
7th PhDnet General Meeting

27-29 November 2008, Bremen

Abbreviated protocol

Thursday, 27 November 2008

Introduction

Introduction to PhDnet

Ian FitzPatrick

Tasks of the PhD representatives

Hermine Wenzlaff

Last year's working groups updates

Questionnaire Group

Development of Questionnaire and Data Development

David Alich (formerly MPI for Demographic Research)

Sabine Schnabel (MPI for Demographic Research)

Coordination Data Analyses & Report:

Sandra Krapf (MPI for Demographic Research)

Data Analysis & Report:

Dorothea Hämmerer (MPI for Human Development)

Axinja Hachfeld (MPI for Human Development)

- Survey carried out between November 2006 and March 2007
- Over 600 Ph.D. students responded: 576 valid cases = 13% of all MPS Ph.D. students (41% CPT, 25% Humanities, 34% BM, 65 institutes), 17 institutes did not respond)

Questionnaire covered questions regarding:

- (A) Ph.D. program
- (B) Motivation for starting a Ph.D. at an MPI
- (C) Ph.D. project: funding, progress, satisfaction etc.
- (D) Supervision: type and quality
- (F) Satisfaction with working conditions
- (E) Ph.D. Net: knowledge about it and evaluation
- (F) University background
- (I) Sociodemographic information

Important result:

Rise of stipends vs. contracts

2005: Stipends MPI 23.3 %, Contracts MPI 61.4 %

2006/07: Stipends MPI 31.5 %, Contracts MPI 54.0%)

More questionnaire results available on wiki internal.

Seminar group

For a list of available seminars – see wiki internal

- 500€a day available for seminars
- IMPRS do not get Phdnet sponsoring for soft skill seminars -> IMPRS students must urge their coordinators to organize this
- More expensive trainings need to be supported from local directors

Web group

Wiki: 153 registered users, 209 uploaded files 1,818 total pages in the database

Mailing List : 267 subscriptions , Open to everyone

<https://listserv.gwdg.de/mailman/listinfo/mpg-phdnet>

Event group

Anna Lena Keller – MPI for Biological Cybernetics, Tübingen (group leader)

Guido Donath, Martin Mücke, Thomas Weiss, Carlos Acevedo-Rocha, Tobias Lenz

3rd interdisciplinary workshop "The Art of Science and the Science of Art"

August 29th - 31st at the Burg Schwaneck near Munich

40 people from 23 MPIs participated

Secretary group

Maike Trenkel - MPI for Physics, Munich (group leader)

Maria Eckholt, Kryssia Aguiluz, Rosalind Skelton, Christian Schröter,

Jan Spoenle, Florian Hauer, Marc Schneider

- Organized mailing lists
- Improved the wiki
- Welcome booklet with infos for new Phd students

Offspring

Franziska Hartung - MPI of Experimental Medicine, Göttingen

Corinna Handschuh, Roberto Kretschmar, Julia Steinbach, Verena Conrad, Silvana Schott (Design)

- 3rd offspring on the wiki, http://www.phdnet.mpg.de/wiki/index.php/Offspring_group

- 4th issue upcoming in 2009 (main topic "Diversity": biodiversity, linguistic diversity, PhD students' diversity)

- Contributions invited, send to jstein@bgc-jena.mpg.de until January 2009

News from the steering committee

Melissa Duhaime – MPI of Marine Microbiology, Bremen
Sören Alsheimer, Ralitsa Angelova, Ian FitzPatrick

A) Response to the article in Science

(Vogel, Max Planck accused of hobbling universities. *SCIENCE* **319**, 396 (2008)
Gretchen Vogel writes about a damaging disconnect between MPIs and universities. The Steering committee wrote an article in defense of the Max Planck Society (Duhaime et al. In Defense of Max Planck. *SCIENCE* **320**, 872 (2008))
→ more info: www.phdnet.mpg.de/documents/PhDnet_response.pdf

B) Connections to other PhD networks:

