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 Evolbio), the Christian Albrechts University of Kiel (CAU) and the Geomar in 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 PhD program

(1)

All participating students will be eligible to receive their PhD degrees from Kiel University, following the official guidelines of the Math. Nat. Faculty (Promotionsordnung) 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.

All students are obligated to register online as doctoral candidate with the CAU. 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.

Furthermore, all students are compelled to register their PhD project with the Mathematics and Natural Sciences Faculty and with this enter the list of dissertations of the Faculty.
It is recommended that the students of the IMPRS are enrolled as doctoral students at the CAU.
The PhD work should be completed within three years by students entering with a Master or Diploma degree. 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)
The graduate program consists of a teaching curriculum and the PhD thesis. Both should be discussed with and guided by the direct supervisor and a thesis committee.

a. teaching program: complementation of the skills and experience of the student
b. PhD thesis: independently compiled scientific output of the PhD work. It follows the official guidelines of the Math. Nat. Faculty (Promotionsordnung) 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 her/his PhD work.
d. Thesis committee: committee of at least three (senior) scientists who will guide the PhD student in all aspects of her/his PhD work 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 PhD thesis

(1)
Once admitted, the doctoral fellow will work closely with her/his direct

supervisor on finding a PhD topic. Besides the guidance from their direct advisor, students are also supervised and mentored by a thesis committee. This committee consists of the thesis advisor 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. It should be formed within the first 3 months and its members are jointly elected by the student and her/his direct supervisor. The committee should meet for the first time after 6 months, further meetings should take place at least once per year. The purpose of meetings with a thesis committee is to guide and advise the PhD student in all aspects and development of her/his PhD work and to monitor the student's work progress. In addition, they are also intended to make suggestions for participating in specific teaching modules that should complement the skills of the candidate and to assist the student in all aspects of career planning and networking.

(2)

Within 6 months of admission, the student should have completed a written thesis proposal. The PhD 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 committee in good time before the meeting will be held. At this meeting, the student will present her/his 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 student before the main practical work is done.

(3)

The second thesis committee meeting has to be called by the student after 12 months of PhD work. The student will present her/his 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 committee members at this meeting is essential for the student to continue in the program.
Thereafter, thesis committee meetings should be called by the student at least once a year as described above. If an extension of the PhD work is needed, additional thesis committee meetings should take place.
During each of the meetings, the student should get the possibility to talk to the members of the steering committee without the presence of the direct supervisor and vice versa.
The student and the thesis committee members are obliged to document their meetings as well as the courses taken and day equivalents achieved briefly to the program coordinator using standard forms.
More details can be found in the TAC checklist.
(4)
The thesis committee members are asked to actively collaborate with the student, e.g., to read and comment on drafts of manuscripts.
(5)
The thesis committee members are not necessarily the opponents during the thesis defense.
(6) If potential problems should evolve between the student and the supervisor, both parts are encouraged to address the thesis committee, which will try to solve it.

§ 3

Additional curriculum

(1)
Besides their own scientific research culminating in the PhD thesis, the students are obliged to complete an additional training program. It has been designed to complement the skills and experience that the students already have. The additional curriculum is individually tailored to the student's specific

demands. The students are flexible to visit different teaching modules, after discussing this with their supervisor and thesis committee.

(2)

A "day equivalent" factor has been established and the students should achieve a minimum of 60 day equivalents over the three-year PhD period. A report about the courses taken and “day equivalents” achieved during the year should be provided for the thesis committee meetings. A signed copy should be handed in to the coordinator.

(3)

The major elements of the curriculum include:

a. Rotations – are not part of the PhD time

These are two blocks of six weeks in which a small project should be completed. The rotations are taken consecutively before the start of the thesis and should be done in two of the participating institutions, preferably also in both locations (Kiel and Plön). The rotations are primarily meant to get newly recruited candidates to become familiar with the IMPRS, its members, laboratories and locations. Furthermore, it is a short training phase before the start of the PhD project.

b. Lectures and seminars

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

The lectures and seminars serve to sharpen the student'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 students to learn specific techniques.

d. Lab exchanges

(5 day equivalents per week)

These are meant to offer students the option to get an insight into another project or a new technique. They will be organized on an individual basis between students 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 student is recommended to visit at least three different such courses.

f. Retreats

(2 day equivalents per retreat)

The graduate school meaning mainly the students will organize one retreat per year that includes all faculty, teaching staff and students. Students and parts of the faculty will present their projects in short talks and/or posters. Two guest speakers will be invited and will serve as opponents for the students.

g. Organization of a yearly workshop/conference

(5 day equivalents for working in the organization committee)

The IMPRS students 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 student 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 for visiting international conferences, conditional on presenting a poster or a talk, is possible.

§ 4

Funding

(1)

The best students who applied for and passed the IMPRS selection procedure have qualified for a 3-years period of funding by the IMPRS. Third party funding is possible. Students working at the MPI or the Geomar receive a working contract according the TvöD (Collective Wage Agreement for the Civil Service) of at least 50% during the entire period of their education. Students working at the CAU receive a tax-free stipend with the 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.

Track I students at the MPI and the university can spend 5.000€ per year for research expenses. All additional research expenses will be covered by institutional funds or third party funds.

(2)

IMPRS funding will last for a period of three years. If an extension of this time is needed, further financing of the student is the supervisor’s responsibility. This also means that all faculty members accepting a PhD student are clearly expected to ensure the funds required for a possible prolongation of the student’s stipend.

An extension of the funding provided by the IMPRS (and thus an exception to the above 3-year PhD period) is only possible for family reasons (eg birth of a child), longer periods of sickness or in very specific cases to be discussed by the thesis committee and the IMPRS faculty.

(3)

Depending on the financial situation of the graduate school, all IMPRS students 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 steering committee 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 students (both tracks) contributed.

If the student 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 PhD student and her/his supervisor agree to this agreement of the IMPRS for Evolutionary Biology.

Date

Signature PhD student

Signature Direct supervisor