



EVEREST

EVOLUTION AND ECOLOGY
RESEARCH SCHOOL TÜBINGEN

Bylaws

(Geschäftsordnung)

<http://www.everest.uni-tuebingen.de>

Version: 25 February 2022

1. Preamble

- The Evolution and Ecology Research School Tübingen EVEREST offers structured doctoral training as specified in its Key Principles (Bestimmungen) that were approved on 15 April 2013, and amended on 15 November 2016 and 26 April 2019.
- These Bylaws (Geschäftsordnung) complement the Key Principles and explain the detailed organisation and functioning of EVEREST.

2. Status

- EVEREST started as a joint activity of professors from the involved partner institutions.
- A grant from the VW Foundation financed its establishment and first three years (2012–2015).
- EVEREST PhD students graduate at the Faculty of Science of the University of Tübingen.

3. Tasks of EVEREST

- Observe standards for good scientific practice
- Offer reliable supervision and mentoring
- Support students through thesis advisory committees (TACs)
- Request supervision agreement for quality control
- Promote interdisciplinary doctoral training
- Offer courses in relevant scientific fields
- Instruct doctoral students in professional skills
- Prepare doctoral students for their graduation
- Facilitate personal exchange within the school
- Assist in obtaining scholarships or grants
- Assure equal opportunities

4. Membership

- Scientists can become an EVEREST member provided formal authorization from the Faculty of Science to supervise doctoral students (= all Professors, but also some junior scientists).
- Members work broadly in evolutionary biology or ecology.
- Memberships are individual: Professors as well as other PIs from one unit or research group can become members. If a professor is not a member, PIs from within her/his unit can be member.
- To become a member, scientists informally apply to the EVEREST board. Membership then needs approval by the EVEREST Steering Committee.
- Membership of EVEREST can be cancelled on short notice, but this requires that the continuation of the member's supervision is ensured. In unclear cases, the board will assign a replacement.
- PhD students whose supervisor cancelled his/her membership can still obtain the EVEREST certificate, assuming all other requirements are fulfilled.

5. Responsibilities and privileges of members

- Members are committed to EVEREST.
 - They support the goals of EVEREST internally and externally.
 - Their PhD students working in a field that fits within the scope of EVEREST are informed about, and enrolled in, EVEREST. This is the responsibility of the supervisor.
 - They strive to increase EVEREST-internal scientific collaboration.
 - They take a fair share of EVEREST's task and aims, including (minimal) administrative tasks such as participation in the Steering Committee and its meetings.

- They organise the Meeting of Students in Evolution and Ecology (Meeting StEvE) on a yearly basis, alternating between members of Geosciences and Biology.
- They participate in Thesis Advisory Committees (TAC).
- They offer course places in advanced training courses. Topic, time and location should be sent to the coordinator 2 months in advance.
- They assure that membership fees (see *Budget*) are paid without delay.
- Members have the following privileges
 - Their PhD students receive additional guidance through their personal EVEREST Thesis Advisory Committee. This support is the main direct benefit from being a member of EVEREST.
 - Only enrolled PhD students can present at Meeting StEvE. Depending on the availability of presentation slots, MSc students or young postdocs from member groups can also present.
 - Members can obtain support from the EVEREST coordinators and speakers (but see **15.**).
 - They can propose speakers for the Hilgendorf Lecture series.
 - They can actively participate in defining the policy and function of EVEREST, and participate in all EVEREST programmes and activities.
 - They can use the corporate design (job adverts, letterhead, homepage).
 - They have full voting rights in the Steering Committee, and can be represented by a co-worker if not available in person.
 - They can mention EVEREST in grant applications for e.g. PhD or grad school funding, or for advertising a position.

