

Remarks at the Diploma Students Meeting

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Let me begin by congratulating all of you on being selected to the Diploma Program here. Many others who applied to this program did not make it, so you are indeed special. This program can provide you an opening to almost anything if you use it properly. Some past Diploma students have become professors and successful researchers and many are successful in other ways. There is no reason why you cannot be one of them. Almost half the Diploma students end up getting Ph.D. degree, and there is no reason why you cannot be one of them.

But you have to pay attention to some elementary facts of life. You are here principally to learn, so work hard and diligently. Your teachers are all active researchers, some of them are world-class. Take advantage of being close to them; get to know them; learn to think (in matters of science) like the best of them. This will be helpful to you in learning the subject and in understanding it better. There are pragmatic reasons too: your professors will be happier to write a good letter of reference for you if they know you well. Take advantage of the people and facilities that ICTP has placed at your disposal. Learn

from the new culture into which you have been placed now.

You have been here already for a few weeks, and know about many facets of ICTP and its Diploma Programs. Ms. Patrizia Passarella has already talked to you about practical matters such as meal coupons, lockers, library, computers, laptops, stationery, mail, accommodations, health insurance, being absent from Trieste, TOEFL and GRE tests, how to ask for recommendation letters, exams, bus tickets, how to deal with psychological and medical problems, Italian lectures, telephone calls, shopping, and so forth. If there are further questions, do ask Patrizia or Sandra, or anyone else for that matter, and everyone will help. Use common sense all the time.

Let me add a few items here of a broader category, on the basis of past experiences. These items are even more important than previous years because we now have 50 students instead of the 30 that we used to have only two years ago. This is because of two new programs, one of which is in Earth Sciences, begun last year, and another on basic physics which has begun this year. This increased enrollment calls for additional vigilance on your part as well as ours. If you think that what I am going to say now is obvious, it is indeed so. Unfortunately, however, sometimes the obvious has to be stated.

1. Many of you, if not all, come from disadvantaged countries; many of you are from different culture and religion. These are no reasons for you to feel insecure and intimidated. Be confident and act confidently. Learn to speak straightforwardly and to articulate your thoughts without offence.

No one will take away your rights. However, with rights come responsibilities; let me note some of them.

2. Show respect for people, whether they are your teachers, classmates, or other employees of ICTP. Do not make disparaging remarks about anyone, especially those from a different culture or background. Learn to live harmoniously with different belief systems and temperaments. Take advantage of everyone who is willing to help you but do not abuse them. A lot of people spend a lot of time, energy and money to help you through the year, and to put you on a better course and career path. They are quite helpful and are willing to go out of their way. But do not take them for granted.

3. Ethical behavior is paramount and no amount of your accomplishments means anything if you are also not ethical. This remark extends to your personal behavior as well as academic behavior. For instance, do not plagiarize under any circumstances. The

word plagiarism may mean many things to many people, but it means that do not use someone's work or words as if they belong to you. As an obvious example, when you are given homework to do, do not copy from others. Talk to others, learn from others, discuss your problems with others, but ultimately use your own understanding to solve your home work problems. Do not give falsify information of any sort. It will catch up with you sooner or later, and the penalty you have to pay when it comes to light is far more severe than you imagine.

4. Show respect for property such as buildings, computers, furniture, books, etc. Use all ICTP facilities as much as you want but do not abuse them: e.g., don't write on tables, take good care of computers and of library books, do not eat and drink on keyboards and library books, or leave food on desks, do not take any of ICTP property with you, do not play within the buildings, do not throw things on the floor, keep bathrooms tidy, etc. These are all matters of common sense.

5. Desks are not assigned to you. Once you finish your use of one, you should log out and take all your personal belongings so another student can use the same desk and use the computer.

6. Be punctual for your lectures. If you wish to be absent for whatever reason, make

sure that you let someone (such as the secretaries or the professors) know. When you are asked to attend a meeting, like this one or others, you should attend them and be on time. When you set up an appointment, be on time. Read the messages you receive from the Diploma secretaries or, for that matter, from others at ICTP. They often contain useful information, written reminders, written explanations, changes of programs, and so forth. If some action is required, act on them.

7. Let me say a few words about your living in the city. You are from different countries and are now thrown in to live in the midst of a different culture with different norms. While I am not asking to absorb these norms in every respect, do show some sensitivity to local way of life. If you share rooms with others, be mindful of personal habits; take good care of the property that you are renting. Be courteous to strangers and fellow workers alike.

8. Let me add something broad: as you all know, we live in a difficult world today, and ICTP takes considerable institutional risk in inviting so many young people from so many cultures and backgrounds. We have been fortunate that our record in these matters is without blemish. Please help us maintain that stellar record, and add to the reputation that this Diploma program has

already acquired over time, and become part of its successful legacy.

If there are issues that cannot be sorted out through usual mechanisms, do feel free to see me.

I wish all of you great success.