GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN

GGNB
Göttingen Graduate Center for Neurosciences, Biophysics, and Molecular Biosciences

GGNB Admission Panels

Recommendations for Applicants and Supervisors

The interview with the GGNB admission panel has the character of a scholarly exam. Thorough preparation by the candidates is therefore crucial for success.

Beyond the ability to present the rationale, strategy, methodology, results, and conclusions of past work (e.g., MSc) and the rationale, strategy, methodology, potential, risks, and contingencies of work planned for the PhD phase, we expect from the candidates a comprehensive knowledge of the biological/physical/chemical and methodological background of the past and planned projects. To prepare for the admission panel, it is advisable for the applicant and the supervisor to discuss the PhD project in depth and rehearse the presentation.

Make sure to prepare well as a re-try is only possible in exceptional cases and upon recommendation by the admission panel. In case of final rejection, it is not possible to apply for another GGNB program, unless the admission panel recommends this based on the criterion of thematic fit.

General guidelines:

- Please send an updated exposé of your planned PhD project at least 7 days before the panel date to the GGNB Office (in case it has changed in the meantime).
- Admission Panel:
  - Presentations: 12 minutes on Master and PhD project
  - Discussion: 10 minutes
  - The attendance of the supervisor during the project presentations of the candidate is optional. However, the supervisor is not allowed to contribute to the discussion and must leave before the panel members deliberate on the admission or rejection of the candidate.

Criteria for admission include:

- **Presentation of MSc and/or PhD project**
  - Is the presentation well-prepared and comprehensible?
    - Both parts of the presentation should include brief introductions to the scientific background.
    - While the presentation on previous MSc work should also include substantial results, the presentation of the planned PhD work should preferentially highlight the rationale, aims, and strategy.
    - Extensive presentation of data from previous work of the host lab generated by others should be avoided. Instead, it is important to give insights into the background of the topic and into the methods and technologies that will be used.
    - Possible collaborations with other labs, if any, should be highlighted.
  - The time limits must be strictly adhered to.

- **Knowledge of research topic and related topics**
  Examples of questions:
  - What is the history of the topic? What discoveries led to the current plan?
  - What are the current concepts and open questions?
  - What is its relevance for basic research and – if applicable – for applications, translational medicine, or society?
- **Knowledge of MSc and/or planned PhD project**
  Examples of questions:
  - What are/were the aims of each project? What is/was the working hypothesis?
  - How do the aims provide conceptual advance - e.g., do they promote a technique, advance insights into a disorder, or address a basic questions of your field?
- **Knowledge of methods**
  Examples of questions:
  - How do they work? What are the physical, chemical, biological principles?
  - What are their limitations?
  - What are the strengths?
- **Critical discussion of alternative approaches and expected project outcome**
  Examples of questions:
  - Which alternative approaches did you consider?
  - Why did you choose the proposed approach compared to the alternatives?
  - What are the expected obstacles? What are your contingency plans?
- **Excellent textbook knowledge**
  - Be sure to know the foundations of the program's scientific disciplines.
  - Be prepared to explain textbook knowledge underlying any topic you address.
- **Motivation**
  Examples of questions:
  - Why did you choose this topic for your PhD?
  - Why do you wish to join GGNB?
  - Where do you see advantages/disadvantages over other GAUSS PhD programs?