



## **Bylaws of the iFIT Cluster of Excellence PhD Training Program**

### **§1 Mission**

The Cluster of Excellence 2180 "Image-guided and Functionally Instructed Tumor Therapies" (iFIT) is the only oncology cluster of excellence in Germany. The mission of the iFIT Cluster of Excellence PhD Training Program is to promote graduate education, scholarship, and research; to support individuals in the pursuit of excellence; to foster innovative, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary activities; and to maintain high ethical and academic standards in graduate studies. This is achieved in three key research areas: Functionally Instructed Molecular Therapies (A), Immunotherapies (B) and Molecular and Functional Multiparametric Imaging (C).

### **§2 Eligibility**

The program is open for all doctoral students (including PhD, Dr. rer. nat., Dr. sc. hum.; subsequently referred to as PhD students), who are actively working on dedicated iFIT projects: All iFIT group leaders (PIs, AIs, group leaders) are invited to inform the iFIT Office about their eligible group members. To participate, it is not necessary that the PhD students are financed by iFIT.

Students who have already started their PhD studies before the start of the program can have their previous achievements credited. Please contact the iFIT Office for further information.

### **§3 Commitment**

iFIT PIs, AIs and group leaders who enroll their PhD students to the program are committed to support PhD students from other iFIT groups by providing lab internships, mentorship and data club visits that are required for the completion of the program. If the number of PhD students from a single lab exceeds 2 p.a., the supervisor agrees to provide a staggered number of data club and lab internship opportunities to other participants in the PhD Training Program. PhD students will independently have to approach the PIs, AIs and group leaders in order to fulfill the PhD Training Program requirements.

### **§4 Program Structure**

The core element of the PhD Training Program is the individual research project that is to be submitted as a doctoral thesis and defended orally. The program offers a broad portfolio to develop and enhance skills and expertise of students, tailored to the iFIT research program. It aims especially at linking students from the three areas to widen their knowledge and to gain a maximum of cooperation within the iFIT projects.

Therefore, there are some mandatory as well as some voluntary modules (see §5). Students can participate in the mandatory elements of the first track “PhD Training Program” and in return are entitled to benefit from its offers.

Students additionally have the opportunity to apply for the second track “PhD Training Program PLUS\*” (see §6) and benefit from further support and benefits if accepted. Financial benefits in either program track are limited to three (travel funds) and one (project-related expense, PLUS\*) payment(s) each.

## **§5 Requirements**

In order to be able to participate in the PhD Training Program, the PhD student will have to provide a letter of support by their supervisor where both will confirm that they have understood the program bylaws. In addition, the PhD student will have to provide proof that a university faculty has accepted them as a PhD student.

### Data Clubs:

In addition to the regular mandatory data clubs (lab meetings or journal clubs) of their respective departments (confirmation of group leader necessary by the end of each year), all PhD students registered for the training program must attend at least two data clubs per year within the areas they are not a member of. I.e. a student from area A has to provide evidence of having attended a data club in area B and C. PhD students will independently have to approach the respective PIs, AIs and group leaders in advance when they want to participate in a specific data club.

### Lab internships:

All registered iFIT PhD students are required to visit the lab of one other area they are not part of for at least one week during the duration of their doctoral studies. The lab internship is individually designed and scheduled by the PIs, AIs and group leaders and communicated to the iFIT Office, who will inform the students about these options at the start of the program. PhD students will independently have to approach the respective PIs, AIs and group leaders to apply for these internships. It is mandatory that PhD students report about their internships to their own lab groups within their regular data club meetings and send a written report (max. 2 pages, A4, Arial 11, line spacing of 1) with the PhD student supervisor’s signature to the iFIT Office.

### Other mandatory elements:

- Orientation Day: iFIT Office will organize annually dedicated meetings for the enrolled and non-enrolled iFIT PhD students. These meetings are meant to inform about the iFIT Cluster of Excellence (research, structure, contact persons etc.) and the PhD program (current structure and updates). Incoming students have the opportunity to network and to get to know each other.
- Workshops: iFIT regularly offers various workshops. For members of the PhD program, it is mandatory to participate in three workshops (it is highly recommended to participate in the Scientific Writing workshop).
- iFIT Seminar Series and Lunch & Learn: iFIT organizes (usually once per month) dedicated seminars with renowned speakers and Lunch & Learn sessions on specific techniques, core facilities, ongoing projects or scientific regulations. Over the course of one year, the registered iFIT PhD students must attend at least 50% of the iFIT lectures (iFIT Seminar Series as well as iFIT Lunch & Learn Sessions).

