



POSTDOC AGREEMENT

Preamble

MPI-AB's vision is to understand and predict animal decision-making in the natural world. By developing and applying emerging technological and analytical approaches, our mission is to reveal the drivers of behavior across temporal, spatial, organizational, and taxonomic scales. To take up this challenge in all its complexity, we bring together a diverse, interdisciplinary team to produce rigorous and reproducible science that is shared openly. In this way, we contribute positively to the global research community and provide scientific training to empower the next generation. We foster a supportive and inclusive work environment that promotes intellectual exchange and productive collaboration¹.

We do this by treating each other with respect, acting honestly, ethically, and with integrity, and by communicating transparently and respectfully both internally and externally. These are the core values of the Max Planck Society². All members of the MPI-AB are bound to MPG's Rules of Conduct for Good Scientific Practice³.

This MPI-AB postdoc agreement applies regardless of funding sources and contract details unless it conflicts with the type of funding involved⁴.

1. Concept and Purpose of Postdoc Stage

Postdocs conduct independent research under the direction of their supervisor within the thematic realm of MPI-AB's vision and mission. The postdoc phase serves for the development of a scientific profile and the acquisition of additional qualifications⁴. Its purpose is also to clarify the future career path regarding the question of whether to aim for an academic career or to pursue a different career path, e.g. in industry⁴. The postdoc phase is time-limited. There are no regular transitions for postdocs towards advanced, possibly permanent positions at MPI-AB or within MPG⁴. MPI-AB employs postdocs by means of temporary contracts. Alternatively, postdocs may procure their own funding⁴.

2. Relationship between Postdoc and Supervisor

- a. At the beginning of the postdoc phase, the supervisor and postdoc mutually define the postdoc's Individual Development Plan (IDP; Appendix). The IDP includes the framework of the research project as well as the postdoc's career objectives and professional needs for development. Very importantly, they shall also agree on the postdoc's degree of independence and their regular

¹ ab.mpg.de/who-we-are

² mpg.de/14172230/code-of-conduct.pdf

³ mpg.de/197494/rulesScientificPractice.pdf

⁴ mpg.de/guidelines-postdocs



meeting intervals⁴. The IDP should be seen as a living document and shall be jointly amended whenever necessary.

- b. Beyond the scientific project, the IDP includes how to support the postdoc in reaching their personal goals for further qualification such as supervising students or doctoral students, teaching, organizing and participating in events, writing grant proposals, and acquiring additional qualifications.
- c. At least annually, the IDP should be updated in the formal review meeting between the postdoc and supervisor. The postdoc is responsible to organize this yearly meeting with the supervisor being obliged to make the time available and to inform HR. In the fourth year after starting the first postdoc position, a comprehensive status review is mandatory. The goal of this review is to realistically assess the postdoc's development and prospects of success in relation to the career objectives and to develop alternative career prospects if necessary⁴.

3. Research Data

- a. Data management is good scientific practice, ensuring that research can be verified, reproduced, and reused⁵. For that reason, creating a Data Management Plan (DMP) should be an integral first step of every research project. DMPs are living documents requiring revisions and updates as research progresses⁶. The following aspects are usually covered: data collection and description; metadata; storage and archiving; legal considerations and usage⁶.
- b. Crucial for the reuse of any data either by the creator or any other scientist is clear and consistent labeling and documentation of data and metadata.
- c. All research data and results must be reliably retained and stored for ten years. It does not matter whether the research results are published or not³. MPI-AB is providing the required infrastructure to guarantee that information stored both digitally and in analog format is secured and remains accessible³.
- d. Archiving beyond the obligatory ten years of storage aims particularly at possible later use in different contexts. This long-term archiving is restricted to the meaningful part of the data and metadata³.
- e. The Max Planck Digital Library (MPDL) provides tools and training for all these aspects from generating DMPs to long-term archiving and publication of research data⁷.
- f. Project participants who substantially contributed to collecting the data or made key contributions to their processing, may make use of the data and possibly take a copy of the data with them. If several persons can claim an entitlement to the data, they must all be considered as authorized to use the data, except where this would put at risk the success of the research project for which the data were collected. If data can only be used in one single research project for compelling material reasons, it must be assumed that the authorization for its use lies with the people/person who primarily collected it and their project(s)³.
- g. In the case of research projects and especially cooperation projects involving several institutions, it is advisable to conclude documented rights of use agreements for all project participants at the earliest opportunity³.

