

**MAX  
PLANCK  
SCHOOL**

**of  
cognition**

# Doctoral Candidate Handbook

Last edited September 2025



# Doctoral Candidate Handbook

## Doctoral Phase

Information given in this document is subject  
to change and without warranty

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## 1. Welcome to the Doctoral Phase of the MPSCog!

At the start of the doctoral phase, doctoral candidates focus mainly on their thesis research. They also take part in two Cognition Academies per year (with only one Academy in the final year).

The Academies include presentations by candidates, faculty members, and guest speakers on their research topics, as well as soft-skill courses and workshops covering areas such as project management, writing and argumentation, leadership, negotiation, and conflict management, among others.

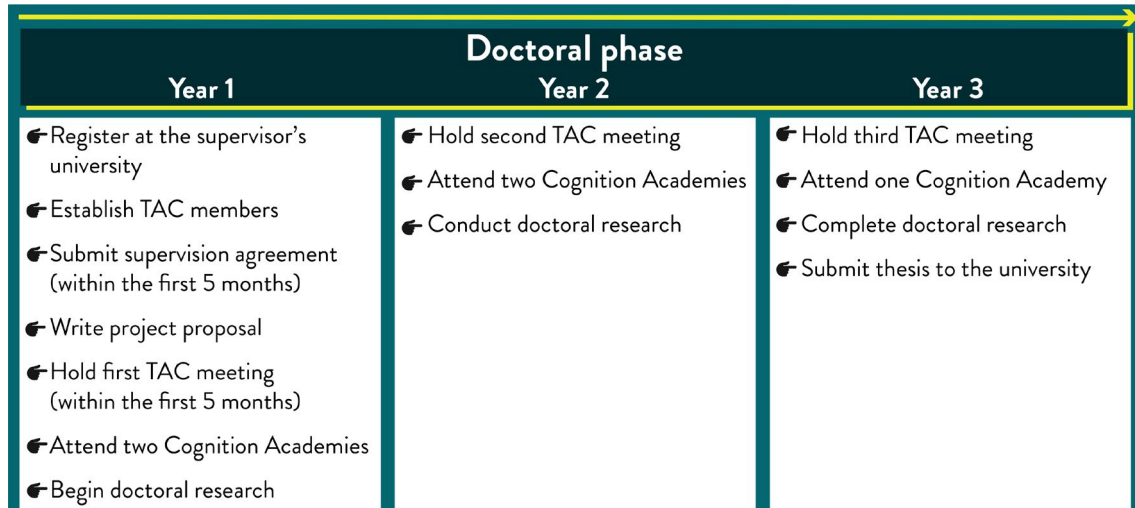
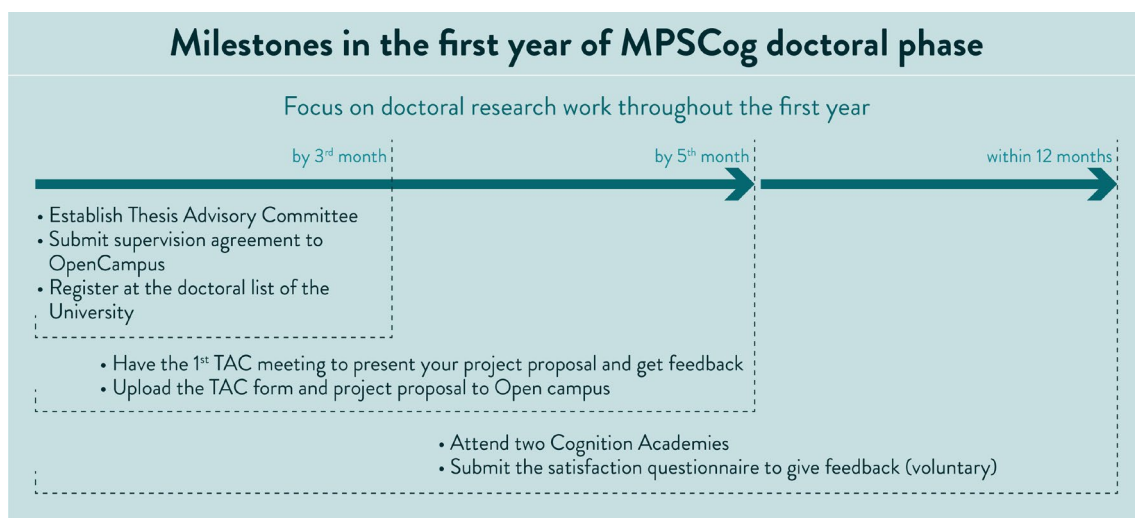


Figure 1. Overview of the three-year doctoral research phase.