- Helmholtz Association – Helmholtz Juniors
Others: Leibniz Association, THESIS (<http://www.thesis.de/>, contact with President Marcus Mueller, University Bonn), Eurodoc - “European Council of doctoral candidates and young researchers”

C) Stipends vs. TVöD

Contracts:

- (pre-tax) TVöD salaries are raised by a base amount of 50€ then by another 3.1%, back-date to 1st Jan, 2008
- In Jan 2009, a single special payment of 225€ will be given and the salary increases by another 2.8%
- Maternal leave possible (not only HartzIV as with stipend)

Stipends:

- Stipend base amount is no more than 1000€ (but can be 500€, 800€, etc.)
- Can get additional payments: East 340€, West 365€
- Allowance for books can be +103€/month
- Total possible: 1468€
- GWK determined this amount at end of 2005
- 14 Responses about Stipend Issues:

Stipend Raise: 9 No change: 5

One institute conducted a survey to display need for increase, then wrote a letter to directors asking for the change.

- No gain of "occupational experience" with stipends, in contrast to contracts

Discussion: example cases from different institutes:

- Director moved, raise in stipend in 365€
- Mostly stipends, raise after publishing a paper, other department: raise after PAC meeting (by 100€)
- PhDs get usually stipends, only 1000€ not allowed to work for additional Income (only correcting tests at university, max. 200€)
- Some institutes subsidize health insurance (40-80€, special deal with insurance companies)
- In some fields PhD is still first training → student insurance possible of 60€ with Barmer and TK

- Reason for full contracts for some PhDs: “Mangelfachzulage” for some research areas, some institutes give half contract + “Mangelfachpauschale”
- Some universities differentiate between contract/stipend holders (public transportation)

Conclusions:

- Stipend has to be as high as possible to compensate for legal disadvantages

Other administrative issues:

- In many universities PhD students need to enroll for whole period of studies, collect Credit points, differences due to diversity in "Promotionsordnungen" at Universities/faculties
- Permanent enrollment necessary for foreign students (“Aufenthaltsbewilligung”)
- There will be a shift in payment date (was: beginning of a month; will be: end of a month)

Fundraising (Sören Alsheimer)

Discussion about PhD Advisory Committees (PACs)

Ideas how to make PAC work better:

- A summary of expected work progress from both student and supervisor should be prepared before the meeting, and merged in the meeting
- Some institutes have PAC meetings in the way: supervisor does not attend a part of the meeting, so that supervision can also be discussed
- Dean-like function suggested, someone that has influence on the supervisor should attend (neutral person, that checks whether time schedule is met)
- For IMPRS programs: PAC is mandatory
- MPS intends to maintain option that PhD thesis can be "PhD students' own thing", no PACs enforced
- For some constellations of PAC-members and student it might be better to talk to PAC members one by one

Presentation by Helmholtz Juniors (John Kettler, FZ Jülich)

Helmholtz Gemeinschaft (Helmholtz Society)

15 research centers, 250 institutes, 3500 PhD students, budget 2.4 billion €

independent research centers, 6 key topics (Energy, Earth and Environment, Health, Key Technologies, Structure of Matter, Transport and Space)

Helmholtz-juniors: 2 representatives from each research center

2 spokespersons , Helmholtz-Juniors Wiki, Webpage: <http://www.helmholtzjuniors.de>

Discussion on PhDnet working groups

- Voting: to be continued: offspring, questionnaire group, not to be continued: alumni (MaxNet can do this)
 - Event group renamed to Interdisciplinary Scientific Exchange group
 - New working group: Human Resources/ Law proposed
 - No new/extra working group for PhD network Retreat, summer 2009 (hand voting: 20 votes pro, 21 votes contra the establishment of a new group)
- Anna Lena Keller volunteered as contact person for the networking issues.

