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 collaboration[1].

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 Society[2]. All members of the MPI-AB are bound to MPG's Rules of Conduct for Good Scientific Practice[3].

This MPI-AB postdoc agreement applies regardless of funding sources and contract details unless it conflicts with the type of funding involved[4].

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 qualifications[4]. 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 industry[4]. The postdoc phase is time-limited. There are no regular transitions for postdocs towards advanced, possibly permanent positions at MPI-AB or within MPG[4]. MPI-AB employs postdocs by means of temporary contracts. Alternatively, postdocs may procure their own funding[4].

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 intervals[4]. 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 necessary[4].

3. Research Data

a. Data management is good scientific practice, ensuring that research can be verified, reproduced, and reused[5]. 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 progresses[6]. The following aspects are usually covered: data collection and description; metadata; storage and archiving; legal considerations and usage[6].
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 not[3]. MPI-AB is providing the required infrastructure to guarantee that information stored both digitally and in analog format is secured and remains accessible[3].
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 metadata[3].
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 data[7].
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 opportunity[3].

[5] rdm.mpdl.mpg.de/introduction/research-data-management/
[6] rdm.mpdl.mpg.de/before-research/data-management-plans/
[7] rdm.mpdl.mpg.de/

4. Publications and Inventions

a. We recognize the achievements of others and give credit where it is due[2]. All completed research results financed predominantly by public funds must be published in suitable, independent scientific media in good time[3].
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 publication[8].
c. MPI-AB and MPG are committed advocates of Open Science. Publications should therefore be Open Access whenever possible[9]. 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 repositories[3]. MPDL offers Open Access publications for all MPI-AB scientists in most of the relevant scientific research journals[10] and hosts an open research data repository[11].
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 law[12].

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 year[4]. 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 where[4].
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/
[9] openaccess.mpg.de/policy
[10] mpdl.mpg.de/21-specials/50-open-access-publishing.html
[11] rdm.mpdl.mpg.de/mpdl-services/edmond/
[12] mpg.de/913603/erfinderleitfaden.pdf

management[4]. 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 Germany[13].
c. The Equal Opportunities Officers offer help and advice related to childcare; work-life balance; and maternity protection in the lab[14].

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 misconduct[15].
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 Officers[15].
d. The Equal Opportunities Officers offer help and advice related to sexual discrimination, harassment, bullying, or racism[16].
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 work[17].

[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-integritaet.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

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INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Preamble

The relationship between postdoc, supervisor, and MPI-AB is stipulated in MPI-AB's Postdoc Agreement which should be signed before the postdoc phase. The time-limited postdoc phase serves for the development of a scientific profile and the acquisition of additional qualifications[1]. 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 industry[1]. The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is designed to help in these aspects. It should be seen as a living document and shall be jointly amended whenever necessary. Postdoc and supervisor can agree on using other IDP forms.

1. Procedure

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 that the meeting has taken place (all.hr@ab.mpg.de). The postdoc and supervisor should take time and prepare for the meeting, fill in the questionnaire below and share it with each other so that both sides are well prepared for the meeting. MPI-AB also recommends the postdocs go through the AAAS assessment tool[2] in preparation for the meeting. After the meeting, the postdoc should provide the supervisor with the updated version of the IDP that is signed by both parties. The previous IDP serves as the basis for the review meeting and will be updated in each review meeting.

Date of last formal IDP meeting _____

[1] mpg.de/guidelines-postdocs
[2] myidp.sciencecareers.org

2. Quick Self-Evaluation

Before diving deeper into the questionnaire, the postdoc is encouraged to provide a quick self-evaluation of the period since the last IDP meeting by checking the following boxes.