### 1.1 First Year of the Doctoral Phase

The candidates settle into their labs and begin their doctoral research projects. To establish a solid foundation for the thesis, several administrative requirements must be completed. At the very start of the doctoral phase, candidates are encouraged to discuss with their supervisors the expectations regarding supervision, the project content (project proposal and three-year plan), and university registration (*Promotionsordnung* and appropriate doctoral degree). The key milestones in this transition to the doctoral phase are shown in Figure 2.



TO DO

Figure 2. Milestones at the beginning of the doctoral phase.

Candidates are expected to continuously record their academic achievements and progress in the OpenCampus platform.

**Please note:** In OpenCampus, the doctoral phase is represented by the progress trees of Years 2–4 of the program.



# Doctoral Phase

The supervision agreement template and project proposal instructions are already available within the Year 1 progress tree (see Figure 3). This allows candidates to familiarize themselves with these documents during the orientation year, before access to the Year 2 section of OpenCampus is granted.

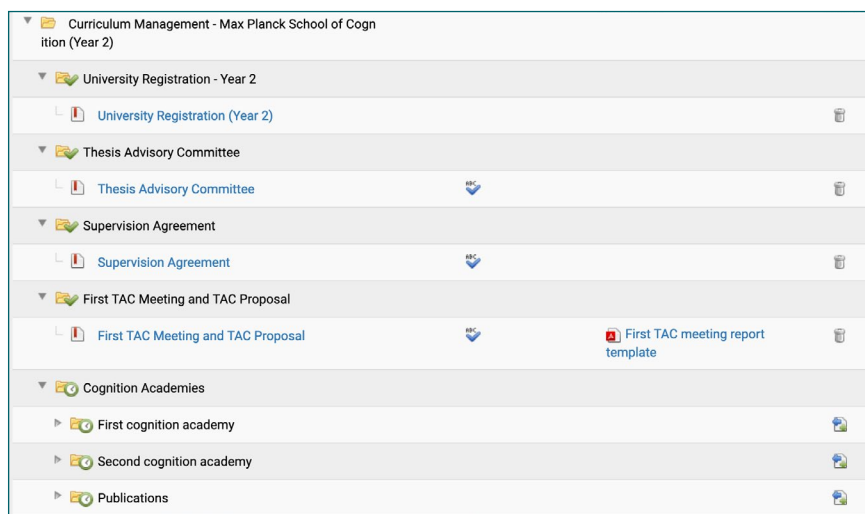


Publications	
Supervision Agreement	Supervision Agreement Template
Absence Requests	Planned absence: 2 Unplanned absence: 0
Planned Absence December 13, 2021 - December 13, 202	1
Planned Absence December 15, 2021 - December 15, 202	1
Additional Documents	
Doctoral Project Proposal Instructions	Thesis Proposal Instructions

Figure 3. OpenCampus: supervision agreement template and project proposal instructions available within the progress tree of Year 1.

Within OpenCampus, the progress trees for the doctoral phase (Years 2–4) follow a dependency structure: Each step requires approval by the coordination team before the next submission can be made (see Figure 4). For example:

- The names of TAC members added by the candidate must be approved before the supervision agreement can be uploaded.
- Once the supervision agreement is approved, the TAC form is made available in the tree.
- Finally, the date and form for the TAC and the project proposal can be uploaded for approval.



Curriculum Management - Max Planck School of Cognition (Year 2)	
University Registration - Year 2	
University Registration (Year 2)	
Thesis Advisory Committee	
Thesis Advisory Committee	
Supervision Agreement	
Supervision Agreement	
First TAC Meeting and TAC Proposal	
First TAC Meeting and TAC Proposal	First TAC meeting report template
Cognition Academies	
First cognition academy	
Second cognition academy	
Publications	

Figure 4. OpenCampus: Progress tree of Year 2 with multiple approval steps.