Friday 28 November 2008

Discussion of insurance issues: gathering information

- No public health insurance for foreign students that don't have contract for less than 1 year.
 - Liability: students on contract can be made liable for up to 3 monthly salaries for damaged equipment.
 - Occupational Disability Insurance (Berufsunfähigkeitsversicherung)
You are not covered by Berufsunfähigkeitsversicherung for first 3 years (waiting period)
 - Berufsunfähigkeitsversicherung (not able to work in the job you have been trained in) not equal to Erwerbsunfähigkeitsversicherung (not able to work at all)!
- We should make sure that every PhD student gets the same Erwerbsunfähigkeitsversicherung.
Bundesurlaubsgesetz: min. vacation is 20 days (this is what we get)
We as PhD students are not in TvöD.

2 years of PhD (+ extension to three years) is fixed by Bund-Länder-Kommission, nothing that MPS can change

Prof. Schön's presentation

Max Planck Society:

- New MPI in Erlangen (Science of light)
 - 11850 doctoral candidates, post docs and guest scientists
 - MPS 3rd most popular employer in Germany for graduate in the natural sciences
 - MPS involved in 70% of the clusters of excellence and about half of the grad schools
 - 17 Nobel Prize winners since 1948
- >12000 publications in 2003
- MPIs are autonomous: Each MPI
- determines its research topics
 - chooses its research structure (departments/projects)
 - recruits its own personnel
 - manages institute's budget
 - raises own funding
 - determines its forms of cooperation and its partners in Germany and overseas - ensures that it is part of a local networks

Max Planck Digital Library (MPDL)

Career at MPS:

- not entire career path should be spent in MPS, go and come back
 - support of jun. scientists at MPS: substantial scientific freedom, well equipped institutes
- 800 PhD dissertations per year

New initiatives: Max Planck graduate center with University of Mainz

Independent junior research groups:

- giving scientists the skills to take senior scientific positions at universities/in research by giving them the opportunity to conduct scientific work independently at an early stage in their careers

Advancement of outstanding female scientists

- C3 special program
- Program for the advancement of female scientist in management positions
- Same quality of research expected, but not same quantity
- Support of family fathers only on case-to-case basis
- Dual-career problem the most significant

Future action:

- Childcare: Facilities wherever possible, extended hours of care provision, affordable prices, more freedom to use public funding

Discussion with Prof. Schön and Ilka Schiessler

Full version on wiki internal

Questions/comments by PhDnet

Accident/Casualty Insurance (“Unfallversicherung”)

1. Are stipend holders covered by “gesetzliche Unfallversicherung” insurance?

- no, stipend holders are not covered by statutory insurance
- the lawyers and administration of MPS have been and are trying to find a solution
- in case of an accident, please report your case to the PhD representative, who should assist you in contacting the MPS administration. They will try to solve problem on a case-by-case basis.

2. Could you use MPS resources of lawyers and insurance specialists to help us find a way to better make it easier for all PhD students to have equivalent insurance coverage?

Negotiate on behalf of us on a standard private contract option with more coverage for new stipend holders? To be equivalent, this should include:

“Erwerbsunfähigkeitversicherung”, more reasonable money for death and invalidity, hospital stay, re-convalescence.

- No possibility to get into “gesetzliche Unfallversicherung”.
- Last week: we did ask for “Berufsunfähigkeitsversicherung”/ “Erwerbsunfähigkeitsversicherung”, group contract, not paid by MPS, but negotiated by MPS, insurance can be taken with student when he/she leaves MPI (to the same conditions)
- for the understanding of insurance companies you are still students, no specific occupation

MPS working together with 3-4 insurance companies closely, will inform students

MPS lawyers will find gaps that exist in insurance cover, see what can be done

- Stipend holders: might not go for private Erwerbsunfähigkeitsversicherung (expensive, must be maintained when leaving Germany after 3 years)

Putting together persistent information source

- difficult: so many different information sources

- personal book by MPS GV: every institute can access this, with insurance related information
- guide book should be handed to every newcomer (this is a new MPS policy as of two months), is in the progress of being created

*Students often do not get the choice between scholarship and contract.
To whom shall we talk?*

