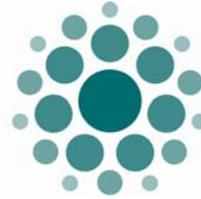


International Max Planck  
Research School  
for Organismal Biology



**Guidelines for the PhD Advisory Committee (PAC) of the  
International Max Planck Research School  
for Organismal Biology**

***Preface***

The International Max Planck Research School (IMPRS) for Organismal Biology is a close cooperation between the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology (MPIO) and the Department of Biology at the University of Konstanz (U KN). Its aim is to provide first-class training and education for outstanding doctoral students from all over the world in a stimulating research environment. This competitive doctoral program will provide its fellows with an excellent starting platform for a successful career in the fields of animal behavior, ecology, evolution, physiology, and neurobiology. In addition to their primary supervisors, students can gain academic supervision, guidance and support from other senior scientists through a PhD Advisory Committee (from here on referred to as PAC).

**§1**

***PAC Committee Composition***

- (1) Besides the direct supervisor, each doctoral student needs to have a PAC who will guide the doctoral student in all aspects of her/his PhD work.
- (2) The PAC shall consist of the direct supervisor for the doctoral thesis and at least two other senior scientists without affiliation/dependence to the PhD student's lab and, preferably, from an institute other than the direct supervisor's institute.
- (3) The members of the PAC are jointly elected by the doctoral student and her / his direct supervisor.
- (4) The composition of the PAC may change during the course of the project for professional or non-professional reasons, upon the mutual consent of those involved. In the case of conflicts, the coordinator and board shall mediate.

## **§2**

### ***PAC responsibilities***

- (1) The PAC exists to assist the doctoral student by monitoring the pace and progress of the student's work and advising the student regarding the development of the research project, hereby complementing the role of the student's direct supervisor.
- (2) The PAC can (and is encouraged to) recommend changes to a student's proposal, evaluate the progress with regard to the potential for publication, and may also recommend a timeline for accomplishing defined goals necessary for completing the thesis research in time.
- (3) PAC members are asked to actively collaborate with the student, e.g., to read and comment on drafts of manuscripts.
- (4) In addition, PAC members are also intended to assist the student in all aspects of career planning, professional development and networking.
- (5) Members of the PAC may eventually mediate discussions and resolve conflicts if the doctoral candidate and the primary advisor disagree on essential aspects of the project or its supervision.
- (6) PAC members should be willing to remain in the PAC for the duration of the student's PhD project, when possible, and be also available to the PhD student for one-on-one consultations.

## **§3**

### ***PAC procedures***

- (1) The PAC should be formed within the first 3 months and be notified to the coordinator of the IMPRS for Organismal Biology once determined.
- (2) The PAC should meet for the first time after 6 months. The second PAC meeting has to be called by the student latest after 12 months of PhD work. Thereafter, PAC meetings should be called by the student at least once a year. Independent of the expected schedule, PAC members can be approached at any time, both by the student and the supervisor, if their advice and input is requested.
- (3) During the PAC meetings, the doctoral student should also have the opportunity for an interchange with the other PAC members without the main supervisor.
- (4) First PAC meeting:  
Within 6 months of admission, the student should have completed a written thesis proposal using the IMPRS PhD proposal form. This PhD proposal should clearly develop the research questions based on a detailed overview of the recent research in this specific area. Furthermore, a methods section on

how to address the research questions, possible results and their implications for recent research in this area, and a timeline with defined milestones are mandatory. A preliminary program for the additional curriculum, tailored to fit this research program, should also be presented in the proposal. This proposal will be sent to all PAC members, and two weeks later a major PAC meeting will be held. At this meeting, all committee members will have read the proposal in detail and will discuss the proposed thesis work in great detail, the main aim being to provide critical and constructive feedback to the student before the main practical work is done.

(5) Further PAC meetings:

The second PAC meeting has to be called for by the student (and/or the advisor) after 12 months of PhD work. The student will present her/his research progress. A positive evaluation by the PAC members at this meeting is essential for the student to continue in the program. Thereafter, PAC meetings should be held at least once a year.

(6) Prior to each meeting the student will send a brief progress report to each committee member, and give a short (10 min) presentation of the activities and achieved and missed goals during the reporting phase at the meeting itself. The research and additional curriculum schedule for the next period should also be planned / adjusted during these meetings. The student and the PAC members are obliged to document their meetings briefly to the program coordinator using the IMPRS PAC meeting minutes form.

(7) It is the student's responsibility to invite the PAC members, arrange PAC meetings and provide the IMPRS coordinator's office with copies of the signed PAC meeting minutes in a timely fashion.

(8) The meetings do not serve as an examination of the student, but as an evaluation and assessment of the student's work and a scientific support to the student.

## **§6**

### ***PAC meeting minutes***

(1) After each PAC meeting the minutes must be completed within a few days following the PAC meeting, and sent to all PAC members for review. Once approved by the PAC members the same should be signed and a copy sent to all participants and the IMPRS coordinator's office.

(2) The length should be concise yet informative and contain the following sections:

- Achieved goals in reporting phase
- Missed goals, weaknesses

- What was proposed to solve these problems?
  - Adjusted project and financial time line
  - Other comments, suggestions
  - Milestones until next meeting
  - Date of next meeting
- (3) The PAC meeting minutes should serve as a reference for the student and the PAC in the following PAC meetings, in order to better track the progress of the student and to adjust the project outline to the financed period.
- (4) In addition, regular and complete PAC meeting minutes are an essential requirement before applying to any financial support by the IMPRS.

## **§7**

### ***Exceptions***

- (1) Exceptions to any of the aforementioned regulations can be discussed with the IMPRS coordinator. When necessary, issues may be discussed with the IMPRS board members.

## **§8**

### ***Resolution of disputes***

- (1) Scientific conflicts of opinion may be discussed and resolved within the PAC. Members from different groups within and outside the IMPRS shall guarantee a balanced composition of experts in the respective area.
- (2) In case of any other disputes or conflicts, the doctoral candidates are encouraged to approach the IMPRS board members or the coordinator. Also, the Academic Staff Development of the U KN offers free counseling and coaching in English and German for doctoral candidates.
- (3) The ombudsperson of U KN and/or MPIO may be contacted in cases of scientific misconduct.

With their signature, the PhD fellow and her/his PAC members agree to the agreement of the IMPRS for Organismal Biology.

Date

Name + Signature PhD Student

Name + Signature Direct Supervisor

Name + Signature PAC members