German system

classical university career:

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student



Beamter
state officer

unbefristet
permanent

Beamter / Angestellter
state officer / employee

(un-)befristet
(non-)tenured

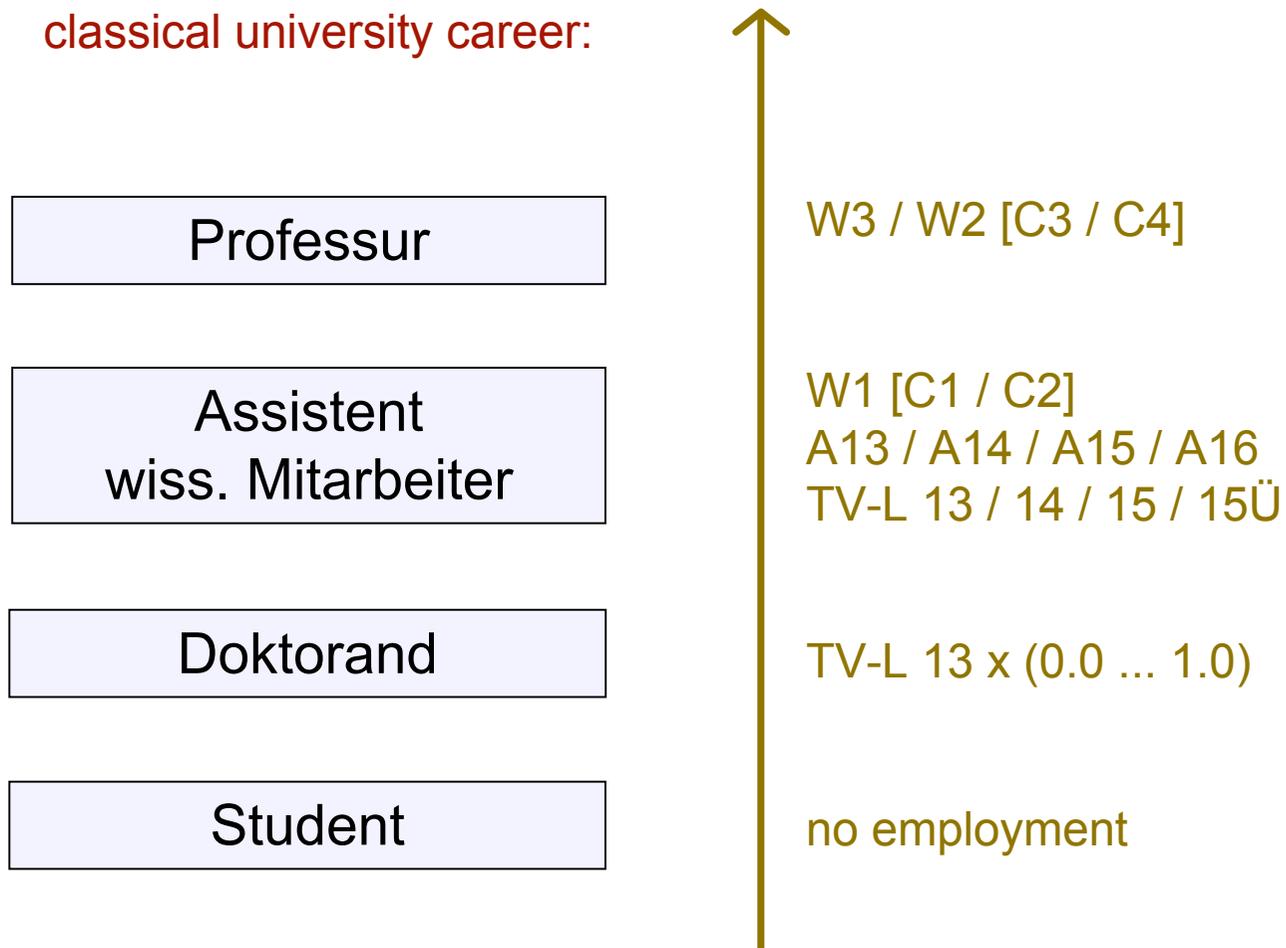
Angestellter
employee

immer befristet
always time limited

no employment

German system

classical university career:



German system

classical university career:

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student

Problems:

- system is very rigid
no transitions possible
(say C2 → C3, C3 → C4)
- to get promotion, you have to
change university
- no tenure track
- „Ordinarien-Prinzip“: academic
mid-level personnel strongly
depends on „Lehrstuhlinhaber“
(has very little own responsibility)
- usually you stay at the same place /
with the same professor

German system

classical university career:

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student

Problems:

- system still quite rigid
but in principle transitions possible
(W1 → W2 → W3)
- in most cases to get promotion,
you have to change university
- tenure track still rare (Juniorprof.)
- „Ordinarien-Prinzip“: academic
mid-level personnel strongly
depends on „Lehrstuhlinhaber“
(has very little own responsibility)