## 1.1.1 Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

To ensure that doctoral projects are well supervised from the start, candidates are asked to establish a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) within the first three months of the doctoral phase.

The TAC supports the candidate throughout the doctoral phase, including preparation for the defense. Committee members must have expertise in the research topic and meet with the candidate (in person or online) at least once a year. These meetings aim to monitor project progress, provide critical feedback and guidance, and ensure the completion of a high-quality thesis within the three-year period.

Candidates are encouraged to discuss potential TAC members with their main supervisor as early as possible, ideally shortly after the start of the doctoral phase. Once the TAC is established, all members and the candidate must sign the supervision agreement (see the template on OpenCampus).



**Please note:** The first supervisor must be an [MPSCog Fellow](#).

## Structure of the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC consists of **two to four members**, selected by the doctoral candidate in consultation with the thesis supervisor. The candidates should list the names of TAC members within OpenCampus Year 2 (Figure 5).

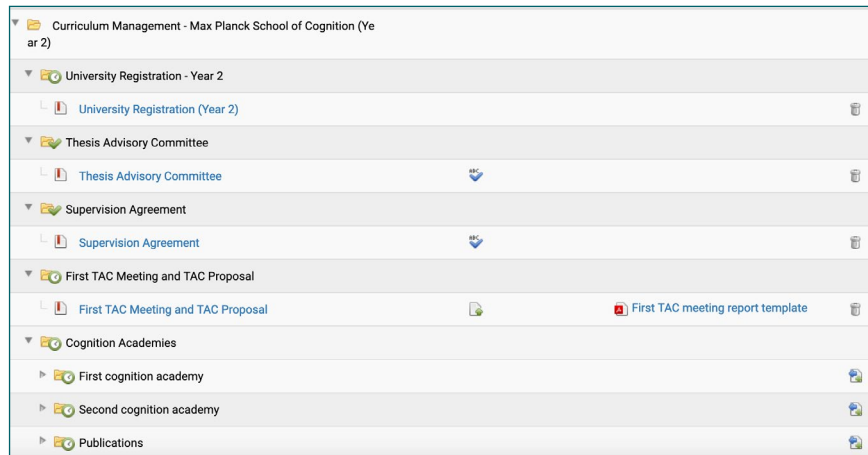


Figure 5. OpenCampus: List of Thesis Advisory Committee members within Year 2 tree.

- **Supervisor(s):** One MPSCog Fellow is required. An additional co-supervisor is optional.
  - Oversee the doctoral project in terms of content and methods. Candidates conduct their research in the supervisor's laboratory and regularly discuss and present data during lab meetings. The supervisor holds a professorship at a local university, and the faculty of the main supervisor will award the doctoral degree at the end of the doctoral phase.
- **Advisor(s):** One or ideally two advisors. At least one advisor should be independent from the main supervisor (i.e., from a different department and without current scientific collaborations with the supervisor).
  - They provide academic guidance and ensure appropriate supervision of the doctoral project. Advisors can be consulted if issues arise regarding the project or supervision.

**Please note:** One of the independent TAC advisors may chair the TAC meeting, complete the TAC assessment form, and manage the timing of the meeting.

**Important:** It is the candidate's responsibility to **invite** the TAC members, **schedule** TAC meetings, **collect** the signatures during or after the meeting, and **submit** the completed forms to the OpenCampus platform.

## Supervision agreement

As soon as the TAC is established, the candidates need to fill out and circulate the supervision agreement among the members of the TAC in order to collect their signatures (Figure 6).

It is important that the candidate as well as the supervisors read the document carefully before signing it. MPSCog supervision agreement is binding for the candidate and the TAC members. Some of the crucial content points that supervision agreement covers are:

- Definition of the time frame of the doctoral phase (three years)
- Listing the candidate's and supervisor's responsibilities and obligations
- Explanation of the role of all TAC members throughout the doctoral project
- Guidance in case of conflict management
- Reference to general and local Good Scientific Practice regulations in force in case of the specific doctoral project

