

Internal Guidelines for Tenure Track Procedures for Junior Group Leaders

of the Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB)

Valid as of 1 May 2020

Objective

Setting up new working groups at IGB by staffing junior group leader positions in a tenure track process with transparent rules:

- Tenure track procedures for highly promising junior scientists;
- applicable for working group leaders with initially a fixed-term contract at IGB (junior group leaders) or coming from other institutes or laboratories in order to set up a working group of their own;
- typically starts after 3-6 years of postdoctoral research;
- two-phase process typically extending over a period of 2 x 3 years (72 months in total) and mid-term review after 3 years; extension of the period can be applied for in the case of parental leave, severe diseases or care of relatives [note: in exceptional cases it can be decided in advance to shorten the tenure track period];
- after successful evaluation at the end of phase 2: promotion to senior group leader position with a permanent contract at IGB.

Mentoring and Evaluation Committee

For each candidate a Mentoring and Evaluation Committee is established during the first few months.

This committee consists of:

- the Head of Department of the department where the candidate established her/his group;
- the Director of IGB;
- an IGB Mentor, chosen within the first year by the tenure track candidate him/herself;
- a fourth member from the IGB Senior Scientists, from another department.

Each committee should at least have one female scientist.

There is a yearly brief evaluation by the Mentoring and Evaluation Committee during which progress and problems can be discussed. Every year the timing and criteria can be re-evaluated to take specific developments into account (e.g. parental leave, severe disease or care of relatives). The mentor plays an important role in coaching the candidate.

Criteria

Below the overall criteria are given that hold for all tenure track evaluations. These criteria refer to **scientific output and achievements**, to **personality development**, reflecting **leadership** and development as a **mentor**, and **strategic development**. **Criteria can be individualized** (e.g. based on type of research or amount of service delivered through key expertise; see also below) and can in some cases be updated based on developments during the tenure track period. Exceptional conditions can also be taken into consideration – the evaluation of such exceptional conditions is done by the mentoring and evaluation committee (see below).

Overall criteria over the full period (typically 6 years):

- potential of the research group that has been developed, innovation potential, successful implementation, strategic fit with IGB;
- indicators of international esteem and commitment (e.g. evaluation by expert reviewers, scientific awards, nominations for international committees, editorial boards of renowned journals, membership in expert groups, invited and keynote talks, etc.);
- at least four accepted publications of the research group in top 15% journals of the discipline or in general biology or science fields (or contributions that are judged equivalent by the evaluation committee) as first author or group leader (usually to be recognized as last or second author for articles where group members are the first authors; or papers that are judged equivalent by the evaluation committee e.g. second, third or last authorship on a multi-author paper in a high profile journal) (the evaluation committee can decide on also counting a manuscript in revision with minor comments);
- at least one third-party funded project that has been successfully applied for as PI, plus proof of active applications for multiple other projects – either successful or scientifically very positively evaluated (reflecting high potential) ;
- proof of commitment to collaboration and sharing of expertise, both within and outside IGB;
- proof of mentorship and of good leadership style, also based on opinions and experience of group members;
- commitment to scientific service (e.g. reviewing, organization of workshops, sharing expertise and teaching);
- commitment at IGB, also beyond science.

Overall, the criteria are designed to achieve a healthy balance between **quality** and **quantity** in scientific output and achievements and to evaluate the **consolidation of the candidate as an independent and mature group leader** who has eye for the broader context of her/his scientific work. The criteria also aim at evaluating the positioning of the group within IGB and the degree to which the young leader develops towards strong mentor- and leadership.

Individual objectives to be agreed on

- are defined by the Mentoring and Evaluation Committee after consultation with the candidate;
- specify the general criteria with regard to the scientist, their special life situation, research field, and ways of promotion.

Intermediate evaluation

After three years, there is an intermediate evaluation started in month 31 and finalized in month 32.

Criteria

- successful application for at least one own third-party fund (minimum 100,000 €, at least one personnel position) as a PI, or proof of multiple applications with very positive evaluations (reflecting potential) as PI (in some cases the evaluation committee might judge projects as co-PI equivalent if a key role is played and when it involves a very large project);
- at least two submitted papers to a leading journal (top 15%) that is relevant for the topic dealt with at IGB (e.g. also review/opinion papers) as first author and/or group leader (usually to be recognized as last or second author for articles where group members are the first author);
- a total of at least 5 accepted publications as co-author through co-operation;
- promising path towards the build-up of an internationally innovative and recognized team that has a strategic fit with IGB;
- potential for high international visibility;
- path towards shaping a personality as an independent researcher (while recognizing need for effective and broad collaboration);
- successful consolidation of skills and expertise;
- proof of commitment to collaboration and sharing of expertise, both within and outside IGB;
- path towards mentor- and leadership;
- development of a promising network for the topic within IGB and with national and international teams.

The **Mentoring and Evaluation Committee** will submit the evaluation report to the Directorate. The Directorate based on that report formulates a proposal for decision, which is discussed at the LGI. Then the Director takes the final decision.

In the case of a positive evaluation: progress to phase 2 of the tenure track process. At this stage, the Mentoring and Evaluation Committee can also provide clear feedback on the aspects that need further development or where there are worries, and can provide advice. The intermediate evaluation thus also offers the opportunity for feedback and advice to help the candidate to develop in an optimal way as a group leader at IGB.

In the case of a negative evaluation result: termination of the tenure track process.

Negative evaluations reflect clear cases where criteria are not met and remediation is unlikely.

Final evaluation

In order to allow sufficiently timely notification, the **final evaluation**, based on the **overall criteria** mentioned above, is being organized in Month 64 and completed in Month 66.

At the end of the second phase, the **Mentoring and Evaluation Committee** will submit the evaluation report to the Directorate. The Directorate based on that report formulates a proposal for decision, which is discussed at the LGI. Then the Director takes the final decision.

In the case of a positive evaluation: permanent contract as senior group leader.

In the case of a negative evaluation result: termination of the tenure track process.

All mentioned criteria need to be met to achieve a positive evaluation. A positive evaluation in case one of the criteria is not met needs to be justified by the Mentoring and Evaluation committee and needs to be rooted in proof of extra-ordinary achievements on other criteria or extra-ordinary circumstances. The qualitative criteria, including mentorship and commitment to IGB, are also important for establishing as a permanent researcher at IGB.

When a tenure track position is started, it is guaranteed, except in situations that could not be foreseen (e.g. unexpected major top-down cut in institute funding), that there are resources to hire the candidate permanently in case she/he achieves to expectations. Lack of resources can thus (except in the mentioned unforeseen cases) not be invoked to not grant the position.