6. Student hiring and registration

- Advertisements: Available PhD positions are advertised with the EVEREST (and university) logo (template available). Where possible, advertisements are coordinated with EVEREST colleagues to increase visibility. They should indicate that the candidate will be enrolled in EVEREST. Exceptions apply when the topic is out of EVEREST's field of interest or students will be enrolled in other graduate school systems. Prospective students are informed about EVEREST, and the need to initiate registration with the EVEREST programme after registration as a PhD student.
- Formal registration as a PhD student is with the Faculty of Science, and is followed by registration in EVEREST.
- The Faculty of Science requires two formal supervisors (see: Rules and Guidelines for Doctoral Studies at the Faculty of Science). The first is the PhD supervisor. The second does not need to be an EVEREST member. External (international) scientists are possible and encouraged.
- Students enrol in EVEREST by filling out and submitting the registration form.
- Enrolment is final after submission of the supervision agreement form, signed by all members of the Thesis Advisory Committee before or during the first TAC-meeting within 3 months after registration at the Faculty of Science.
- Students enrolled in EVEREST cannot be enrolled in another graduate programme simultaneously. Exceptions need approval from the EVEREST Board.
- A tick list for new students guides them through the enrolment process:
<https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/47924>

7. Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

- The goal of the TAC is to follow and optimise the progress of a PhD project, and to make recommendations to the student and the supervisor on any relevant aspect (scientific topic, methodology, effectiveness, quality, cooperation, training, outreach, career planning, etc.). It identifies or anticipates problems, and offers solutions.
- The TAC is **not** meant to replicate the student's "home environment", but should **expose** a student to external views, ideas, suggestions, compliments and constructive criticism from peers.

- **TAC composition**
 - Three TAC members is the minimum, up to 5 are possible.
 - TAC members are not necessarily identical to the thesis reviewers or oral defence examiners.
 - TAC members are usually scientists (Professors, Postdoc PIs) that are formally allowed to supervise their own PhD students. However, it is acceptable to have one TAC member who has not yet obtained this authority (PhD required. E.g. junior postdocs in an EVEREST group).
 - One TAC member is the PhD supervisor.
 - At least one TAC member is from outside the research field. EVEREST members are first choice, but including a non-EVEREST member (external, international scientists in particular) is encouraged. Biology students have at least one member from the Geosciences, and *vice versa*.
 - The TAC is proposed by the PhD supervisor and student. In case of difficulties finding members, the EVEREST coordinators can make recommendations or help establishing contact to individual members.
 - The TAC composition is confirmed by the Board and the PhD supervisor.
- **TAC Timing:** First meeting within 3 months after registration (date fixed at registration). During each TAC, the next TAC date is fixed (to be changed when necessary). One meeting per year is compulsory (irrespective of the duration of the PhD). More are possible on demand (e.g. by student or supervisor). TAC meeting dates are communicated to the coordinators through the TAC protocol.
- **TAC Meetings** are prepared by the PhD student and chaired by a guest member (not the PhD supervisor) who fills out the protocol. The student presentation does not exceed 15 min (if presented uninterrupted) and initiates the discussion. The meeting ends with 5-10 min of private exchange between student and TAC members excl. supervisor, and 5-10 min for all TAC members incl. supervisor, excl. student. Total meeting duration is 1-2 h.
- TAC members evaluate student progress and give recommendations on how to continue.
- From the third year, specific advice on thesis submission and defence is provided. Career plans are discussed to encouraging the candidate to think about their future in time.
- The chair assures that the protocol is signed by all and sends it to the EVEREST coordinators. All participants receive a digital scan.
- **TAC Guidelines:** All information regarding preparation, topics and protocols can be found here: <https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/47924>

8. Skill development and incentives for PhD students

- Students must meet the credit point requirements outlined in the EVEREST Key Principles. The following table summarises the required credit point components, split into a **fixed** component (grey background in the following table) and a **flexible** component (white background).

Type	Duration	Frequency	Content	CP	Work load Contact / self-studies
PhD retreat	2-4 days	Attend once at least	Talks of doctoral students, discussion rounds about (planned) work with EVEREST faculty	2	20h/40h
Meeting StEvE	1-2 days	Annually, ≥ 1 presentation required	Posters and talks about the work of the doctoral students.	1	15h/15h
Doctoral student seminar	2 h each	approx. monthly Host 1, attend 14	Talks or demonstrations of doctoral students about their projects and methods. Supervisors are excluded to provide an informal discussion platform	2	30h/20h
Scientific and transferable Skills	---	---	Skill development course work (e.g. scientific writing + presenting, statistics, method skills etc.)	10	7 max.
	---	---	Active participation at workshops or conferences (oral or poster presentations)		5 max.
	---	---	Undergraduate teaching and student supervision		3 max.
	---	---	Others (in agreement with EVEREST coordinators)		3 max.

