How To Use the New Seminar Room Booking System

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Introduction

In connection with the integration of the CSC system group into the central IT unit of KTH a number of services are either moved to the central domain or will be discontinued in the very near future. One of the systems that will be closed down is the room booking system we are using at the math department (MRBS). This means that from 1st August 2015 it will no longer be possible to reserve rooms via MRBS. As a replacement, the central IT unit offers a system that is intergrated into their Exchange mail server. The following notes describe the move.

1 Understanding the philosophy behind rooms booking in Exchange

A room is considered to be an entity like any other resource (including persons — or their precious time). So a room has a schedule. This is nothing else but the reserved times for an event located in that room. The physical representation of a room's schedule is its calendar. Given this interpretation, booking a room by a person means nothing else but scheduling an appointment with this room. The room will "accept" the invitation to this meeting if this meeting will not conflict with another one the room is involved in. With other words, the room will be booked for you if it is not already booked by someone else.[1]

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[1]For sure, a room will never invite you to an appointment.

2 The procedure in a nutshell

1. Login into the web interface of Exchange.

2. Get access to the reservation tables for the rooms: sci_math_XXXX where XXXX indicates the room number.

3. In order to reserve a room you must make sure that the room is free for the time you are looking for. Then make an appointment with this room. Hopefully, the room will agree to meet you at the given time.

4. In order to release a booking, simply cancel the event in your calendar.

3 Preparation

The preparation step might be considered tedious but you must do it only once.

All of you have an email account at the domain kth.se. This account includes a calendar at the same server. KTH uses the Microsoft solution Exchange 2013 for that purpose. Even if you have never seen it before since you are using local mail and/or calendar clients, these data are accessible. You can do that either by using a webinterface (https://webmail.kth.se/owa) or Thunderbird (with the corresponding plugins installed). In the rare cases that somebody uses a Windows version, the corresponding functionality is naturally integrated into Outlook.

The following explanations and instructions apply to using the web interface. This one is universally applicable independent of your operating system. For the time being, it should work in Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari. For using other access methods please consult the help system at https://intra.kth.se/it/support/guider.

Occasionally, I will provide screenshots taken from my laptop. The web interface is quering the localization. So everybody will observe texts in his own preferred language. Since I am using the German localization, all texts are in German. I hope that it will not be too hard to interpret them anyway.

3.1 Logging in into the Exchange server

After opening https://webmail.kth.se/owa, the login screen will appear:

KTH Webmail

User name:

hanke   @kth.se

Password:

••••••••

☑ Private computer (<u>What is this?</u>)
Warning: By selecting this option, you confirm that this computer complies with your organization's security policy.