How do you rate…

	☹	😕	😐	🙂	🤩
the development of your research project?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
the supervision and guidance you receive?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
your career perspective?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
your general well-being? (optional)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

☹ = urgently needs improvement; 😕 = needs improvement; 😐 = mostly satisfactory; 🙂 = happy with performance; 🤩 = very happy with performance / exceeding expectations

3. Research Project

The postdoc's research project is the focus of their time at MPI-AB. During the IDP meetings, the postdoc and supervisor should take a step back and focus on the big picture of the research project rather than the day-to-day business. Besides the scientific findings, an open and honest assessment of the postdoc's scientific skills and how they match the research project is crucial for the IDP meeting as well.

a) Review: The following research goals have been accomplished since the last IDP meeting:

b) Review: The following research goals have not yet been accomplished for the following reasons:

c) Review: What has gone (surprisingly) well since the last IDP meeting?

d) Outlook: The following SMART[3] research goals should be accomplished i) by the next IDP meeting and ii) by the end of the postdoc time at MPI-AB:

e) Resources: The following support is required to reach the research goals:

[3] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely

4. Supervision and guidance

Postdocs conduct independent research under the direction of their superiors. The degree of independence depends on the field of research and level of individual experience and shall be agreed on by the postdoc and their supervisor.

a) Review: How regularly have the postdoc and supervisor met to discuss the research project? Is there a constructive feedback and feedforward culture?

b) Outlook: What steps can be done to improve if the current and past situation is not optimal?

c) Resources: The following support is required to reach better mentoring and supervision:

5. Career Objectives

In addition to acquiring scientific knowledge through independent research, the time as a postdoc should also serve to gain more clarity about their career options and possible next steps. Should the postdoc pursue a career in academia, or are jobs in the private sector, public administration, or NGOs a better fit for their skills, interests, and values? In the fourth year after starting the first postdoc position, a comprehensive status review including an experienced scientist is mandatory[1]. Again, the AAAS assessment tool[2] might help to answer the questions.

a) Review: Where are the postdoc's strengths, what did they like to do, and what did they do besides the research project?

b) Outlook: Which career path best matches skills, interests, and values? What are the postdoc's short-, mid-, and long-term career goals (uncertain/vague ideas are OK!)? What is the next step immediately after the current position?

c) Resources: The following support is required to reach the career objectives:

6. General Well-Being (optional)

The postdoc phase should be a time of self-determined research and searching (and finding) one's own scientific profile. Since crucial career decisions are still open, it is also a time of certain uncertainties that some find stressful. General situations and individual relationships at work and in private life can also lead to stress. As an employer, MPI-AB and MPG offer a range of contact and counseling opportunities[4]. But changes in the workplace can improve the situation perhaps as well. In any case, the IDP meeting can also be a place to discuss this dimension of the postdoc's work.

a) Review: Does the postdoc feel too stressed at work? How is the work-life balance?

b) Outlook: What can be done to improve the situation?

c) Resources: The following support is required to reach better well-being:

[4] ab.mpg.de/329019/conflict-management

7. Timeline and Implementation

Talking about these topics is a good first step. However, it is also important to have a shared understanding of the next steps. Create a written action plan based on the discussion and especially integrated items listed under 3e, 4c, 5c, and 6c. Are these activities SMART?[3]

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

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CO-SUPERVISION AGREEMENT

Preamble

This document is intended to facilitate productive and cooperative working structures. Note that as an interpersonal agreement, it is not a change in the University or other structures – for purposes of administrative documents, the PI remains the official supervisor.

As noted in the agreement, when possible the co-supervisor should be on the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) or included as a part of other organizational structures of the project. However, sometimes this is not possible – for example when a collaboration develops after the start of the project. In such cases, this co-supervision agreement should be used to clarify expectations, contributions, decision structures, and project communication, in the absence of formal inclusion on committees. While it was developed by MPI-AB postdoc representatives and science coordinators, it can be modified or adjusted as needed, or used by other labs or universities outside of MPI-AB.