The screenshot shows the front page of a 'Supervision Agreement' template. At the top left is the Max Planck School of Cognition logo. The title 'Max Planck School of Cognition Supervision Agreement' is centered. Below the title, it says 'between:' followed by dashed lines for signatures. The lines are labeled: 'Max Planck School of Cognition Doctoral Candidate', 'Supervisor', '1<sup>st</sup> Advisor', 'Supervisor (2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor, if applicable)', and '2<sup>nd</sup> Advisor'. Below the signature lines is a 'Preamble' section with the text: 'This document serves as a supervision agreement between the Max Planck School of Cognition doctoral candidate and the members of their personal Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC, see point 3 of the document), hereafter re-'

Figure 6. Supervision agreement template: Screenshot of the front page of the document

As mentioned above: the template of the document is available in the tree of Year 1. Once completed and signed it must be submitted in the Year 2 progress tree.

## First TAC Meeting

Candidates need to schedule their first TAC meeting **within the first five months** of the doctoral project (probation time period).

The template of the first TAC form is available on OpenCampus/Year 2 after the submission and approval of the supervision agreement (Figure 7).

The screenshot shows the front page of a '1<sup>st</sup> TAC Feedback Form' template. At the top left is the Max Planck School of Cognition logo. The title 'Max Planck School of Cognition 1<sup>st</sup> TAC Feedback Form' is centered. Below the title is a section 'Part 1: To be completed by the candidate'. The text in this section reads: 'Please complete this section. Forward the saved form to all TAC members at least one week before the meeting, together with a thesis project proposal. The proposal should be no longer than 10 pages of text and should include the scientific background, aims and perspectives of the project, a summary of any results and conclusions to date, plus a clear timeline for future work. See the document "MPSCog Thesis Proposal Instructions" for further details.' Below this is a section 'MPSCog Doctoral candidate details' with fields for: 'Full name:', 'Starting date of the doctoral phase:', 'Date of the 1<sup>st</sup> TAC meeting:', 'Title of doctoral project (provisional):', and 'Supervisor(s) of doctoral project:'.

Figure 7. 1<sup>st</sup> TAC Feedback Form template: Screenshot of the front page.

Candidates must submit the partially completed first TAC report and the project proposal to TAC members **at least one week before the scheduled TAC meeting**.

## Format of TAC meetings

1. Candidate's project presentation (approximately 20 minutes)
2. Group discussion (approximately 20 minutes)
3. Discussion without the candidate – the chairperson invites the candidate to step out:
  - Evaluate the candidate's performance and formulate recommendations
  - Complete the "Evaluation of 1st TAC Meeting/Report" section
  - Review the candidate's training plan and set recommendations/priorities
4. Chairperson presents views and recommendations to the candidate
5. Final discussion and signatures
6. End of the meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to present and discuss the project proposal with the TAC members. The TAC assesses the following criteria, which the chairperson will record on the TAC assessment form (in the absence of the candidate):

- Scope of the project
- Potential impact of the project
- Potential risks involved in the project
- Evaluation of the candidate's technical aptitude
- Overall assessment of the candidate's performance

## 1.1.2 Doctoral Research Project Proposal

Right at the start of the doctoral phase, candidates need to develop a preliminary proposal of their three year doctoral research project. The proposal should be presented to and approved by the TAC members at the first meeting (within the **first five months** of the doctoral phase). The proposal needs to convince TAC members of the research idea(s)/question(s) and the methodological approach. It must clearly demonstrate the research idea(s)/question(s) and the proposed methodological approach to convince the TAC members of its feasibility and scientific merit.

The project proposal (10 pages) should include:

- **Background:** Provide a brief overview of the general area of study within the research topic. Critically address relevant studies and identify potential gaps that need to be filled in.
- **Research questions & hypothesis:** Which questions guide the research? Why are they relevant, and how will they fill in some of the existent gaps?
- **Methodology:** Describe how the project will be executed: the methodology and the analysis to accomplish its goals. Discuss potential problems and how to overcome them.
- **Tentative timeline:** Present a schedule to complete the doctoral research work within three years. Important milestones need to be added to the timeline.
- **Bibliography:** Must include all publications that are mentioned throughout the proposal.

TO DO

**Please note:** Candidates should discuss the expectations related to the project proposal and the workload involved in its preparation directly with their supervisor right at the start of the doctoral phase.

The project proposal shouldn't take more than one month to finalize. It serves as an initial guide for the candidate and the TAC to understand the project, its goals, and its feasibility.