☐ Use the light version of Outlook Web App

⊙ sign in

Don't use the light version! Since I am using my own laptop, I have checked the corresponding selection ("private computer"). Don't do it if your are using a public or similar computer. The following window showing your email (of course, below it's mine using firefox) will show up:
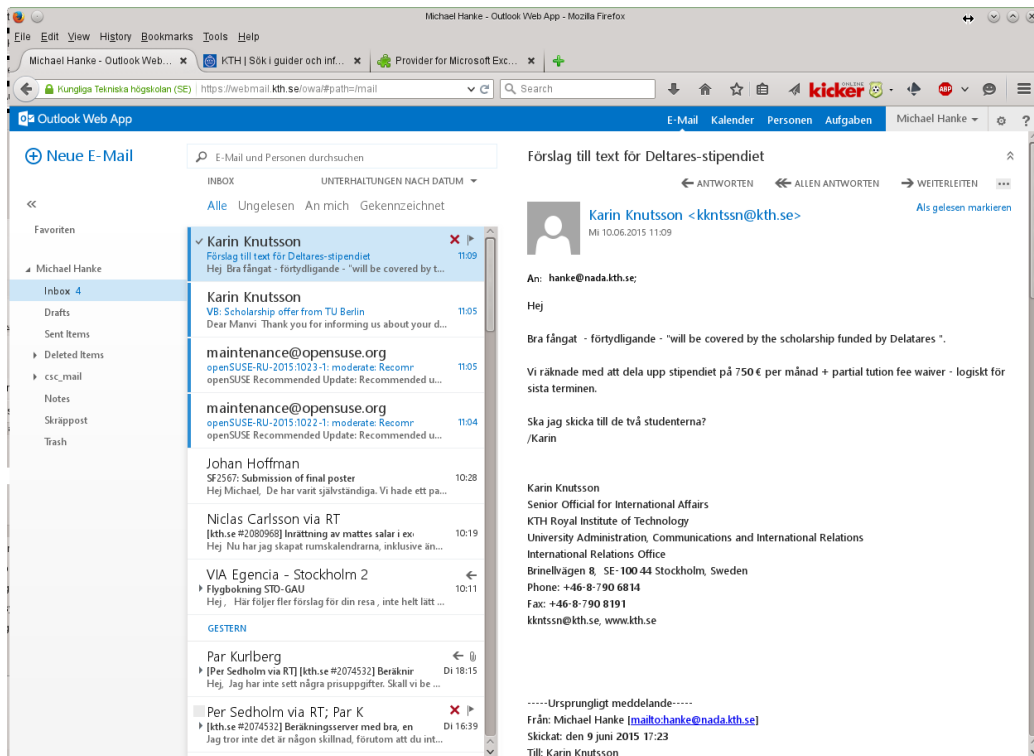
The upper right corner is the most interesting part here:

The small white mark below "E-Mail" indicates that the mail subwindow is active. In rare cases, this window may be empty if you are forwarding your email to a different server.

3.2   The calendar tab

You should change to the calender view now by clicking on the Calender tab ("Kalender"). The screen may look something like this:
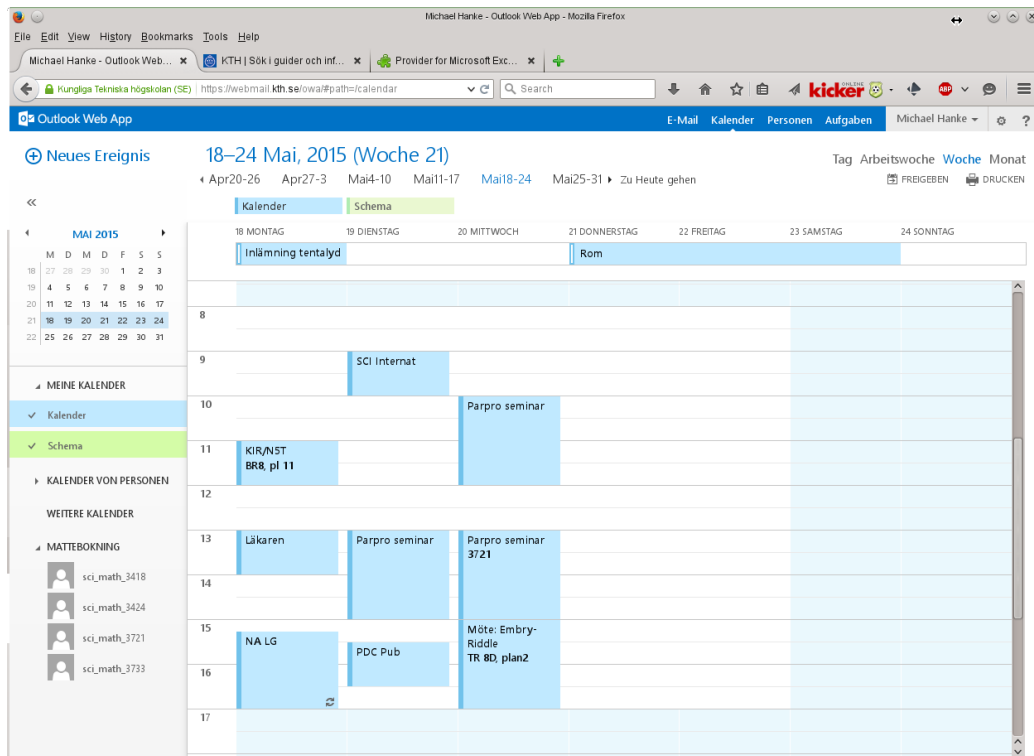
Your accessible calendars are shown in the leftmost column. I have chosen to see all appointments of a certain week at once. This is something you can choose individually using the menu near the upper right corner. Lets have a look at the available calendars:
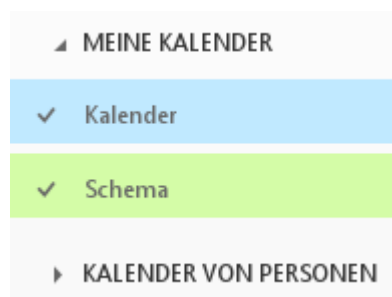
Under My Calendars ("Meine Kalender") you will find the automatically available calendars: Your personal Exchange calendar and the one generated by the central schedule ("Schema"). In the latter you will find all your appointments corresponding to teaching as scheduled centrally. The checkmarks to the left indicate

