

Max Planck PhDnet Statutes

– Ratified at the 22nd General Meeting on October 11, 2023 –

Preamble

The doctoral researchers within the Max Planck Society (MPS) agree to establish a network in order to improve interdisciplinary cooperation, to optimize the doctoral researchers' education, scientific exchange, and to strengthen academic solidarity. A doctoral researcher (hereafter MPS-PhD, or MPG-Doktorand/in) is a junior scientist affiliated with an institute of the MPS by means of a contractual relationship (e.g. employment, scholarship, or guest contract with an institute) and who is currently working towards a doctoral degree. Every MP Institute or research institution, which is entitled to elect a scientific staff representative, is also entitled to elect an external PhD representative. The PhDnet is informed about new institutes or affiliations by the General Administration (GA) or by the Sections of the Scientific Council.

1 Name

The name of the network is "Max Planck PhDnet". For German-speaking target audiences, the designation "Promovierendennetzwerk der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft" can be appended to the name.

2 Language

The working language of the network is English.

3 Aims

The network's main aims are to improve the qualification of all MPS-PhDs and to identify and address concerns common to MPS-PhDs across different institutes.

3.1 Improve qualification of MPS-PhDs

To improve the qualification of MPS-PhDs, the PhDnet

- organizes interdisciplinary meetings,
- organizes an annual General Meeting, and
- organizes and funds seminars.

To this end, the PhDnet brings together MPS-PhDs from different institutes in workshops, meetings and seminars as organized by its various Working Groups.

3.2 Identify and address collective concerns

MPS-PhDs at different institutes often find themselves confronted with similar issues, or with problems of such a nature, that individual institute representatives alone cannot solve them.

To counteract this, the PhDnet aims to

- Facilitate the recognition, discussion, and solving of issues recurring at multiple institutes through the central and regional organs of PhDnet, and
- Represent all MPS-PhDs towards the MPS Administrative Headquarters (Generalverwaltung), the MPS President as well as to external parties through the Steering group and especially through the Spokesperson of the PhDnet.

4 Participation

All MPS-PhDs are invited to contribute to all PhDnet activities, either at the General Meeting, through the Working Groups or at their institutes. All MPS-PhDs are eligible to hold PhDnet offices at all levels.

5 Organizational structure and officers

The structure of PhDnet is stratified across three levels: central, regional, and local. At the central level, the Steering Group broadly coordinates the entire PhDnet and interacts with entities outside PhDnet. At the regional level, MPS-PhDs across multiple neighbouring institutes come together in hubs for social and professional activities. At the local level, MPS-PhDs within each institute are represented, most directly, by Internal PhD Representatives and an External PhD Representative.

PhDnet officers consist of: Steering Group members, Working Group Leaders, Regional Hub Coordinators, and External PhD Representatives.

5.1 General Assembly and General Meeting

Once every year PhDnet holds a General Meeting to bring together all the officers and other interested MPS-PhDs. At the General Meeting, the General Assembly determines the network's general strategic development and holds elections for its Steering Group members and Working Group Leaders (§6). All MPS-PhDs may attend the General Meeting; other guests must be approved and invited by the Steering Group and may not join the General Assembly in voting. Concretely, the General Assembly consists of all MPS-PhDs who are present at the General Meeting. The date of the General Meeting, must be announced at least six weeks in advance, using the PhDnet's official channels. The General Meeting must end no later than 30 November. Minutes of the General Meeting are to be published on the PhDnet's official channels no later than eight weeks after the General Meeting has concluded. These minutes include the annual reports of the Steering Group, the Deputy Spokesperson, the Working Groups, and the Hub Coordinators.

The MPS-PhDs of each institute shall send one Delegate to the General Meeting to vote on their behalf (§6.1). Other members of the General Assembly vote only in minor votes (§6.2). The Delegate should be the External PhD Representative of the institute, but in case the External PhD Representative cannot attend the General Meeting, they may appoint, as a proxy, one MPS-PhD from their institute to serve as the Delegate.

5.2 Central structure and officers

5.2.1 Steering Group

The Steering Group is responsible for the overall development of the PhDnet according to the resolutions of the General Assembly. The Steering Group consists of the Spokesperson, the three Section Representatives, the Deputy Spokesperson, and the General Secretary. In addition to the fixed responsibilities of each office, the Steering Group members adopt responsibilities for other organs: each Working Group and Regional Hub is assigned a member of the Steering Group to oversee it.

