

RTG Situated Cognition

Welcome to Bochum & Osnabrück



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RTG Situated Cognition

<https://situated-cognition.com/>

Center for Mind and Cognition at the Ruhr University Bochum

<https://philosophy-cognition.com/cmc/>

Institute of Cognitive Science at the University of Osnabrück

<https://www.ikw.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/home.html>



Guidelines for RTG Meetings

These guidelines are intended to help establish a positive and respectful atmosphere at all RTG meetings so to support our goal of developing an adequate account of cognition and mind. To this end, discussions at meetings should not have a stressed or competitive atmosphere as this can be intimidating especially for participants who are less experienced, come from a non-academic family or from a minority group. While some may strive under such competitive conditions, other participants shy away and their knowledge and opinions are hence excluded from the discussion. This leads to less fruitful and diverse discussions which is contrary to the RTG's goal of providing an optimal training and learning ground for all students and guests alike.

The aim of these guidelines is to facilitate constructive and inclusive discussion which is maximally beneficial to all participants. While these guidelines are primarily designed for formally structured discussions, they should also be kept in mind for informal discussion rounds.

(Based on David Chalmers guidelines for respectful, constructive and inclusive philosophical discussion, <http://consc.net/guidelines/>, with an addition of general behavioural rules.)

I. General behavioural rules

During the whole event, including dinner, breaks and other informal meetings or discussions, we expect from all participants a respectful behaviour in relation to all other participants. Thus, the organizing team will implement a zero-tolerance strategy against any violent, aggressive, racist, or sexist communication or behaviour. If you need help or feel uncomfortable, do not hesitate to contact any one from the organizing team or from the welfare team.

II. General Guidelines for Discussion

- Everyone should aim to provide **constructive feedback** for talks (see III.)
- All RTG workshop talks should be chaired by PhD students (see IV)
- PhD will be given priority when asking questions throughout – the chair should explicitly encourage PhDs to ask the first questions.
- **Questions for clarification if something was not understood are always permissible**, even if the question/feedback seems unsophisticated or uninformed. The objective of asking questions or providing feedback is not to impress anyone.
- Questions should be kept short and to the point.
- **Follow-ups can be allowed according to the finger/hand rule** but each person can ask ONE follow-up and the follow-up should not be longer than the original question.
- The chair is allowed to interrupt questions and discussions when they have the feeling that they take too long.
- Approaching the speaker after the talk is acceptable, but consider granting the speaker a break after presenting before a deeper discussion may follow during coffee and lunch breaks.



III. Giving Constructive Feedback

Discussion at RTG meetings provides a **valuable opportunity for receiving feedback**. These guidelines aim to ensure that all comments are given in a respectful manner and are maximally beneficial to the presenter. Object to theses and arguments, don't object to people. **Feedback should be cast in a constructive, non-personal manner**. This may include critical feedback, which is an essential part of science and crucial for progress and the presenter's development as an academic. Nonetheless, positive feedback such as comments and questions that build on a speaker's project or strengthen their position are just as much encouraged. This may also include suggestions for further relevant issues or literature to be explored.

Objections should be cast in a constructive way and not as flat dismissals; it should be acknowledged that there is a possibility of a response to the objection from the speaker. Even when an objection is destructive with respect to a position, it often helps to find and propose a positive insight granted by the objection. Discussants who cannot see the merit in the project should make doubly sure that their question is phrased in a respectful manner and could consider whether it might be more appropriate to provide such radical feedback in private.

It is permissible to question the presuppositions of a project or an area, but discussions in which these questions dominate can be unhelpful. Discussants should not keep pressing the same objection (individually or collectively). This is relevant to the Q&A as well as informal discussions.

IV. Chairing and Enforcing Norms

The chair should implement a hierarchy of discussants: PhD, PostDoc, Professors. Within this hierarchy, **chairs should endeavour to allow questions from a diverse group of participants**, possibly giving preference to female discussants or discussants from minority groups in the order of questions. It is reasonable for chairs to **apply the norms flexibly and context-sensitively**, but they should be mindful of reintroducing biases in doing so.

When norms are violated, the chair is encouraged to gently point this out, and others should feel free to say something or to signal the chair. To avoid social, psychological, or professional negative side-effects, it is also adequate to quietly point out violations to the respective individual after the session or to ask another person to do so, for example from the organizing or the welfare team. Concerns about violations of the norms may also be raised with a member of the steering committee in order to be addressed at a steering committee meeting if necessary.

Participants should not be defensive when a violation is pointed out. It is quite possible to accidentally violate these norms without being inimical or having bad intentions. An informative and supportive exchange can solve and avoid any such issue for now and the future.