- Current details on credit point regulations are available from the EVEREST website (<https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/47924>).
- Students are encouraged to recognise the merits of commitment for their future career:
 - Pro-actively (co)organise and initiate (TACs, meetings, PR, etc.)
 - Suggest speakers, courses, summer/winter schools
 - Talk to visiting scientists and speakers
 - Learn new ideas and techniques from fellow students, bridge gaps
 - Attend seminars and meetings
 - Go beyond activities that offer credits
 - Anticipate expectations: Do it (before being asked to)

9. PhD thesis evaluation

- Thesis submission, evaluation and defence are co-ordinated by the Faculty, not by EVEREST. Formal graduation at the faculty precedes EVEREST graduation.
- PhD reviewers:** The Faculty of Science requests at least two reviews. EVEREST recommends that at least one external reviewer is from outside the university.
- PhD defence examiners:** EVEREST expects that at least two of the four oral examiners are from other labs than the one in which the thesis was written. These examiners are unrelated to the PhD student's subject. TAC members and thesis reviewers can, but do not need to be examiners. At least one external examiner from outside Tübingen is recommended.
- The public PhD defence of an EVEREST student is announced to all EVEREST students and members to allow broad attendance.

10. EVEREST Graduation

- After formal graduation by the Faculty *and* fulfilment of the EVEREST requirements, EVEREST students receive the EVEREST certificate and their transcript of records.
- A pre-graduation transcript can be given to students on request, e.g. when applying for a position.

11. EVEREST Structure

- The core institution of EVEREST is the Steering Committee (“Beirat”), which discusses and approves EVEREST’s long-term policy. The Board (“Geschäftsführender Vorstand”) is responsible for the daily operations. Both are led by the speaker or vice-speaker and assisted by the coordinators. An External Advisory Board evaluates EVEREST (typically every three years). The administration of EVEREST consists of two coordinators, one Hilgendorf series organiser, and a secretary. In the following, these structures are explained one by one.
- **Election procedures:** For all positions within the Board (2 speakers, 2 board members, 2 coordinators, 2 student representatives), the election period is 2 years and re-elections are possible. One position per “role” each is occupied by a representative from Biology and the Geosciences, respectively. EVEREST strives to achieve gender balance. If a representative resigns before the mandate ends, a temporary replacement is elected on short notice, and needs confirmation during the next routine election.

12. Speakers

- EVEREST has a speaker and a vice speaker, elected by the Steering Committee every two years.
- The speakers represent the interests of EVEREST inside and outside the University of Tübingen, institutions for extramural funding and the public.
- The speakers meet regularly with the coordinators and take routine decisions on daily management. Decisions that require broader agreement are discussed by the EVEREST Board or in the EVEREST Steering Committee. The speakers and the PhD students can meet on request for reciprocal exchange of views and wishes (e.g. DOSEs, Meeting StEvE, PhD retreat). A key task of the speakers is also to take care of a fair distribution of tasks among coordinators, board members, secretaries and members.
- Speakers cannot send representatives if not able to attend a Board meeting in person.

CURRENT STATE (Apr 2019)

Speaker and vice-speaker are Prof. Hervé Bocherens (Geosciences) and Prof. Katja Tielbörger (Biology), respectively (elected 09 April 2019).

13. EVEREST Board

- The EVEREST Board is the executive institution of EVEREST and responsible for running operations, organisation, budget management and internal and external communication.
- The speakers, two additional EVEREST Board members, the EVEREST coordinators, and two student representatives make up the EVEREST Board.
- The two additional Board members are elected by the Steering Committee every two years. They can send a representative from among the EVEREST members when not able to attend in person.
- The competences of the EVEREST Board extend to all subjects that are not regulated by laws of the state of Baden-Württemberg, the University of Tübingen or the Max Planck Institutes or via cooperation agreements with other institutions.
- The EVEREST Board prepares the Steering Committee Meetings and reports to the latter.