MPSCog project proposal instructions on how to write a project proposal are available on OpenCampus/Year 1. They are generic, thus must be adjusted to the nature of the specific research project and to the expectations of the supervisor.

Candidates need to submit a complete and fully signed first TAC form together with the project proposal to OpenCampus/Year 2 within **one week after** the meeting (Figure 8).

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Date of your 1st TAC Meeting \*". It contains several sections:

- Date:** A text input field with "Jan 13 2022" entered and a hint "E.g., Jun 23 2022".
- 1st TAC Date: Approval \*:** A dropdown menu with "Approved" selected.
- Upload Documents:** A section header.
- Upload TAC Proposal \*:** A file upload area with a search button "Durchsuchen...", a status "Keine Datei ausgewählt.", and an "Upload" button. Below it, a note states "Maximum upload size is 5 MB. Pdf is the only allowed file extension." and a link for "More information".
- Upload TAC Report \*:** A similar file upload area with a search button, status, and "Upload" button, also including a "More information" link.
- TAC report approval \*:** A dropdown menu with "- None -" selected.

Figure 8. OpenCampus: First TAC meeting documentation in the Year 2 progress tree.



# Doctoral Phase

As soon as the date of the first TAC is approved by the coordination team, the TAC feedback form as well as the project proposal can be uploaded.

## 1.1.3 Satisfaction Questionnaires

The MPSCog coordination team regularly monitors project supervision and the wellbeing of doctoral candidates. All candidates are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on their overall experience. The feedback questionnaire is organized into seven sub-categories, including time frame and workload, supervision and networking, and coordination team, among others (see Figure 9).

Doctoral project \* Time frame and workload \* Supervision and networking \* Networking within the MPSCog \* General satisfaction \* Coordination team \*

General issues

This is a confidential questionnaire regarding the satisfaction with your doctoral project and supervision. The questionnaire is to be submitted 12 months after the start of the doctoral project, and every 12 months afterwards until the end of the doctoral project (months 24 and 36). There will be space at the end of the questionnaire for further comments. By completing this survey, you accept that the curriculum officer, the scientific coordinator and the e-learning officer will have access to the survey results.

I have clear research questions and/or hypotheses. \*

☐ strongly disagree

☐ disagree

☐ neutral

☒ agree

☐ strongly agree

☐ does not apply/do not want to answer

I have a clear doctoral project design (e.g., research design, experimental setup, timeline). \*

☐ strongly disagree

☐ disagree

☐ neutral

☒ agree

☐ strongly agree

☐ does not apply/do not want to answer

Figure 9. OpenCampus: Satisfaction questionnaire in the doctoral phase.

Satisfaction questionnaires are made available within OpenCampus throughout the doctoral phase. They are listed within the progress trees of Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 of the program (Figure 10). They are voluntary, confidential (can be viewed only by Natacha Mendes), and questionnaires can be submitted at any time during the respective year of the doctoral phase.

▼ Satisfaction questionnaire (Year 2)

📄 Satisfaction questionnaire M12

Figure 10. OpenCampus: Satisfaction questionnaire in Year 2 progress tree.

## 1.1.4 Enrollment as a Doctoral Candidate

In Germany, doctoral degrees are awarded exclusively by universities, not by non-university research institutions (such as Max Planck Institutes).

At the start of the doctoral phase, candidates must enroll as a doctoral student at the university where their main supervisor holds a professorship. If this is not Universität Leipzig, please inform the coordination team so that your preliminary enrollment at Universität Leipzig can be cancelled (during the orientation phase).

TO DO

In order to be accepted for the doctoral defense in Germany, candidates need to fulfill specific requirements (e.g., number of publications, format of doctoral thesis, number of ECTS credits for conferences, journal clubs, etc.) of the *Promotionsordnung* (doctoral degree regulations) of the respective faculty/university. These requirements may differ from university to university and can also be subjected to change over time.

Thus, candidates must familiarize themselves with the *Promotionsordnung* of the respective university/faculty at the start of the doctoral phase, to avoid unforeseen problems when submitting their thesis.