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that the appointments of these two calenders shall be visible in the weekly view. An indication of that is repeated just above the headline with the weekdays. The colouring of appointments indicates the calenders which they belong to. Since this is an examination week, I do not have any lectures etc.

As you can see, I have some more calenders accessible (and some are hidden). They depend on my personal preferences.

The final part has been created for booking rooms at the math department:

None of these calendars carries a check mark. So their contents is not shown on the screen shot.

3.3 Creating an overview of the free and reserved times for the rooms

As indicated above you have to connect to the rooms' calendars. Although not strictly necessary I recommend that you create a group of calendars which consists exactly of the rooms' calendars. This corresponds to the view I presented above with the calendar group "Mattebokning".

How to create a calendar group

1. Open the calendar view in the web interface to Exchange.

2. Right-click on the line My Calendars ("Meine Kalender"). Select "New Calendar Group" from the context menu.

3. A small input window will pop up where you can input the name for this group. Above I've chosen "Mattebokning".

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How To get access to a room calendar

1. Right-click on the name of the previously defined calendar group. From the context menu, select "Open Calendar".

2. There appears a small dialog box. The first input field is labeled "From the directory". Start by typing sci_math. There appears a context menu of all available resources. Select the one which you intend to connect to, say sci_math_3418 (our seminar room on the fourth floor).

3. Click open. You will see that the corresponding calendar appears below the entry of your calendar group.

4. Repeat the above steps for all 4 rooms which belong to the math department.

Congratulations! Now you are ready to do room reservations!

4 Make a room reservation

4.1 Preparation

In order to obtain an overview of the already reserved times it is a good idea to show the reserved times of all rooms you may want to use. This is done in the follwing steps:

1. Deactivate all calendars you may have a look at right now with the exception of your own calendar. This is done by clicking on the check marks to the left of all calenders.

2. Make your own calendar visible if it is not seen. This is accomplished by clicking on "Calendar" under "My Calendars".

3. Make all room calenders visible by clicking on them until checkmarks appear next to them.

Caveat: The web interface allows only 5 calendars visible at a time. If you want to see all 4 rooms, you must close all other calendars (with the exception of your own, of course). This restriction does not apply to other access methods. If you only use this calendar for room reservation purposes, Outlook webaccess will remember your settings between sessions.