- More difficult when group work is required, lab work (late night requirements by experimental set-up)
- Consequence of independence of institutes, but: PhD students need to be informed (at least)
- Stipend holders have no working obligations.
- Always: stipend holders are not employees

Number of contracts decreasing, number of stipends increasing:

- in last 10 years: 10% increase in permanent positions, 100% increase in flexible positions

Goal: flexibility

More information, also regarding maternity leave of stipend holders required

3. Liability Insurance (Haftpflichtversicherung)

Employee's Liability Insurance (Diensthaftpflicht)

Employer's Liability Insurance – Amtshaftpflichtversicherung

How can we make these situations equivalent for contract and stipends/others? This would mean: stipend holders do not pay for damages done in negligence, and pay only part for damages done with gross negligence.

Is there a possibility to negotiate with outside company to set up a viable (cheap) option for stipend holders to easily acquire liability insurance when they begin?

- general administration is currently negotiating with insurance companies for an offer on private accident insurance that stipend holders that could be bought by stipend holders
- difficult to find unlimited liability insurance, risk of breaking something in the lab is not covered
- Mavista & Hanse Merkur: a private liability insurance comes with health insurance, separate contract with HM possible (very limited coverage)
- MPS GV working on helping us by rewriting stipend guidelines to limit risk: difficulty: research money would be needed to cover damage caused by stipend holders, GWK might not approve
- Number of stipend holders: not a relevant number for insurance companies (high risk, to little revenue)

*Critical mass might be reached when also considering Helmholtz, Leibniz, etc.
Good Idea*

- Rule: stipend holders should not be allowed to work with patients or expensive equipment (3rd party damage, also in every lab co-workers could be damaged)

- Stipend holder not per se prevented from lab work, but should stay away from high-risk situations (mentioned in talk with funding-agencies, said, but not written)
- Currently, common practice is that institutes pay for damages caused by stipend holders, but this cannot be guaranteed.

Increase information flow: majority of PhD that currently do not know this

Written words have been sent to the directors (give a contract when a person should work for the institute as well), theoretically they know how to treat stipend holders, MPS can not enforce this, if things are not followed (MPIs are autonomous)

MPS: standardized information for directors will be made available

4. Post-docs salaries (stipends) now split:

Foreign: 2100-3000 €

German: 1468-1621 €

Is it legal to pay Germans/non-Germans differently? Is this true?

Is such “Inländer” discrimination acceptable by EU law?

Post-PhD, your salary will depend on how much ‘work experience’ you have accumulated. Whose jurisdiction defines ‘work experience’?

Reverse discrimination: EU law: foreigner from EU must be treated at least as well as Germans, not the other way round

- History: Stipend is to cover living expenses, more expensive if you move to Germany and have to build a new existence.
- Stipends of German post docs are planned to be raised to meet increasing cost of living and to have a difference to PhD students
- Next year new numbers (increase up to level of foreign stipend holders)

5. Pregnancy and work. State law prohibits pregnant women to work in labs.

What is official position of MPS on this issue?

If 9 months are taken off for the full term, is this fully added at the end?

- Labs that involve certain risks, talk to doctor and to administration, clarify if there is a risk.

Contract holders:

- You could stay at home as a contract holder, still get some money, contract is prolonged
- Maternity leave (“Mutterschutz”): can stay at home, nursing time: the same regulations as for the period before giving birth apply, contract prolongs by law
- Other option: other work, get an assistant who is doing the lab work

Stipend holders:

- Law is not valid for stipend holders, 6 weeks before and 8 weeks after birth: get paid, but time does not count for duration of stipend, stipend is prolonged by 14 weeks
- You could stay at home and continue later with stipend OR assign a certain person to take over the risky (lab) work
- Do other work, get a bit less stipend, get your stipend prolonged by this time
- Prolongation of contract if childcare is a reason for not finishing in time
- Who decides? The director(s) of the respective MPI

6. *Are there different conditions for PhD students who become fathers that they are not allowed 1-2 days at the time of their child's birth?*

- Father: days off during birth (probably comes from TvöD), normal German labor law says that leave should be granted under special conditions (Trauerfall, Child birth)

7. *It seems that MPI PhD students are now unable to get travel grants from DFG. Has there been a recent development/policy change?*

DFG regards DFG funding as funding option supplementary to MPS funding, will not pay when MPS could

MPS is not in the position to tell DFG what to do, 2 MPS directors are in the board of DFG, that's it.

