

**IGB**Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology
and Inland Fisheries

GUIDELINE

Tenure Track Procedure for Junior Group Leaders

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

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Objective

Setting up new working groups at IGB by staffing junior group leader positions in a tenure track process with the following 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 two to six years of postdoctoral research;
- two-phase process typically extending over a period of 2 x three years (72 months in total) and intermediate evaluation after three years; extension of the period can be applied for in the case of parental leave, severe diseases or care of relatives; shorter periods can apply for more experienced candidates or for exceptionally successful candidates who have reached all aims well ahead in time;
- the intermediate and final evaluation are carried out by the mentoring and evaluation committee; if desired by the tenure track scientist or by members of the mentoring and evaluation committee, one or more members of IGB's scientific advisory board (SAB) can be involved in the evaluation process;
- external reviews:
 - external reviews are not necessarily part of the intermediate or final evaluation but can be included based on a decision of the mentoring and evaluation committee or on demand of the tenure track scientist. They serve as additional information but not for overruling or replacing the assessment by the committee.

- an external review is asked for in year four – not as part of an evaluation, but to provide advice and guidance to the tenure track scientist on progress, performance and opportunities for improvement. This does not apply if external reviews have already been included in the intermediate evaluation.
- after successful evaluation at the end of phase two: 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 the department where the candidate establishes their group;
- the director of IGB;
- an IGB mentor, chosen within the first year by the tenure track candidate themselves;
- a fourth member from the IGB senior scientists, from another department.

Each committee should include at least one female scientist.

There is an annual evaluation meeting by the mentoring and evaluation committee during which progress and problems can be discussed. Every year the timing and criteria can be revisited 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.

Overall 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 certain 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 six years)

- potential of the research group that has been developed, innovation potential, successful implementation, strategic fit within IGB;
- evidence of indicators of international esteem and commitment (e. g. strong positive evaluation by expert reviewers, scientific awards, nominations for international committees, editorial boards of renowned journals, membership in expert groups, invited and keynote talks);
- at least six accepted publications of the research group in top 15 % journals of the discipline or science fields relevant to IGB (or contributions that are judged equivalent by the mentoring and 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 committee, e. g. second, third or last authorship on a multi-author paper in a high profile journal) (submitted papers and papers in preparation do not count, but the mentoring and evaluation committee can decide on also counting a manuscript in revision with minor comments, and can consider papers in pre-publication repositories to assess quality and innovative nature of very recent work);

- at least one third-party funded project that has been successfully obtained as PI, plus proof of active applications for at least one other project – 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 assessment by the head of department (e. g. based on annual appraisal meetings) and, if needed, impressions of other IGB members who actively interacted with the candidate or group members (e. g. as second advisors of doctoral candidates);
- commitment to scientific service (e. g. reviewing, organization of workshops, convening sessions, sharing expertise and teaching);
- commitment to IGB, also beyond science (e. g. participation in retreats, outreach events, committees, mentorship beyond the own group).

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 an eye for the broader context of their 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 can be agreed on, these

- are defined by the mentoring and evaluation committee after consultation with the candidate in the first year of the tenure track procedure;
- adapt the general criteria listed above and below to be aligned with the situation of the individual scientist, their personal situation, research field, and career stage.

Intermediate evaluation and criteria

After three years, there is an intermediate evaluation. The procedure involves that the tenure track candidate submits a written report to the committee, followed by a meeting with an oral presentation of its content and a discussion with and without the candidate. The procedure for this intermediate evaluation starts in month 31 and is finalized in month 32. This deadline can in some cases be exceeded, for instance when the candidate asks for external reviews.

Criteria

- successful application for at least one own third-party fund (minimum 100,000 €, at least one personnel position) as PI, or proof of multiple applications with very positive evaluations (reflecting potential) as PI (in some cases, the mentoring and evaluation committee might judge projects as co-PI equivalent if a key role is played in a very large project);

- at least two submitted papers to a leading journal (top 15 %) that is relevant for the topics 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) published on work conducted during the time at IGB;
- additionally, at least four other accepted publications during the tenure track period in internationally peer-reviewed journals, as lead author or as co-author through collaboration;
- promising path towards building up an innovative and internationally recognized team that has a strategic fit with IGB with some clear examples / evidence;
- potential for high international visibility with some clear examples / evidence;
- path towards shaping an individual profile as an independent researcher (while recognizing the need for effective and broad collaboration);
- successful consolidation of skills and expertise with some clear examples / evidence;
- 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 with some clear examples / evidence.

The **mentoring and evaluation committee** will submit their intermediate evaluation report to the director. It will also be communicated to the candidate for reasons of transparency and to allow the candidate to ask for factual corrections. The drafting of this report is the responsibility of the head of department. There should be consensus on the report by the committee. Based on that report the director formulates a proposal for a decision, which is discussed within the IGB Board. Then the director takes the final decision.

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 establishment as a permanent researcher at IGB. In the case of a positive evaluation: progress to phase two of the tenure track process. At this stage, the mentoring and evaluation committee can also provide feedback on the aspects that need further development or where there are worries, and the candidate can request specific advice by the committee on certain decisions or challenges. The intermediate evaluation thus offers the opportunity for feedback and advice to help the candidate to develop in an optimal way as a strong group leader at IGB.

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

Negative evaluations reflect cases where a considerable number of listed criteria are not or barely 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.

The **mentoring and evaluation committee** will submit the evaluation report to the director latest in month 66. Based on that report the director formulates a proposal for decision, which is discussed within the IGB Board. Then the director takes the final decision.

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

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

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 they fulfil expectations. Lack of resources can thus (except in the mentioned unforeseen cases) not be invoked to not grant the position.