An example of doctoral degree regulations is provided below for two faculties at Universität Leipzig:

- [Faculty of Life Sciences \(pdfs in German and English\)](#)
- [Faculty of Medicine \(pdf in German only\)](#)

Some MPSCog fellows are affiliated with more than one university. In such cases, the candidates should seek advice directly from their supervisor (and other lab members) on what is the most appropriate choice of faculty for them.

## 1.1.5 Credit Points – Admission to Doctorate

**Please note:** In Germany, universities grant a variety of doctoral degrees, such as Dr. rer. nat., Dr. med., PhD candidates need to select the most suitable available degree, depending mainly on the nature of the doctoral project and their further career plans. Usually, the main supervisor and also other lab members are the best source of advice.

Some candidates, such as those who completed a one-year master's program in the UK, may not have accumulated enough credit points to be admitted to a German doctoral defense. In such cases, missing credit points may need to be earned during the doctoral phase by attending certified courses.

## 1.1.6 Publications, Attendance at Conferences, and External Events

During the doctoral phase, the candidate's supervisor is responsible for funding attendance at external scientific events (conferences, courses, workshops) once agreed upon, and for covering travel costs for mandatory participation in Cognition Academies. Attendance at all events must be discussed with and approved by the supervisor(s) in advance.

Candidates should add the information about the publications and presentations at the conferences to OpenCampus.

**Please note:** MPSCog affiliation must be added to all the publications and presentations throughout the doctoral phase alongside with the affiliation of the institution at which the candidate is based.

## 1.1.7 Research Academy Leipzig

(RALeipzig; applicable only for candidates on the doctoral lists at Universität Leipzig)

MPSCog candidates who are registered on the doctoral list of Universität Leipzig and conduct their doctoral thesis there, become full members of the Research Academy Leipzig. RALeipzig is the central service institution at Universität Leipzig that is dedicated to actively supporting early career researchers. Members can, among other things, participate in workshops of the [Competence School](#) to strengthen their skill sets. Doctoral candidates at the MPSCog are not eligible to request travel funding from RALeipzig, but can apply for the yearly RAL [doctoral prize](#).

## 1.2 Second to Third Year of the Doctoral Phase

Candidates continue working on their research projects, and it is mandatory to **present their progress to their supervisors and TAC members within the required timeframe**.

Moreover, candidates are strongly encouraged to provide feedback by completing the annual satisfaction questionnaires. Responses are handled confidentially.

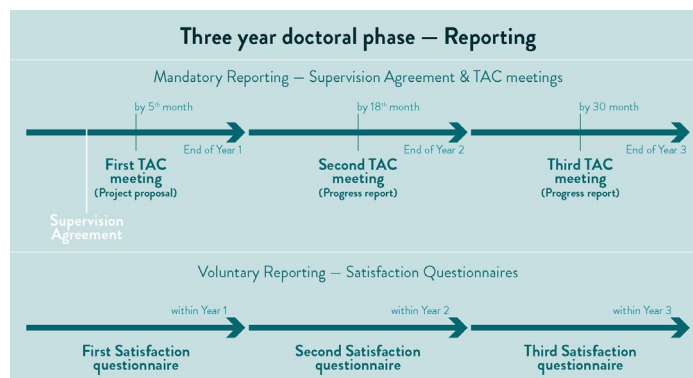


Figure 11. Timeline of reporting during the doctoral phase.

## 1.2.1 TAC Meetings Progress Report

TO DO

As aforementioned (see Figure 11), doctoral candidates are expected to have a TAC meeting progress report in the second and third year of the doctoral research phase (that is, approximately 18 and 30 months after the start of the doctoral research phase).

The purposes of the second and third TAC meeting during the doctoral research phase are:

- Updating the TAC members on the candidates' progress with the research project(s), the timeline, the status of publications, etc.
- Advising candidates on how to proceed towards a successful and timely submission of the thesis.
- Checking on candidates' career development plans.

Candidates need to **write a short progress report** and submit it to the TAC members at least **one week before** the scheduled TAC meeting. The progress report should have a maximum of **five pages** in the following structure:

- Short scientific background
- Provide a concise overview of the general area of study within the research domain. Critically address relevant studies and identify potential gaps that need to be filled in.
- The previously written 'Scientific Background' section of the project proposal (first TAC) can serve as the basis for the updated report.
- Research questions & hypothesis  
Which modifications in terms of research questions have been made (with regard to the project proposal)?
- Methodology  
Which modifications in terms of the planned methodology and data analysis have been made (with regards to the project proposal)? Discussion on encountered problems and how they were (or not) overcome.
- First results & discussion  
Description of project findings and concise discussion.
- Timeline  
Which modifications in terms of the planned timeline have been made (with regards to the project proposal)?  
Present an updated schedule to complete the doctoral research work within the three years including important milestones within the timeline.
- Bibliography  
Must include all publications that are mentioned throughout the proposal.