5.2.2 Spokesperson

The Spokesperson represents and manages the PhDnet and heads the Steering Group. The Spokesperson is responsible for communication within the network as well as with external parties, in particular relations with the President and other official organs of the MPS. The Spokesperson shall report on the work of the Steering Group in front of the General Assembly during the following General Meeting, near the end of the term.

The Spokesperson is responsible for the representation of the PhDnet within N^2 , the network of networks.

5.2.3 Deputy Spokesperson

The Deputy Spokesperson takes on the responsibilities of the Spokesperson when the Spokesperson is temporarily unable to act. In case the Spokesperson is unable to complete the term of office, the Deputy Spokesperson becomes the new Spokesperson and a new Deputy Spokesperson has to be selected as defined in §5.5.

Next to the Spokesperson, the Deputy Spokesperson is responsible for the representation of the PhDnet within N^2 , the network of networks.

The Deputy Spokesperson also acts as Financial Officer (Zeichnungsbefugte/r), is responsible for the PhDnet's funds and reports on their use at the General Meeting. Only the Deputy Spokesperson is authorized to sign payments from the PhDnet's budget. The name of the Deputy Spokesperson must be communicated to the MPS Administrative Headquarters (Generalverwaltung) within four weeks after the General Meeting has concluded. The Deputy Spokesperson reports every transaction to the Spokesperson in a timely manner and provides a final statement of account to the Spokesperson and the succeeding Deputy Spokesperson at the end of the term.

5.2.4 Section Representatives

The three Section Representatives represent the diverse scientific disciplines of MPS-PhDs in the respective MPS sections: Biology and Medicine (BM); Chemistry, Physics and Technology (CPT); and Human Sciences (HS). The Section Representatives are the primary points of contact in the Steering Group for PhD Representatives at their constituent institutes and should thus maintain contact with those Representatives.

5.2.5 General Secretary

The General Secretary oversees the administrative tasks of the central level of PhDnet, including the elections of local PhD Representatives. For assistance with these tasks, the General Secretary leads the Secretary Group formed in the General Assembly. However, unlike other Working Group Leaders, the General Secretary is elected by the Delegates of the General Assembly as part of the Steering Group.

5.2.6 Working Groups

The Working Groups are essential to the PhDnet's mission, as they provide the principal platform for the network's day-to-day activities. They are formed among the members of the General Assembly during the General Meeting, and each Group has a single Leader. Moreover, during the term, each Working Group Leader may add additional MPS-PhDs members at any time. The Working Group Leaders report regularly to the Steering Group. The initial communication between the GA and the Working Groups is carried out via the Steering Group, as each Working Group is assigned to one member of the Steering Group.

The following five Working Groups are permanently established as the core Working Groups of the PhDnet:

- General Meeting Working Group (organizing the annual General Meeting)
- Secretary Working Group (administering and supporting the network)
- Web Working Group (designing and maintaining the PhDnet's web presence).
- Equal Opportunities Working Group (fostering the similar treatment of people, unhampered by artificial barriers, prejudices or preferences)
- Offspring Working Group
- Survey Working Group
- Open Science Working Group
- Social Media Working Group

Upon a successful motion proposed by the Spokesperson, the General Assembly can establish additional Working Groups for a one-year term. Other successfully established Working Groups are published and listed on the official PhDnet website.

5.3 Regional structure and officers

5.3.1 Regional Hubs

In order to facilitate social and professional activities of PhDnet, most institutes belong to a Regional Hub that contains all neighbouring institutes in the geographic region. The members of a Hub consist of all MPS-PhDs affiliated with an institute belonging to that Hub. Each institute belongs to at most one Regional Hub, according to the city where the institute resides.

The Steering Group maintains a list of all Regional Hubs on the PhDnet website. The MPS-PhDs of neighbouring institutes should convene at the General Meeting in order to form new Regional Hubs. Additionally, new Hubs may be formed at any time upon confirmation and announcement by the Steering Group.

