



# International Max Planck Research School

*for Evolutionary Biology*

## Agreement of the International Max Planck Research School for Evolutionary Biology

### **Preface**

The International Max Planck Research School (IMPRS) for Evolutionary Biology is a direct cooperation between the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology (MPI-EB), the Christian Albrechts University of Kiel (CAU) and the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel.

This international graduate school is dedicated to highest level research and training in all areas of contemporary Evolutionary Biology.

### **§ 1 General structure of the IMPRS graduate program**

(1) All participating doctoral researchers will be eligible to receive their doctoral degrees (Promotionsurkunde) from Kiel University, following the official Doctoral Degree Regulations (Promotionsordnung) of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the general guidelines of the university.

Participation in the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology will be documented with an official IMPRS certificate after the graduation.

After a training phase of six months, the doctoral project should be completed within three years. All scientific work in the program is based on the Max Planck Society's rules for good scientific practice.

The working language of the school is English.

(2) It is mandatory for all doctoral researchers to apply for acceptance as a doctoral candidate at CAU's Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (entry into the doctoral degree list) right at the beginning of their doctoral project. Furthermore, all doctoral researchers are obligated to register online for the CAU doctorate statistics. By law, universities have both the permission and the obligation to collect data from you as a doctoral candidate and deliver them to the statistical office of the federal state of Schleswig Holstein.

In addition, doctoral researchers of the IMPRS have to enrol as doctoral students at the CAU. This is necessary to give them access to all benefits reserved for enrolled students.

IMPRS doctoral researchers also need to register with the CAU Graduate Center in order to access their offers of soft skill courses or general support in areas of interdisciplinary qualifications, funding, consulting of doctoral teams, among others.

(3) The graduate program consists of a training program and the doctoral thesis. Both should be discussed with and guided by the direct supervisor and a thesis advisory committee.

- a. training program: complementation of the skills and experience of the doctoral researcher
- b. doctoral thesis: independently compiled scientific output of the doctoral project. It follows the official Doctoral Degree Regulations (Promotionsordnung) of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and has to be written in English.
- c. Direct supervisor: PI and member of the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology faculty in whose laboratory the student performs his/her doctoral project.
- d. Thesis advisory committee (TAC): committee of at least three (senior) scientists who will guide the doctoral researcher in all aspects of his/her doctoral project and will make suggestions for participating in specific teaching modules that should complement the skills of the candidate.

The participation in the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology and the detailed (additional) curriculum will be certified individually by the IMPRS.

## **§ 2 Supervision and doctoral thesis**

(1) Once admitted, the doctoral researcher will work closely with her/his direct supervisor on finding a doctoral topic. Besides the guidance from their direct advisor, doctoral researchers are also supervised and mentored by a thesis advisory committee (TAC).

The committee consists of the direct supervisor and at least two other members of the IMPRS faculty, whereby one member could be a postdoc from a lab of the faculty. Participation of an additional external member is possible. The committee should be formed within the first 6 months and its members are jointly elected by the doctoral researcher and her/his direct supervisor. The committee should meet for the first time within 12 months of the doctoral project, further meetings should take place once per year. A minimum of two TAC meetings is required.

The purpose of meetings with a thesis advisory committee is to guide and advise the doctoral researcher in all aspects and development of her/his doctoral project and to monitor the her/his work progress. In addition, they are also intended to make suggestions for participating in specific curriculum modules that should complement the skills of the doctoral researcher and to assist her/him in all aspects of career planning and networking.

(2) Before the first TAC meeting, the doctoral researcher should have completed a written thesis proposal. The proposal should clearly develop the research questions from a detailed overview of the recent research in the specific area. Furthermore, a method section on how to answer the research questions and possible results as well as their implications for recent research in this area are mandatory. A description of how the work is connected to evolutionary biology and a timeline with defined milestones are also requested. This proposal will be sent to all members of the thesis advisory committee at least one week before the meeting. At this meeting, the student will present his/her plans during a 30 min presentation. All committee members will have read the proposal and will discuss the proposed thesis work in detail, the main aim being to provide critical and constructive feedback to the doctoral researcher before putting it into practice.

(3) The second TAC meeting should normally be called by the doctoral researcher 12-15 months after the first meeting. The doctoral researcher will present his/her research progress in a written and oral way. The research and additional curriculum schedule of the last and for the next period should also be planned/adjusted during these meetings. A positive evaluation by the thesis advisory committee members at this meeting is essential for the doctoral researcher to continue in the program.

Thereafter, TAC meetings should be ideally called by the doctoral researcher once a year as described above, including extensions of the doctoral project. During each of the meetings, the doctoral researcher should get the possibility to talk to the members of the TAC committee without the presence of the direct supervisor and vice versa.

The doctoral researcher is obliged to document the meetings as well as the courses taken and day equivalents achieved to the program coordinator using standard forms.

More details can be found in the TAC checklist.

(4) The TAC members are asked to actively collaborate with the doctoral researcher, e.g., to read and comment on drafts of manuscripts.

(5) The TAC members are not necessarily the opponents during the thesis defense.

(6) If potential problems should evolve between the doctoral researcher and the supervisor, both parties are encouraged to address the thesis advisory committee, which will try to solve it.