4.2   Reserve a room

1. Allocate a room that is not occupied at the time you wish to reserve.

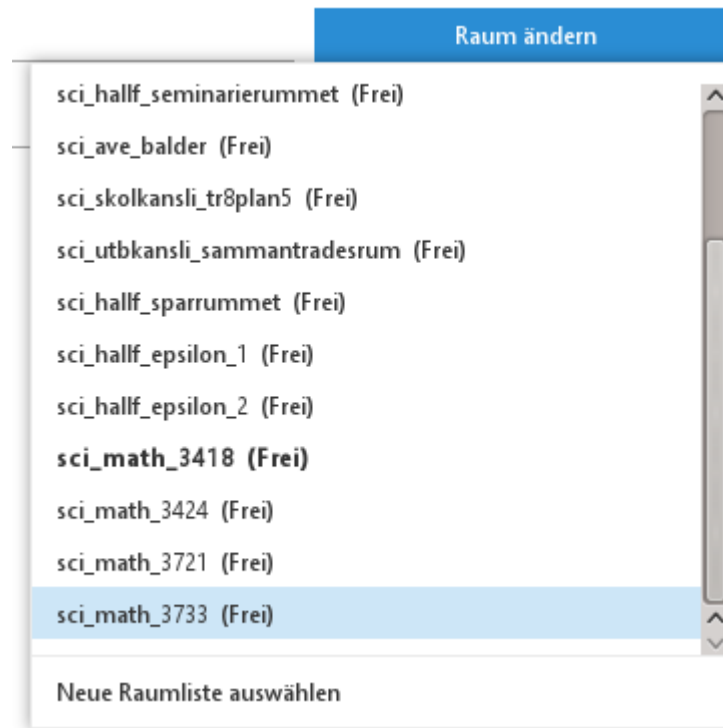2. Create a "New Event" by clicking on the corresponding button:

3. A large dialog box will open:

   I have already inserted the name of the event: "Seminar".

4. Select a room for this event. In the second row close to the right border you will find a rectangular button for room selection "Raum hinzufügen". Klicking on it, a scroll list similar to the following will appear:

("Frei" means free.) I selected the seminar room at the 4th floor.

5. The selection will appear as follows, both as place ("Ort") and as a participant ("Teilnehmer"). The latter should be clear given the interpretation of a room as a resource with calendar.

6. Now you can edit the time duration, frequency of repetition etc at will. Please do not change the calendar to be used for this appointment. Finally, do not uncheck the box "Request reply" ("Antworten anfordern"). Or if not checked, do so. This way, the room will answer to your invitation with "yes" if everything is fine and there are no collisions with other reservations. The answer will appear in your mailbox almost instantaneously.
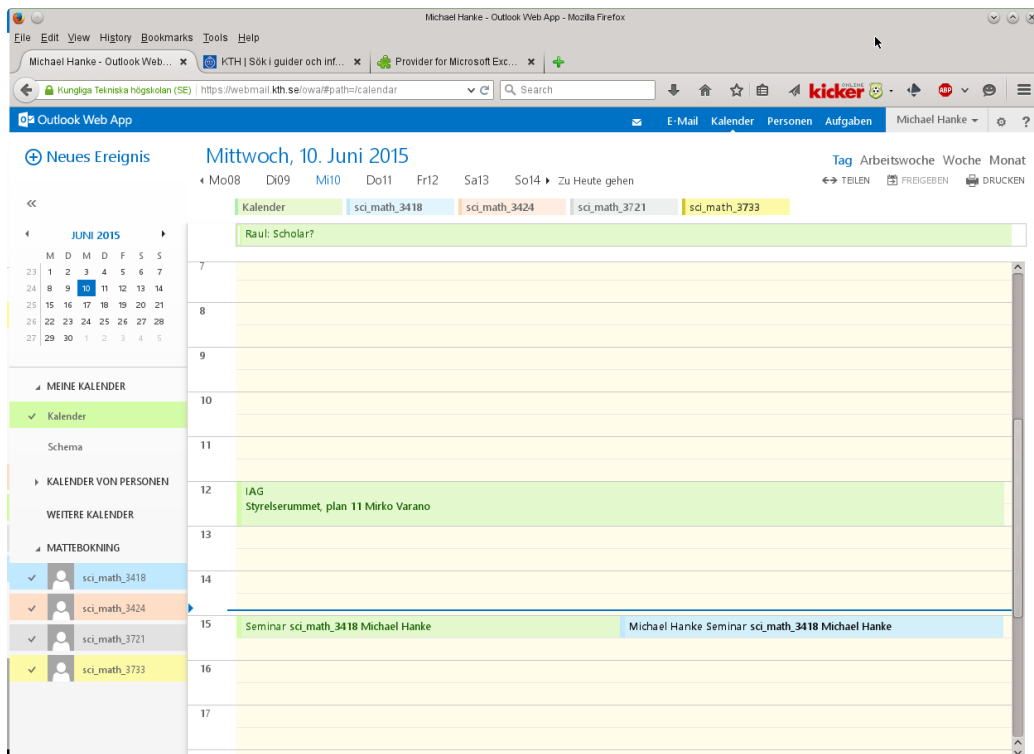
Start:
Mi 10.06.2015 ▾   15:00 ▾