⁵ rdm.mpg.de/introduction/research-data-management/

⁶ rdm.mpg.de/before-research/data-management-plans/

⁷ rdm.mpg.de/



4. Publications and Inventions

- a. We recognize the achievements of others and give credit where it is due². All completed research results financed predominantly by public funds must be published in suitable, independent scientific media in good time³.
- b. Every individual who has made a genuine, identifiable contribution to the content of a research publication of text, data, or software shall be listed as an author. The order of the authors shall be discussed according to their contribution. All authors agree on the final version of the work to be published. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, they all share responsibility for the publication⁸.
- c. MPI-AB and MPG are committed advocates of Open Science. Publications should therefore be Open Access whenever possible⁹. For reasons of traceability, follow-on research, and potential later use, scientists store research data and central materials, such as code, on which the publication is based whenever possible – following the FAIR principles (Findable / Accessible / Interoperable / Re-usable) – e.g. at accessible, commonly recognized archives and repositories³. MPDL offers Open Access publications for all MPI-AB scientists in most of the relevant scientific research journals¹⁰ and hosts an open research data repository¹¹.
- d. Inventions made by MPG staff members usually emerge within the scope of their research activity or are based on the Institute's experience or work. These inventions are thus called “employee inventions”. In accordance with the Employee Inventions Act, MPG is entitled to such inventions – in so far as MPG claims them under the stipulations of this law¹².

5. Skills and Career Development

- a. The postdoc phase is a crucial time to develop their personal profile and acquire further qualifications for their future career, within or outside academia. The personal development goals and ways to acquire these goals shall be jointly agreed on in the IDP and be updated during each status meeting.
- b. MPI-AB encourages postdocs to participate in professional skills training and career-related topics offered by Max Planck Academy. Participation in professional training is part of the working time.
- c. Scientists at all career levels are expected to keep their knowledge of the standards of good scientific practice up to date. MPI-AB is offering general and regular training on the rules of good scientific practice including research ethics.
- d. Besides the central offers provided by Max Planck Academy, postdocs are also encouraged to engage with MPI-AB's Science Coordinators and external experts for advice on the diverse spectrum of job opportunities within and outside the realm of academic research. Advice by an experienced scientist independent from the supervisor is mandatory during the comprehensive status review in the fourth year⁴. MPG provides career coaching to postdocs who have been employed in their current position for at least one year and completed their status review: professional career coaches support the postdocs in individual sessions on how to find opportunities to further their careers and advance their professional development, no matter where⁴.
- e. MPI-AB encourages postdocs to engage in the supervision of bachelor and master students, doctoral students and/or technical assistants, or other staff, to acquire skills in personnel

⁸ [wissenschaftliche-integritaet.de/en/code-of-conduct/authorship/](https://www.wissenschaftliche-integritaet.de/en/code-of-conduct/authorship/)

⁹ openaccess.mpg.de/policy

¹⁰ mpdl.mpg.de/21-specials/50-open-access-publishing.html

¹¹ rdm.mpd.l.mpg.de/mpdl-services/edmond/

¹² mpg.de/913603/erfinderleitfaden.pdf



management⁴. The duties and responsibilities of all people involved shall be defined in an individual MPI-AB Co-Supervision Agreement (Appendix).

- f. Postdocs are encouraged to gain teaching experiences by supporting MPI-AB senior scientists with teaching obligations at the University of Konstanz, or by offering internal courses or workshops themselves to students, peers, or other interested participants.