- The speakers make recommendations to the Steering Committee concerning the strategic and organisational development of EVEREST (e.g. new drafts of the Key Principles and Bylaws).
- In addition, the EVEREST Board executes the implementations for quality control as defined by the Steering Committee.
- Additional responsibilities include decisions about credit point assignment to doctoral students where necessary.
- The Steering Committee can assign further responsibilities to the EVEREST Board.

CURRENT STATE (Apr 2019)

Board members are currently the speakers (see 12), Prof. Annett Junginger and Prof. Oliver Bossdorf (elected 09 Apr 2019), two EVEREST coordinators (see 15), and two student representatives (see 16).

14. EVEREST Steering Committee (SC)

- The SC is the central institution of EVEREST. It defines intermediate and long-term planning as well as the overall scope of the school.
- The SC includes the EVEREST Board, all EVEREST members (or their representatives), and the Hilgendorf series organiser. All have equal voting rights.
- The SC meets at least twice a year.
- Meetings are announced by the coordinators one month in advance via email. In urgent cases, the speakers can shorten this period of notice.
- A call for a meeting includes a preliminary agenda. Any SC member can propose topics to be sent to the coordinators at least two weeks before the meeting. The final agenda must reach the members one week before the meeting. Topics not on the agenda can be discussed if all meeting attendants approve. In such cases, absent members must have the opportunity to express their opinion or vote in written form.
- The EVEREST speaker(s) chair the SC meetings. They decide on the order of the topics on the agenda as well as on the mode of voting.
- Members not able to attend excuse themselves. They can name a representative to attend and vote for them.
- Decisions are typically taken by voting during SC meetings, but email-voting is possible if no member disagrees with this procedure.
- Resolutions of the SC are passed with a simple majority. Abstention does not count as a vote. In the case of equality of votes, the vote of the chairing speaker decides the resolution.
- The discussions and resolutions of the SC are protocolled by the coordinator(s). The protocol includes time and location of the meeting, participant names, the agenda and a summary of the discussions and resolutions. The protocol is sent to all members of the SC as soon as possible.

15. Coordinators

- EVEREST has two coordinators, elected by the Steering Committee every two years. The Steering Committee strives for asynchronous replacement of the coordinators.
- The coordinators take care of the day-to-day business in close consultation with the EVEREST students and EVEREST Board. They initiate EVEREST activities, manage the internet site, and take care of exchange between students, supervisors and the administration. They prepare and protocol the Meetings of the Steering Committee as well as the EVEREST Board.
- The coordinators are responsible for the security of personal (student) data. Summarizing statistics are published regularly on the EVEREST website.
- The coordinators are also neutral contact persons for students and can mediate in case of problems (but see 17).

- The coordinators are not responsible for tasks that are normally carried out by EVEREST members or students. For specific activities that take too much of their time, they can be assisted by student assistants paid from the EVEREST budget, following approval by the board.

CURRENT STATE (Feb 2022)

The coordinators are Dr. Henri Thomassen (Biology) and Dr. Sireen El-Zaatari (Geosciences).

16. Student representatives

- The attendees of the meeting of all doctoral students of EVEREST elect two student representatives for a mandate of two years, not exceeding the duration of their PhD.
- The student representatives are members of the EVEREST Board and present and discuss the subjects and concerns of the students of EVEREST.

CURRENT STATE (Feb 2022)

Student representatives are Effrosyni Roditi (Palaeoanthropology, elected in 2021) and Frank Reis (Plant Evolutionary Ecology, elected in Dec 2020).

17. Ombudsperson

- Arising conflicts in the supervisor-student relationship should best be addressed and solved early on **within TAC** committees.
- For cases in which TACs fail to rest the conflict, EVEREST strives to establish a system that provides PhD supervisors as well as EVEREST PhD students explicit contact options to resolving conflicts:
- **Within EVEREST**, the Steering Committee determines two ombudspersons, one from within the Geosciences to support Biology students, one from within Biology to support Geoscience students.
- **Beyond EVEREST**, we seek to establish a board of ombudspersons in reciprocal collaboration with other graduate programs in the Science Faculty, so that external scientists act as ombudspersons for any given program. This panel can be called if the above options fail.