5.3.2 Hub Coordinators

The Hub Coordinator of a Regional Hub coordinates the activities of that Hub, such as meetings and other social events for the MPS-PhDs in the Hub's institutes. Additionally, the Hub Coordinator acts as the Steering Group's main point of contact for the Hub and should interact with them regularly. The attending members of the Hub should convene at the General Meeting in order to determine a Coordinator. However, as a non-representative position, Hub Coordinators may be decided by the members of the respective Hub at any time.

5.4 Local structure and officers

5.4.1 Internal PhD Representatives

The MPS-PhDs affiliated with an institute elect Internal PhD Representatives for their institute as their direct representatives in the institute. Those MPS-PhDs are the local constituents of the elected Internal PhD Representatives for that institute. Internal PhD Representatives play a crucial role in the representation of MPS-PhDs at their institute. An institute's Internal PhD Representatives maintain cohesion of their local constituents and represent the interests of those constituents to the institute's management and administration. Concretely, Internal PhD Representatives convene regular meetings of the MPS-PhDs at their institutes; they assist with elections and campaigning at the institutes; they look for and create opportunities to improve doctoral training conditions for their constituents; and they keep in touch with their institute's directors, administration, academic staff member in the scientific council, ombudsperson, Promotionsbeauftragte/r, and works council (Betriebsrat).

5.4.2 External PhD Representative

The MPS-PhDs affiliated with an institute additionally elect a single External PhD Representative to serve as their representative to the central level of PhDnet. Whereas the Internal PhD Representatives act entirely within their institutes, the External PhD Representative acts within PhDnet, for example, by reporting to their Section Representative and by voting as a Delegate at the General Meeting on behalf of their institute. The External PhD Representative may or may not be one of the Internal PhD Representatives of the institute.

5.5 Terms of office

For all officers at the central level, the term of office begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December each year, but no sooner than successors have been elected. For Hub Coordinators, the term of office is to be decided by the members of the respective Hub. For External PhD Representatives, the term of office is described in full detail in Appendix A, and for Internal PhD Representatives, the term of office is to be determined locally.

Except for the Spokesperson, if a member of the Steering Group is unable to complete the term of office, the remaining members of the Steering Group should select a replacement within one month and communicate this to the PhDnet through the PhDnet's official channels; the procedure in the case of the Spokesperson is described in §5.2.3. If a Hub Coordinator is unable to complete the term of office, the PhD Representatives at the Hub's institutes should determine a replacement within one month and communicate this to the Steering Group. The procedure in the case of PhD Representatives is described in full detail in Appendix A. All PhDnet officers should summarize their experiences in writing for their successors in order to ensure smooth transitions and efficient knowledge management. The departing Steering Group instructs the newly elected Steering Group between the election of the new Steering Group and their assumption of office. At least one member of the outgoing Steering Group should be available to the succeeding Steering Group as a consultant for the first half of their term.

6 Voting and elections

Various forms of voting and election take place at the different levels of PhDnet.

At the local level, voting occurs within each institute for the election of Internal and External PhD Representatives. The election of Internal PhD Representatives is to be determined locally, whereas the election of External PhD Representatives is described in full detail in Appendix A. In order to facilitate the organization of elections across all institutes, elections for External PhD Representatives should generally be held in between beginning of March and end of August each year. This time period ensures sufficient preparation time before the General Meeting takes place.

At the central level, voting occurs at the General Meeting according to two goals. First, to maintain democratic legitimacy, certain critical votes should be reserved for Delegates only. Second, to encourage active participation of everyone at the General meeting, less critical votes should be open to all members of the General Assembly. All elections can be held electronically. Voting at the General Meeting is categorized into major voting and minor voting respectively.

6.1 Major voting

Major voting consists of the elections of Steering Group members and votes to ratify new drafts of these statutes. Only Delegates may participate in major voting, for which each Delegate is allocated a ballot. Major voting requires a quorum: the Delegates of a majority of the institutes of the MPS must be present.