### **§ 3 Additional curriculum**

(1) Besides their own scientific research culminating in the doctoral thesis, the doctoral researchers are obliged to complete an additional training program. It has been designed to complement the skills and experience that the doctoral researchers already have. The additional curriculum is individually tailored to the doctoral researcher's specific demands. The students are flexible to visit different teaching modules, after discussing this with their supervisor and thesis advisory committee.

(2) A "day equivalent" factor has been established and the program aims for a minimum of 60 day equivalents over the doctoral project period. A report about the courses taken and "day equivalents" achieved during the year should be provided for the TAC meetings. A signed copy should be handed in to the coordinator.

(3) The major elements of the curriculum include:

a. *Initial training phase*

Before the actual start of the doctoral project or accompanying it, the doctoral researchers are asked to improve their skills if necessary. The doctoral researchers are also encouraged to do rotations in the participating institutions, preferably in the respective other location to become familiar with the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology, its members, and laboratories.

b. *Lectures and seminars*

*(1 day equivalent for a lecture, seminar or journal club per semester)*

The lectures and seminars serve to sharpen the doctoral researcher's conceptual understanding of specific topics in evolutionary biology.

This will be complemented by participation in the ongoing group seminars and institutional literature club.

c. *Practical courses*

*(5 day equivalents per week)*

The practical courses will provide an opportunity for the doctoral researchers to learn specific techniques.

d. *Lab exchanges*

*(5 day equivalents per week)*

These offer doctoral researchers the option to get an insight into another project or a new technique. They will be organized on an individual basis between doctoral researchers who are interested in this.

e. *Soft skill workshops and courses*

*(1 day equivalent per day)*

These cover topics like presentation skills, grant writing, paper writing, teamwork, time management or job application. They will be coordinated by the Graduate

Center of the University or the coordinator of the IMPRS. Each doctoral researcher is recommended to visit at least three different such courses.

*f. Retreats*

*(2 day equivalents per retreat)*

IMPRS doctoral researchers organize one retreat per year that is mandatory for all doctoral researchers. Faculty and teaching staff as well as guest speakers will also be included in the program.

*g. Organization of a yearly workshop/conference*

*(5 day equivalents for working in the organization committee)*

The IMPRS doctoral researchers are invited to organize a small conference or workshop once per year. The IMPRS can fund these events on request. It is aimed to invite international speakers who give lectures (and coaching modules if possible). Each doctoral researcher of the school should participate at least once in the organization committee.

*h. Conference visits*

*(4 day equivalents for preparing the poster or talk)*

Funding from the IMPRS is possible for visiting international conferences, conditional on presenting a poster or a talk.

#### **§ 4 Funding**

(1) The best candidates who applied for and passed the IMPRS selection procedure have qualified for a three and a half years period of funding by the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology. Third party funding is possible.

Doctoral researchers starting with a working contract in accordance with TvöD or TV-L (Collective Wage Agreement for the Civil Service) receive at least 65% of Pay Group13 during the entire period of their education.

Doctoral researchers who start with a six-month training phase receive a tax-free stipend (basic amount of 1,365 €/month plus 103 €/month “Sachkostenzuschuss”). Furthermore, a health insurance subsidy of max 100 € is paid if the grantees choose a comprehensive health insurance cover. Stipend holders who are parents

will be granted a monthly children's allowance of 400 € for the first child and 100 € for every further child.

IMPRS doctoral researchers at Kiel University can spend up to 5.000 € per year for research purposes. All additional research expenses will be covered by institutional funds or third-party funds.

(2) IMPRS funding will last for a maximum period of three and a half years (stipend plus funding contract). If an extension of this time is needed, further financing of the doctoral researcher is the supervisor's responsibility. This also means that all faculty members accepting a doctoral researcher are clearly expected to ensure the funds required for a possible prolongation of her/his doctoral project.

An extension of the three year's IMPRS funding contract can exceptionally be granted for family reasons (e.g., birth of a child), longer periods of sickness or in very specific cases to be discussed by the thesis advisory committee and the IMPRS faculty.

(3) Depending on the financial situation of the graduate school, all IMPRS doctoral researchers are entitled to get funding for visiting international conferences, workshops, summer schools etc., conditional on presenting a poster or a talk or participating actively. Funding possibilities will be advertised. Only travelling, housing and fees for the conference and/or workshop can be paid by the IMPRS. Approval by the supervisor and the spokesperson of the IMPRS is necessary.

## **§ 5 Scientific results and publication**

By law, all scientific results (e.g., original lab-books) have to be stored for ten years in the labs and are lab-property. Only copies for private documentation may leave the labs. All results should be published following the Max Planck Society's rules of good scientific practice. Furthermore, the IMPRS has to be mentioned with its full name in the acknowledgements of all publications, in which IMPRS doctoral researchers (both tracks) contributed.

If the doctoral researcher does not have the time to finish experiments (and possible publication work), the direct supervisor may ask someone else to finish

the work. This third person might gain the right of first authorship depending on how much work still needs to be done.

All documents that are leaving the lab such as grant proposals, manuscripts (and also revisions of manuscripts) as well as abstracts for conferences have to be approved by the direct supervisor prior to leaving the lab.

With their signature, both the doctoral researcher and her/his supervisor agree to this agreement of the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology.

Date

Signature doctoral researcher

Signature direct supervisor

