

International Max Planck Research School for Brain and Behavior

Proposal of Doctoral Work

By the 4th month after starting with the IMPRS, students are expected to electronically submit a written Proposal of Doctoral Work to the IMPRS coordination office. The purpose of this proposal is to sharpen the student's focus on specific research goals, clarify weaknesses or potential problems in the proposed research plan, and give the student experience in preparing a research proposal such as a grant or fellowship application.

It is strongly recommended that the research proposal be written in collaboration with the sponsoring PI, and be submitted to the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) 2 weeks prior to the first meeting of the TAC. Feedback from the TAC during the first advisory meeting will be focused on strengthening and directing the focus of the student's proposed doctoral research.

In some cases, the proposal may not be completed and submitted within the recommended first 4 months. If the student is unable to meet this deadline, they should submit a written request for an extension, signed by the student and their sponsoring PI, to the coordination office of the IMPRS for Brain and Behavior.

The written proposal should be single spaced, in 11pt Arial font on A4 (for Bonn) or standard 8"1/2 x 11" letter (for Florida) sheet of paper with 1 inch margins. The report should not exceed 10 pages, and should follow the below guidelines:

- a. **Title Page.** The proposal's title, student's name, sponsoring PI, date, and academic affiliation.
- b. **Summary.** A synopsis of the proposed project, including the rationale, a statement of specific research objectives, the experimental techniques to be utilized, and the potential significance of the work. Suggested length: ½ page.
- c. **State of the Field.** Explanation of the background information that is necessary to understand the scope and significance of the proposed project. This section should contain a critical evaluation of the existing knowledge in the field and should identify the areas where the project will expand the state of the field. Suggested length: 2 pages.
- d. **Specific Aims.** Provide a clear, concise point-by-point summary of the goals of the research project. Suggested length: ½-1 page.
- e. **Experimental Design and Methods.** Discuss in detail the experimental design and methods that will be used to accomplish the specific aims of the previous section. Provide a tentative sequence or timeline for the completion of the experiments. Include information on expected data analysis and interpretation, including group size and statistical tests. Discuss potential difficulties or limitations of the proposed experiments and alternative approaches that could be used to achieve the aims. Suggested length: 3 pages.
- f. **Preliminary Data.** Succinctly describe preliminary experiments that justify the rationale or demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed aims. Suggested length: 2-3 pages.
- g. **References.** List all references cited in the text, using the J. Neuroscience citation standards.