German system

in the past

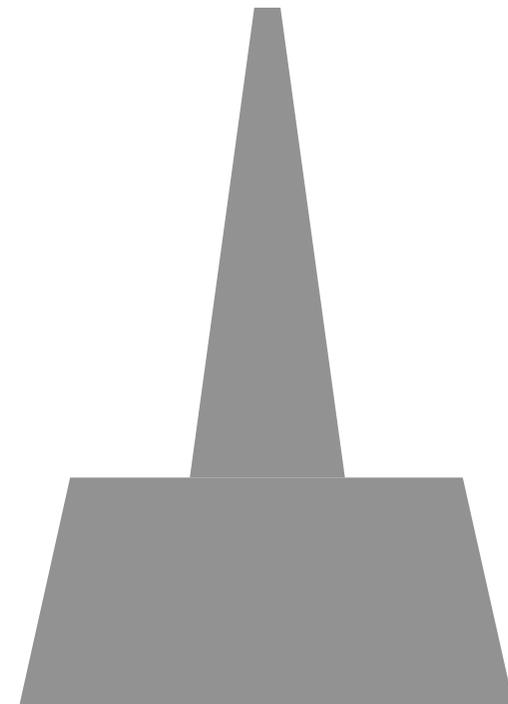
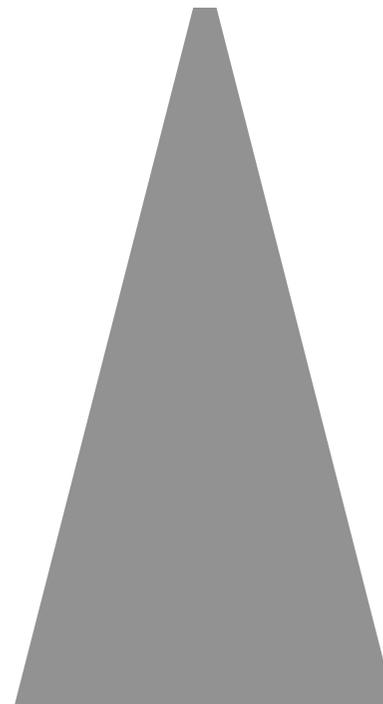
currently

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student



BIG PROBLEM TODAY: no more mid-level positions!!!!

German system

in the past

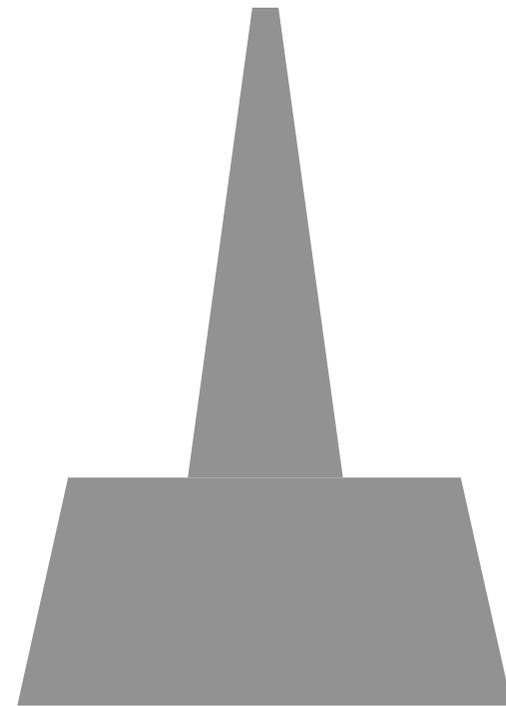
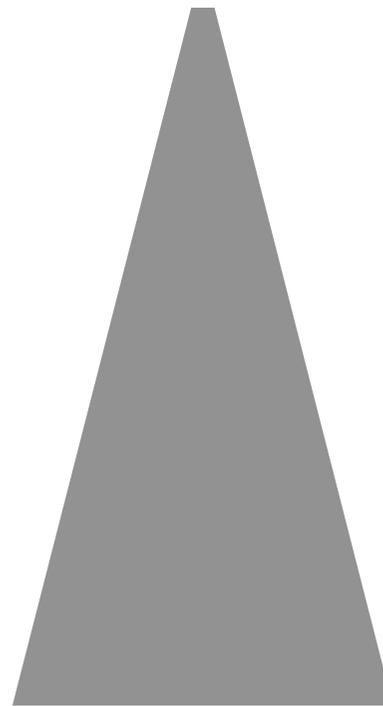
currently

Professur

Assistent
wiss. Mitarbeiter

Doktorand

Student



Example: ITA -- 3 professorships & only 3 mid-level academic staff

German system

classical:

Professur

Assistent

Doktorand

Student

now:

professorship

ext. inst.

post
doc

postdoc
(3.Mittel)

postdoc
ext. inst.

university

ext. inst.

student

prof.

post-
doc

dokt.

std.