Candidates give a short presentation (10 – 20 minutes) of the research project, followed by a discussion with the TAC members. The TAC assesses the following criteria, which the chairperson will record on the TAC assessment form:

- Status of the project
- Progress made
- Detailed timeline until the next TAC meeting (only for candidates having the second TAC)
- Tentative date for submission of the doctoral thesis (only for candidates having the third TAC)

The procedure of the second and third TAC meeting is similar to the first one.

Candidates must submit the second and third TAC reports (partially filled out) and their progress report **one week before** the scheduled **TAC meeting** to the TAC members.

Candidates are responsible to submit the fully signed forms and progress report to OpenCampus within a week after the meeting.

## 1.3. Cognition Academies

Candidates will be involved in co-organizing the Cognition Academies throughout the doctoral phase, together with the MPSCog coordination team. The coordination team will invite volunteers from among the candidates for this task. Volunteers will then consult within their cohorts to suggest which speakers they would like to invite to the Academies.

# Doctoral Phase

Part of the doctoral phase Academies will also include soft skill courses, organized by the coordination team, covering areas such as:

- Project management and open science
- Writing and argumentation skills
- Presentation skills
- Leadership and conflict management
- Applying for funding, career management, and jobs in industry

## 1.4 Administrative Topics

At the beginning of the doctoral research phase, some administrative steps need to be taken as shown in Figure 12:

### 1.4.1 Administrative Steps



Figure 12. Administrative steps at the beginning of the doctoral phase.

Candidates should always contact the coordination team if support is needed with any of the necessary steps mentioned above.

### 1.4.2 Salary

During the doctoral phase, candidates receive a contract, which is made with the institution where the doctoral research work is conducted.

The monthly net salary depends on a few factors, for example in which federal German state the doctoral study is conducted, or whether candidates are married or have children.

The payment is based on the E13 level of the tariff agreement applicable to the respective employer. It is important to note that not all provisions of the tariff agreement apply to doctoral candidates. All candidates receive an equivalent to at least 75% of the E13 level.

### 1.4.3 Travel Requests and Refunds

From the start of the doctoral phase, all business trips (including Cognition Academies) must be requested through the institution where the doctoral contract is based.

Travel expenses are fully covered by the candidate's doctoral supervisor. However, during the Cognition Academies, the coverage of costs is slightly different:

- **Travel costs** and, **if applicable, daily allowance** will be covered by the **institution where the doctoral contract is based**.
- **Meals and accommodation** during the event will be covered by the **MPSCog**.

## 2. Scientific Guidelines

### 2.1 Disclaimer

#### OpenCampus (or Life Cycle = Years 2–4)

- **Information for new data processing within Max Planck School of Cognition\_Life Cycle – Curriculum Management Database**

#### **Purpose and legal basis of the processing**

The data collected on the application site of the Max Planck Schools, upon the submission of your application, will be imported from GWDG GmbH (Application portal) to the Curriculum Management Database of OpenCampus (hereafter referred to as “Life Cycle”). Moreover, all data collected during the orientation and doctoral phase including your academic performance will be collected and stored at Life Cycle. The purpose is to efficiently facilitate the management of your doctoral education by all involved parties (MPSCog coordination team, doctoral candidates, fellows, e-tutors, employees of MPS as well as the Equal Opportunities Officer and the Works Council) throughout every phase of the orientation and doctoral phase, and to make the data easily accessible for you.

Which involved party has an access to the data and to what extent is stipulated in an access and authorization concept. Appropriate technical measures have been taken. This ensures that persons only have access to data to which they absolutely must have access in order to fulfill the above-mentioned purposes.