6.1.1 Election of Steering Group members

The elections of the Spokesperson, Deputy Spokesperson and General Secretary require an absolute majority of Delegates. The elections of the three Section Representatives, however, require an absolute majority of Delegates among the institutes in the respective section. In the case that no candidate receives an absolute majority, a run-off vote between the two candidates with the highest number of votes will be held. If the run-off vote is also tied, the voting for this position will be repeated. If there is only a single candidate for any position, the ballot shall contain the options "Yes" or "No" and the candidate shall be elected only in the case of a majority of "Yes" votes. The elections for the Steering Group should be held preferably on the second day of the general meeting, before the working group leaders are elected. Additional rules for the election of Spokesperson, Deputy Spokesperson and Section Representatives follow.

6.1.2 Rules for electing Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson

Candidates nominated for Spokesperson or Deputy Spokesperson can also be nominated for a Section Representative position, but cannot be elected both Spokesperson and Section Representative. Hence, a new Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson must be found before Section Representatives can be elected.[]

6.1.3 Rules for electing Section Representatives

In case not all three Section Representative positions can be filled, upon a successful motion proposed by the Spokesperson, the General Assembly can hold an additional round of voting in which the sectional restrictions on candidates and electorate are lifted, to the effect that any vote can be cast for any candidate so that all six seats on the Steering Group may be filled. A candidate thus elected will be Steering Group member at large. If a Working Group Leader is elected Section Representative, he or she is no longer Working Group Leader and the Working Group shall determine a new Leader before the end of the General Meeting.

6.1.4 Ratification of new statutes

These statutes may be replaced by a draft of new statutes upon a ratification vote. The draft of new statutes must have been sent to the MPS-PhDs of all institutes not later than two weeks prior to the first day of the General Meeting. The draft may be further amended at the General Meeting, before ratification, by motions proposed by members of the General Assembly. The ratification vote to replace these statutes with the (possibly amended) draft requires a two-thirds majority of the “Yes” votes of Delegates. In the case of a successful vote, these statutes are replaced with the (possibly amended) draft and a record of the change must be appended.

6.2 Minor voting

Minor voting consists of votes on motions proposed by the General Assembly and the election of Working Group Leaders. All members of the General Assembly are eligible to participate in minor voting. Minor voting may be conducted by voice or show-of-hands vote.

6.2.1 Votes on motions

At the discretion of the Steering Group, an immediate minor vote may be taken on a motion proposed by a member of the General Assembly. A successful motion requires a simple majority of the votes of all members of the General Assembly present, in which case the motion must be enacted. A motion may not be used to circumvent major voting.

6.2.2 Election of Working Group Leaders

Except for the Secretary Group, the members of each Working Group conduct a minor vote to elect that Group’s Leader. Each election requires a simple majority of the votes of the Group’s members. Working group leaders shall be elected after the successful election of the Steering group. No Steering group member is eligible to be elected as a working group leader.

7 Entry into force

These statutes enter into force on the day after they have been published on the PhDnet website (www.phdnet.mpg.de), having previously been accepted by the Delegates in the General Assembly and signed by a majority of Steering Group members. negotiated by the Preparing Committee, on August 5, 2005 modified and accepted on November 9, 2007 modified and accepted on October 30, 2009 modified and accepted on October 26, 2011 modified and accepted on November 7, 2014 modified and accepted on November 23, 2015 modified and accepted on November 9, 2016

Appendix A: Election procedure for External PhD Representatives

A.1 Election of PhD Representatives

At every MP Institute or research institution, which is entitled to elect a scientific staff representative, an External PhD Representative there associated shall be elected for a period of one year. In the following, the “day of election” always refers to the last day of election, for elections being held on multiple days.

A.2 Voting rights and eligibility for office

1. All MPS-PhDs (defined in the preamble) affiliated with an Institute have the right to elect the External PhD Representative at this Institute.
2. MPS-PhDs who are entitled to vote are eligible to stand for election.
3. MPS-PhDs who are affiliated with more than one MP Institute have to decide before the election period at which Institute they want to be eligible to vote and stand for election.

A.3 Election

A3.1 Election Committee

1. The election will be prepared for and conducted by an Election Committee which consists of at least two members; all members must be eligible to vote. These members must be announced to those eligible to vote upon formation of the Committee. These members of the Election Committee forfeit their eligibility to stand for election.

2. The Committee, supported by the Institute management, must prepare a list of those who are eligible to vote. The Election Committee will decide upon any objections to the accuracy of the list.
3. The Committee should determine a procedure for voting remotely in order to collect votes from those eligible voters unable to participate in the vote on the day of election.