1. Who is Involved

PI _____

Co-supervisor _____

Researcher _____

2. Project Description

3. Timeline of the Project

Total project duration _____

Supervision agreement duration _____

Notes on Co-supervisor and Researcher contract duration, for example, if contract duration is shorter than the total project duration or supervision agreement duration

4. Focus Scope of Co-Supervisor and Project Decisions

The Co-supervisor will direct research work in the areas of the agreed-upon scope and responsibilities, and will communicate project work and decisions regularly and as discussed below. If any particular aspects or decisions within the project should be discussed first by all parties (e.g. new experiments or use of resources), these should also be noted and discussed. Note: the focus scope of supervision can and should be revisited and discussed yearly or as appropriate for the project, and can be left blank if not yet known for new projects or collaborations.

Focus scope of Co-supervisor (e.g. experiments, data analysis, modeling, or general/entire project)

Aspects or decisions to be discussed with all parties: (e.g. experiments or resource use)

5. Communication and Meeting Structure

The PI, Co-supervisor, and Researcher will stay in regular contact regarding project development, progress, and results. Plans for communication can be specified here based on project and individual requirements, and should be updated as needed.

PI, Co-supervisor, and Researcher communication and meeting plans

PI and Co-supervisor communication and meeting plans

Co-supervisor and Researcher communication and meeting plans

Date of first meeting between PI, Co-supervisor, and Researcher _____

6. Scientific Results and Publication, including Authorship

Following best practices for collaborative project communication, authorship contributions and order of authorship need to be discussed at the project start (see additional suggestion section) and re-evaluated and discussed again when preparing publications. These discussions should consider changes in work that may have occurred during the course of the project. With this agreement, the PI, Co-supervisor, and Researcher acknowledge that authorship has been discussed and will be re-evaluated as appropriate during the course of the project. Additional suggestions for authorship practices are listed in footnote[1]

[1] Standards for authorship; DFG Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice: (wissenschaftliche-integritaet.de/en/code-of-conduct/authorship/)

- Each author is expected to have made genuine contributions to the development and conceptional design of the research project; or the gathering, collection, acquisition, or provision of data, software or sources; or the analysis/evaluation or interpretation of data, sources and conclusions drawn from them; or the drafting of the manuscript
- AND to have approved the submitted version (and any substantially modified version that involves the author's contribution to the study)
- AND to share responsibility for the publication unless explicitly stated otherwise.

What constitutes as a 'genuine contribution' is not a black-or-white issue, so at the beginning of each study, which contributions warrant first authorship, co-authorship, or acknowledgments should be discussed. When in doubt, we suggest to take a more 'inclusive approach', especially towards early-career researchers, i.e. students, PhDs and postdocs.

CRediT taxonomy. Collaborators can make various contributions to a study or project. We therefore suggest to use the CRediT taxonomy (Contributor Roles Taxonomy), which includes 14 roles, to represent the diverse roles played by contributors to research outputs. (credit.niso.org/)

7. Acknowledgement of Co-supervisor work

When possible, the Co-supervisor should be on the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) or included as a part of other organizational structures of the project. In all cases, and in particular, in the absence of other agreements or organizational structures, the PI recognizes the work of the Co-supervisor and agrees to acknowledge supervision duties, for example, to support listing of co-supervision experience where appropriate on a Resume/CV.

8. Changes of Agreement

This agreement should be discussed and re-evaluated on a yearly basis. This will ensure specific parts of the agreement can be updated as required or appropriate. Changes should be discussed and agreed upon by all project members.

In instances where a project member leaves, e.g. due to taking up a new position, this agreement will be discussed and the roles of each team member re-evaluated.

Date (Day/Month) of re-evaluation of scope and responsibilities _____

Signatures

By signing this document, the PI, Co-supervisor, and Researcher, acknowledge that they have read and discussed the above points.

_____	_____	_____
Signature PI	Signature Co-supervisor	Signature Researcher
_____	_____	_____
Name PI	Name Co-supervisor	Name Researcher
_____	_____	_____
Date	Date	Date