#### **Legal basis for data processing**

The legal basis for data processing is Art. 6, para. 1, letter f (legitimate interest) of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

#### **Data recipients and categories of data**

Processing of your personal details and data is carried out by processing on systems of OpenCampusGmbH. A passing on of data to third parties does not take place.

#### **Duration of storage**

Your data will be stored for a period of 5 years.

#### **Contact details of the controller**

Controller in the legal sense is the *Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften e.V.* (MPG), Hofgartenstraße 8, D-80539 Munich, Germany, Phone: +49 (89) 2108-0.

Furthermore, you can always contact [hanna.kriebel@gv.mpg.de](mailto:hanna.kriebel@gv.mpg.de) (link sends e-mail) if you have any questions.

#### **Contact details of Data Protection Officer**

The Data Protection Officer of the controller is Heidi Schuster, Hofgartenstraße 8, 80539 Munich, telephone: +49 (89) 2108-1554, email address: [datenschutz@mpg.de](mailto:datenschutz@mpg.de).

#### **Rights of the data subject**

In principle, you have the right to information in relation to the data concerning you, the right to have the data corrected should it be incorrect, and the right to request deletion of the data if it is being stored unlawfully, as well as the right to have the processing restricted and the right of data portability. You have the right to object to the data processing and to appeal to the supervisory authority. For the MPG, this is the Bavarian State Office for Data Protection Supervision (*Bayerisches Landesamt für Datenschutzaufsicht*), Postfach 606, 91511 Ansbach.



## Satisfaction questionnaire

This is a confidential questionnaire regarding the satisfaction with your doctoral project and supervision. The questionnaire is to be submitted 12 months after the start of the doctoral project, and every 12 months afterwards until the end of the doctoral project (months 24 and 36). There will be space at the end of the questionnaire for further comments. By completing this survey, you accept that the Scientific Coordinator and the E-learning Officer will have access to the survey results.

The term *Data Protection* stands for the protection of individual personality rights. Every person should have the possibility to decide for themselves what happens to their data. According to the Federal Constitutional Court, the right to informational self-determination is a constituent of general personality rights. The fundamentals are governed by the EU General Data Protection Regulation and the Federal Data Protection Act (*Bundesdatenschutzgesetz* – BDSG); there are also special legal regulations.

## Open Learning Management System

The Cognition Academy surveys are anonymous.

## 2.2 Ethics

Each study needs to be approved beforehand by an ethics council. Please consult your supervisor for more information.

## 2.3 Good Scientific Practice

Doctoral candidates are obliged to adhere to the recommendations for safeguarding good scientific practice as set out by:

- [Max Planck Society](#)
- [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft](#) (German Research Foundation, DFG)
- Rules of the institution where any project is based and/or where registration as a doctoral candidate has occurred.

Please make sure to familiarize yourself with all sets of rules.

## 2.4 Confidential Support and Guidance

If any conflicts, issues, or concerns arise during the doctoral phase, candidates are encouraged to seek advice and support from Equal Opportunities Officers, ombudspersons, or the MPSCog Persons of Trust.

**Conflict management at the Max Planck Society.** The Max Planck Society has set up a [website](#) regarding conflict management and relevant contact points.

The MPI CBS has also a website on this topic on the [MAX intranet](#).

**Equal opportunities officers.** The Max Planck Society and each of its institutes support and promote employees regardless of gender, nationality, religion, disability, age, cultural origin, or sexual identity.

Whenever needed, doctoral candidates should seek out the local contact for the equal opportunities officers at their respective host institutions.

**Ombudsperson.** Scientific integrity is one of the most highly valued assets in science. This includes an open debate about what constitutes good scientific practice and according to which rules scientific activity is pursued. Generally speaking, the role of an ombudsperson does not concern severe violations in the sense of potential scientific fraud but rather conflicts that arise from scientific practice. Most of the discussions held by ombudspersons concern issues of authorship, i.e. questions relating to the fair acknowledgment of scientific contributions to a certain publication on the part of individuals.

**Person of Trust.** Candidates can contact the MPSCog [Persons of Trust](#) for confidential advice in case of conflicts or questions regarding good scientific practice. In addition, candidates can reach out to the ombudsperson(s) at their respective host institutions.

If preferred (e.g., in case of conflict of interest), candidates may also contact the Persons of Trust from the Max Planck School Matter to Life and the Max Planck School of Photonics.