A.3.2 Election procedure

In institutes with less than 10 PhDs an alternative election procedure can be applied in accordance with the Steering group. Otherwise, the following procedure applies:

1. The Election Committee must declare the election not less than two weeks prior to the first day of the election to all those eligible to vote. The election declaration must contain:
 1. the place and date(s) of the election,
 2. a procedure for voting remotely, when needed,
 3. a copy of this election procedure.
2. The Committee must call for candidates who wish to stand for election not less than two weeks prior to the first day of the election to all those eligible to vote. This can be combined with A.3.2.1.
3. The Committee will publish a final list of candidates no later than one week prior to the election date.
4. The Committee must supervise the due and proper casting of votes (see A.3.3) and must count the votes. Alternatively, the Committee can ask the secretary group to take this task over.
5. The Committee must announce the result of the election immediately and report it to the General Secretary (A.6).

A.3.3 Voting procedure

1. Voters have only one vote to give. The vote is cast by marking a cross against one of the names listed on the ballot. If there is only one candidate standing for the election, the ballot must include the alternatives "Yes", "No", and "Abstention". Ballots on which more than one name is crossed or which contain additional marks will be invalid.
2. Voters not present on the day(s) of the election may vote remotely in accordance with the election declaration. When the casting of votes is concluded, the Election Committee must add the votes received remotely, ensuring that no remote voter already cast a vote as in paragraph 1.
3. The election requires a quorum at all rounds of voting: at least 50% of eligible voters must participate in the election. If no quorum is reached, the election shall be invalid. []
4. If only a single MPS-PhD stands as a candidate they shall be elected if they receive more than 50% "Yes" votes among valid votes cast. Otherwise the election shall be invalid
5. If more than one MPS-PhD stand as candidates, the candidate which receives more than 50% of valid votes cast shall be elected. Otherwise, the voting procedure shall be repeated.
6. In case the voting procedure has to be repeated, a second round of voting will take place with a maximum of two candidates, decided by the Election Committee. The candidates have to be announced before the second round of voting. Otherwise, the deadlines stated in A3.2 do not need to be complied with. If no candidate receives more than 50% of eligible vote in the second round of voting, the election shall be invalid.
7. In case of an invalid election, the whole election procedure has to be repeated at a later date. All deadlines and procedures described in A3.2 need to be complied with.
8. An electronic record must be kept of each election. This record must in particular state:
 1. the name of the institute
 2. the name of the election committee members,
 3. the number of people eligible to vote,
 4. the number of votes cast per candidate,
 5. the number of invalid votes, and
 6. if the election was valid, a statement of acceptance signed by the elected candidate, with start of term.

A.4 Electronic voting

With due consideration to the interests of confidentiality and in compliance with the specified deadlines, the election may be prepared for and conducted (A.3) by suitable electronic means. The arrangements contained in A.3 are to be applied accordingly.

A.5 Contesting an election

A challenge to an election shall be resolved by the Election Committee and Steering Group. Any such challenge by a person eligible to vote must be presented electronically no later than two weeks following the day of the election for the attention of a member of the Election Committee and the General Secretary.

A.6 Reporting the election to the General Secretary

The elected candidate for the Institutes must be reported as the External PhD Representative to the General Secretary (§5.1.5). The Election Committee shall provide the General Secretary with the name, contact information, and official start of term of the Elected Representative and the electronic record of the election procedure (A3.3).

A.7 Term of office

If there is no challenge to the election (A5), the term of office commences the earliest two weeks after the day of election, as determined by the Election Committee, and lasts for one year. As an exception, for the year 2016, all External PhD Representatives elected can start the term of office the day after the election. The outgoing External PhD Representative should be available to the succeeding External PhD Representative as a consultant for the first half of their term.

A.8 Premature withdrawal

1. Should the External PhD Representative withdraw from office prior to the expiry of her or his one-year term of office, a new election must be held at the Institute and the General Secretary must be informed.
2. An elected External PhD Representative prematurely withdraws from office if she or he:
 1. permanently departs the Institute,
 2. temporarily leaves the Institute for a period of more than four months, or
 3. resigns.