... in Germany ...

EU/USA/...

How to get a job?

- BE ACTIVE!!!!!!

- *It's YOUR life, YOU have to do something!*

Don't wait for others to approach you, do approach other people / possible employers / colleagues yourself.

- Let other people know you are looking for a job.

LOOK, LOOK, LOOK !!!
ASK, ASK, ASK !!!

&

NEVER GIVE
UP !!!

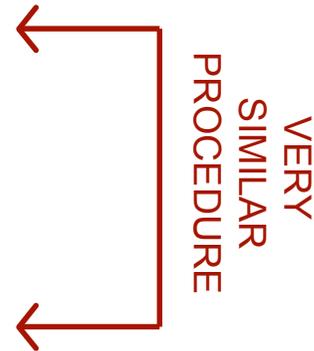
How to know about jobs?

- personal networks are important!
- scan the job pages / websites
- know about 3rd party funding schemes

How to apply for jobs?

- PhD position
- postdoc level
- (tenure-track) position at non-university institute

- professorial level



How to apply for jobs?

- PhD / postdoc position
 - someone offers a position, you apply for it
- preparation! preparation! preparation!
 - learn about the person: who offers the job? what is his/her reputation? what does he/sho want?
 - learn about the position: what is wanted? what skills & specifications?
 - learn about the institute: where is it? what science is done there? how do I fit in?
 - contact the person, ask questions, don't be shy

How to apply for jobs?

● application

- description of past / current research

- description of future research plans

think what you want to do in 5 years, where you want to be then, and what you want to have reached by then

- curriculum vitae

- publication list

- 2 - 3 reference letter (maybe asked for later)

- (maybe reprints)

How to apply for jobs?

- professorship at university
- procedure
 - position at W2/W3 level must EXIST
 - position must be freed & appointment committee built
 - position must be advertised *--> you apply*
 - applications are scanned and ranked
--> list of 4 - 8 candidates for talks and interviews
 - talks and interviews
 - external evaluation of candidates
 - final list (approved by appointment com. -> faculty council -> university senate)
 - „Ruf“ from university / ministry
 - negotiations
 - appointment

How to apply for jobs?

- professorship
- again: preparation! preparation! preparation!
 - learn about the position: what is wanted? what skills & specifications? where do they want to go?
 - learn about the department: what are the plans for the future? where else is there? what science is done there? how do I fit in?
 - contact people in the appointment committee, ask about the position, the institute, the faculty, future plans
 - ask friends / colleagues who may know about the position
 - maybe: visit

How to apply for jobs?

- application

- cover letter (*short summary of everything*)
- description of past / current research
- description of teaching experience / external funding / managerial experience / committees & commissions
- **IMPORTANT:** future research plans -- visions!
what do you want to do at the institute / how do you want to lead the institute in the next 10-15 years / what are the goals you want to reach in this time / how do you fit within the faculty / university
- plans / concepts for teaching
- curriculum vitae (CV / talks / teaching / funding)
- publication list
- (maybe copies of diploma / documents / etc)

How to survive an interview?

- postdoc:
 - often talk + interview / sometimes telephone interview / sometimes nothing
- professorship
 - talk & interview („Vorsingen“)

How to survive an interview?

● talk:

- usually not for specialists --> be understandable / extended introduction
- be motivated, show your topic is fascinating and great
- show your interests are broad
- demonstrate depth in one or two topics
- mention your research (and possible) teaching plans for the near future
- stay in time

How to survive an interview?

- interview (postdoc):
 - introduce again your research plans; why do they fit in
 - what do you need / wish?
 - don't be shy, ask questions
 - starting time

How to survive an interview?

- interview (professorship):
 - introduce again your research concepts
 - introduce (again) your teaching plans
 - what do you need (equipment / personnel)
 - when can you start
 - miscellanea
 - visions
 - possible referees
 - are you willing to move...
 - ask questions

Victory: now negotiate!

- negotiations (postdoc):
 - none
- negotiations (professorship):
 - talk with colleagues (what is needed, what is realistic, what is usual, ...)
 - submit written „wish list“ to chancellor
 - then appointment with rector / chancellor (and dean)
 - with W: talk about your personal salary

Alternatives

- DFG - own position (Emmy Noether, Heisenberg)
 - there is lots going on at the moment!!!!
- EU / BMBF / Stiftungen
 - Alexander von Humboldt / Volkswagenstiftung / DAAD
- **Industry**
- Science lobby
 - (DFG Referent, Stifterverband, Wissenschaftsrat, etc.)
- Administration
 - Ministerien, Bundes-, Landtag