Dauer:
30 Minuten ▾

Anzeigen als:
Gebucht ▾

Erinnerung:
15 Minuten ▾

Kalender:
Kalender ▾

Wiederholen:
Nie ▾

☐ Als privat markieren   ☑ Antworten anfordern

7. Press "Send" in the upper left corner for finishing your reservation. Do not forget it! Now you can see the booking both in your own calendar and in the room's calendar:

4.3   Releasing a reservation

If you do not need your reservation any longer, it is advisable to release the room to your colleagues. The procedure is rather easy:

1. Open you calender view. Locate the reservation in your schedule.

2. Right-click on the event. A new window will appear to send the withdrawal to the involved persons and the reserved room:
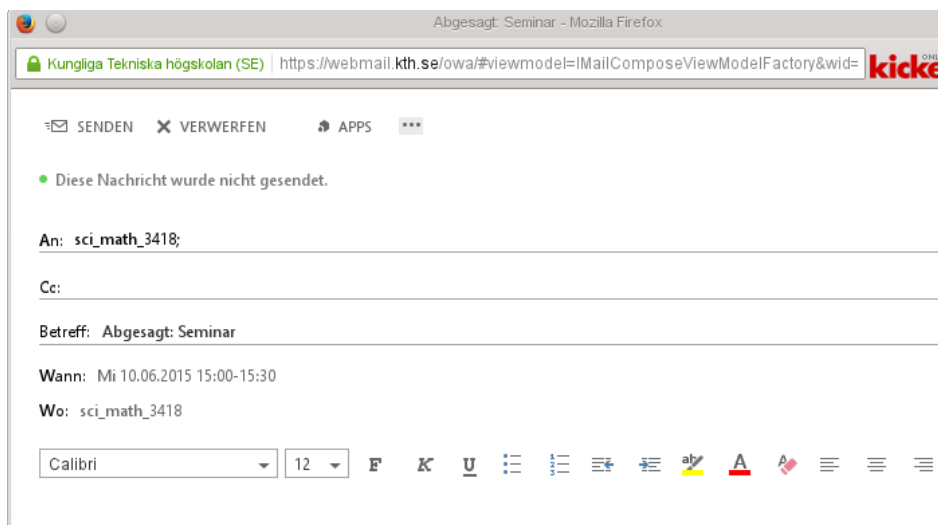
3. Send it! You should see now that the room is no longer reserved. You can check it easily by having a look at the calender.

5   Logout

In the menu at the upper righ corner,

click on your name. A logout button will appear in the menu.

6 Caveats

- The already existing reservations in MRBS will not be moved to Exchange automatically. There is no way to do so. Please do it by hand. We cannot do it for you because we have no way to mimic your identity. Each reservation is owned by the person that did it.