Limitations in travel funding from MPS:

a) Budget limitations

b) If stipend holder does his/her work in a way that does not go along with the institute direction: only pay partially

8. *Could you negotiate an option (not expensive, acceptable coverage) for students not eligible for statutory health insurance?*

Good conditions for foreign students negotiated, but not for German students

IHC (international health care) group contract from Allianz covers everything without asking for pre-existing illnesses

- is included in list distributed to institute administrations

9. *Some PhD supervisors take credit for work performed by their students, denying students authorship of papers and only mentioning them in footnotes.*

This was raised last year at the PhDnet meeting and Prof. Gruss agreed to actively pursue this issue. The practice is still prevalent among certain. Cases should be reported.

English translations of common forms available at MPS GV.

Prof. Schön stressed that PhDnet input on these issues is helpful in demonstrating a need for action.

Prof. Schön asked for experiences regarding differences to foreign situations

Examples by representatives:

- In US switch of supervisor sometimes easier

- Transition different when coming from a different background, no structural PhD program

- US system: rotation between labs before deciding on a topic/lab

- Designated deans in Netherlands: supervise supervision relationship

- Better (or simply existing) alumni networks in foreign universities

researchGATE Scientific Network

Alexander v. Freyhold-Hünecken

- reMeet -> like doodle, scheduling events
- RestoRY -> deposit files, version management?
- simultaneous access to group discussions, user profiles, several research libraries
- similar abstract search
- resource center: access knowledge of whole community -> vote on relevance
- future applications: publication alert, co-author search (matching relevant people): what am I looking for (skills)? What do I offer?
- job board (if you allow for browsing your profile, jobs can come to you)
- virtual conferencing
- Groups can be made invisible
- lots of privacy settings
- companies will pay for placing job ads and browsing profiles
- transmission via FLASH more secure than with skype type transmission (peer to peer, skype uses your computer for other phone calls)

presentation of scholarz.net

Network associated with the university of Würzburg

Saturday, 29 November 2008

Presentation of the new working groups:

Meeting group

New meeting 2009 in Jena,

Group leader Anna Görner

(http://www.phdnet.mpg.de/wiki/index.php/Meeting_group)

Event group

Leader Nicolas Behr (MPI for Gravitational Physics)

Offspring

Leader: stays Corinna Handschuh (MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology)

Seminar group

Leader Stefan Greif

Questionnaire group

Leader Dorothea Hämmerer (MPI for Human Development)

Web group

Tom Kahle (MPI for Mathematics in the Sciences) & Ivaylo Kostadinov (leader, MPI for Marine Microbiology),

Secretary group

Leader: Alexander Buck (MPI for Quantum Optics)

Legal group

Leader: Clemens Kießig (MPI for Physics)
Collect info and provide it: maintain & update wiki page,
provide pdf with legal info, contact to questionnaire group/ secretary group,
take care of statutes of PhDnet

Election of the new steering committee

Spokesperson

Benjamin Schlager (MPI for Developmental Biology, Tübingen)	4
Leonard Burtscher (IMPRS representative, MPI of Astronomy, Heidelberg)	36

Chem-Phys-Tech-Section

Susannah Burrows (MPI for Chemistry, Mainz)	19
Abstained	1

Biomed-Section

Sandra Schöttner (MPI for Marine Microbiology, Bremen)	20
Benjamin Schlager (MPI for Developmental Biology, Tübingen)	1

Humanities-Section

Axinja Hachfeld (MPI for Human Development, Berlin)	8
Dorit Kliemann (MPI for Human Development, Berlin)	6

Author of the original version: Anna Goerner
This shortened version has been done by the Secretary Group.