6. Societal and Institutional Engagement

- a. MPI-AB is committed to interacting openly with the society by presenting research projects and results and involving the public through Citizen Science projects and public outreach activities.
- b. All MPI-AB members are encouraged to actively engage in scientific and public outreach activities as well as in Group/Department and Institute activities like the MPI-AB Seminar Series, retreats, and other measures designed to help establish networks and to benefit from the reciprocal exchange.
- c. Annually, MPI-AB's postdocs elect representatives who participate in MPI-AB's Extended Board Meetings to represent the interests and concerns of their peers towards the Institute's management.
- d. MPI-AB encourages and endorses initiatives by postdocs to organize themselves at the institutional and societal level and, if necessary, offers logistical and financial support.

7. Career and Family Life

- a. MPI-AB is committed to reconciling career and family life by offering flexible and family-friendly working hours as well as the possibility to work remotely from home.
- b. The Welcome Office at MPI-AB supports young families and new staff members in all non-academic matters and to get settled at the Institute and in Germany¹³.
- c. The Equal Opportunities Officers offer help and advice related to childcare; work-life balance; and maternity protection in the lab¹⁴.

8. Conflict Management

- a. MPI-AB supports all its members in case of conflicts or disputes.
- b. For scientific conflicts or complaints about misconduct, MPI-AB provides the support of elected ombudspersons. The ombudspersons provide confidential advice and treat in confidence any information brought to their attention concerning possible misconduct¹⁵.
- c. Situations related to conflicts or disputes with colleagues or supervisors can be directed to the elected representatives at the Works Council or the Equal Opportunities Officers¹⁵.
- d. The Equal Opportunities Officers offer help and advice related to sexual discrimination, harassment, bullying, or racism¹⁶.
- e. The central MPG Employee and Manager Assistance Program (EMAP) offers all MPI-AB members a free immediate counseling service for personal problems and issues that impact their well-being at work¹⁷.

¹³ ab.mpg.de/355972/welcome-office

¹⁴ max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/Equal-Opportunities/Pages/Entry.aspx

¹⁵ ab.mpg.de/329019/conflict-management

¹⁶ max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/Equal-Opportunities/Pages/Entry.aspx

¹⁷ max.mpg.de/Service/Beratungsangebote/Pages/EMAP_EN.aspx



Signatures

By signing this document, both, the postdoc and supervisor agree on the above terms of the MPI-AB Postdoc Agreement.

Signature supervisor

Signature postdoc

Name supervisor

Name postdoc

Date

Date



Further Reading

MPI-AB

Vision and Mission [ab.mpg.de/who-we-are]

MPG

Code of Conduct [mpg.de/14172230/code-of-conduct.pdf]

Guidelines for Inventors [mpg.de/913603/erfinderleitfaden.pdf]

Guidelines for the Postdoc Stage [mpg.de/guidelines-postdocs]

LeitPLANCKen – Guidelines for Responsible Conduct [mpg.de/18156413/leitplancken.pdf]

Rules of Conduct for Good Scientific Practice [mpg.de/197494/rulesScientificPractice.pdf]

Rules of Procedure in Cases of Suspected Scientific Misconduct
[mpg.de/197361/procedScientMisconduct.pdf]

MPDL

Open Access Publishing [mpdl.mpg.de/21-specials/50-open-access-publishing.html]

RDMO for MPG. A tool to support the planning, implementation, and organization of research data management [rdmo.mpdl.mpg.de/]

Research Data Management [rdm.mpdl.mpg.de/]

DFG

Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice
[wissenschaftliche-integrtaet.de/en/code-of-conduct/]

MPI-AB Contacts

Data Protection Officer [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/DSK/Pages/Entry.aspx]

Equal Opportunities Officers [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/Equal-Opportunities/Pages/Entry.aspx]

IT Support [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/Research-Support-Units/IT/Pages/Entry.aspx]

Ombudspersons [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/ombudsperson/Pages/Entry.aspx]

Postdoc Representatives [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/Pages/PhD+-Postdoc-representatives.aspx]

Science Coordinators [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/Research-Support-Units/Science-Coordination/Pages/Entry.aspx]

Welcome Officer [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/Divisions/Administration-and-Services/Pages/Welcome-Office.aspx]

Works Council [max.mpg.de/sites/ab/SDO-C/Works-Council/Pages/Entry.aspx]

Appendices

MPI-AB Individual Development Plan

MPI-AB Co-Supervision Agreement