CURRENT STATE (Apr 2019)

EVEREST-Ombudsperson Geosciences (for Biology students): Annett Junginger

EVEREST-Ombudsperson Biology (for Geosciences students): Katharina Foerster

18. Administrative support

- Budget and administration are supported by a secretary, who assists the two coordinators only.

CURRENT STATE (Sep 2020)

Helen Donath (Biology, EVE Institute) is the EVEREST secretary.

19. Hilgendorf Lecture

- The Hilgendorf Lecture is organised by the Hilgendorf series organiser, elected by the Steering Committee.
- The Hilgendorf series organiser has full voting rights in the Steering Committee.
- In addition, she/he reports suggestions for Hilgendorf speakers to the EVEREST Board, and there has a voting right in the final decision.
- All EVEREST members can suggest future Hilgendorf lecturers to the series organiser, who keeps a list of suggestions.

- Hilgendorf lecturers are internationally renowned scientists, known for being eloquent and inspiring.
- We strive to obtain a good balance across disciplines and gender.
- There are 3 to 4 lectures per semester.
- Hosts cover traveling costs. EVEREST covers accommodation in Tübingen (max. 2 nights) and an honorarium. Detailed information is available on the EVEREST website.

CURRENT STATE (Feb 2021)

Dr. Dorothee Drucker (Geosciences) is the Hilgendorf series organiser.

20. External Advisory Board

- The External Advisory Board consists of 3-5 professors who are recruited internationally by the Steering Committee and whose research topics relate to EVEREST.
- They are invited in the context of the annual Meeting of Students in Evolution and Ecology (Meeting StEvE), typically every three years. In order to assure a carry-over of information from previous and to future EAB visits, it is our aim to assure that two of the board members are serving their second term, whereas the others two are on their first term. The maximum mandate is two terms.

CURRENT STATE (Nov 2018)

Prof. Mikael Fortelius (Uni Helsinki), Prof. Tracy Kivell (Uni Kent), Prof. Marc Naguib (Uni Wageningen). Tracy Kivell and Marc Naguib indicated their willingness to be on the EAB in 2021.

21. Budget

- **Income:** The member fee is 500 € minimum per year, for all members.
 - This is irrespective of whether a member currently has students in EVEREST or not.
 - For one PhD student in EVEREST, this fee remains unchanged.
 - For two PhD students in EVEREST, it is raised to 1000 €
 - For 3 or more enrolled PhD students, the fee is fixed at the upper limit of 1500 €.
 - Students are counted at the level of **professorships**, embedded (junior) groups are automatically included, even if junior group PIs are themselves members of EVEREST (see 4). Fees are issued irrespective of student names, only the number of EVEREST PhD students per professorship on 31 Dec of a given year counts for that year.
 - Voluntary contributions to EVEREST are encouraged (e.g. higher fee, or assumption of costs for e.g. Meeting StEvE or Hilgendorf guests).
- **Expenditures:** What is paid or not can be decided by the coordinators and speakers for routine running costs. Unusually large regular costs or new types of expenditure need approval of the Steering Committee.
- A budget report is presented during a Steering Committee Meeting once per year.
- Typical costs are:
 - Activities, courses, lectures for PhD students (assumption of costs by host encouraged)
 - DOSEs, PhD student retreat, EVEREST day, External Advisory Board
 - Hilgendorf Lectures (partial assumption of costs by host expected)
 - Meeting StEvE (partial assumption of costs by host expected)
 - Office costs (kept minimal, largely absorbed by existing offices)
 - External Advisory Board – once every three years

22. Amendments

- The EVEREST Board and the Steering Committee check the Key Principles (Bestimmungen) and Bylaws (Geschäftsordnung) on structure and organization once per year and approve changes.

23. Ratification

- The first EVEREST Bylaws were unanimously approved by the Steering Committee on 11.10.2013.
- A first revision was approved through voting by the Steering Committee **on 21.07.2017.**
- This second revision was approved through E-Mail voting by the Steering Committee **on 26.04.2019**