- iFIT Annual Junior Academy Retreat: iFIT organizes an annual retreat especially for its young researchers.
- iFIT Symposium: iFIT organizes an annual scientific symposium for all of its members.

Additionally, science communication engagement (i.e. for the Kid's University, a student internship, Girls' Day etc.) or other iFIT activities led by the participating PhD students may be credited within the PhD Training Program upon written confirmation by their supervisors. All elements (orientation / workshops / lab internship / lectures / retreats / symposium), including the data clubs, are central to the Program and the development of the participating PhD students. As such, the iFIT Office may credit the doctoral students for the active organization of up to two events p.a. (conceptualization, planning and implementation) with a maximum amount of 500€ p.a. that can be used towards project or travel funding. If students wish to benefit from this approach crediting their engagement, this should be communicated to the iFIT Office prior to the PhD student-led event.

#### Benefits:

By attending the above-mentioned elements, students benefit from a broad offer of additional support for an excellent education and advanced possibilities for networking:

- Dedicated workshops
- Special scientific/social events
- Opportunity to expand one's own scientific horizon through collaboration with others
- Travel funds (up to 1,500€) for one conference p.a. (according to the iFIT bylaws).

#### **§6 iFIT PhD PLUS\*:**

In order to receive the iFIT PhD Program PLUS\* certificate, the PhD student must have completed all PhD Training Program requirements (§5) and provide the following upon start of the program:

- Letter of motivation (max. 1 page, A4, Arial 11, line spacing of 1)
- Project description (max. 2 pages, A4, Arial 11, line spacing of 1)
- Proof of a mentor

As soon as these documents have been reviewed favorably by the scientific selection panel, the PhD student will be officially invited to the PhD Training Program PLUS\*. The number of students p.a. is limited.

#### Additional requirements:

- Attendance at the iFIT Excellence Workshop
- Attendance at a second workshop (highly recommended to attend Advance Scientific Writing Workshop)
- One additional lab internship in one of the other iFIT areas with the same criteria as applied under §5 Requirements – lab internships

#### Benefits:

In addition to the abovementioned benefits of the iFIT PhD Training Program, participants of the PhD Training Program PLUS\* profit from:

- Travel funds (up to 2,500€) for one additional (international) conference p.a.
- Special mentoring: Each PhD student may choose an experienced iFIT scientist (mentor) to evaluate individual career prospects. Mentor and mentee will meet on a regular basis every 6 months or as required by the mentee. Mentoring is guaranteed for the duration of the PhD Training Program. For iFIT PI, AI or group leaders with students participating in the iFIT PhD program, it is mandatory to offer mentorship to PhD students outside her/his lab but to no more than two students simultaneously.
- The iFIT will grant financial support of up to 5k€ for PhD project-related expenses in justified cases. In case this financial support is requested, reporting to iFIT Office on how the funding was used and applied is mandatory and the content will be reviewed by the iFIT Office.
- National and international lab internships: Each PLUS\* participant is entitled to conduct an external lab internship (max. 4 weeks, to be organized by the student) that is directly related to iFIT's topics. iFIT will support the PhD student financially with the lab internship upon reasonable request.

## **§7 Scoring Sheet**

The scoring sheet is a central document that, when completed, will enable the PhD students to receive the completion certificate. This document certifies the PhD student's participation in all mandatory elements. This is confirmed with the signature from the host of each event (data clubs / lab internships). In the case of the Orientation Day, Lunch & Learn, Retreat, Symposium, Workshops and Distinguished Seminar Series, this will be signed off by the iFIT Office based on the attendance sheets. The participants will send the document to the iFIT Office when all mandatory elements of their responsibility are complete. The participants are also welcome to send the document yearly to the office for further verification and advice. If necessary the iFIT Office can request this document for additional verification.

## **§8 End of the program**

Once all elements have been completed by the student, a certificate of completion will be handed out to the student. As the PhD Training Program has two tracks, there will be a certificate for each track: "iFIT Cluster of Excellence PhD Training Program" and "iFIT Cluster of Excellence PhD Training Program PLUS\*".

## **§9 Suspension of benefits**

The iFIT Office holds the right to revoke travel funds in case the PhD student supervisor (iFIT PI, AI or group leader) does not comply with **§3 Commitment** stated above, or in case the PhD student does not attend 50% of the iFIT lectures (Seminar Series or Lunch & Learn Sessions) within a given year. For this, the iFIT Office will perform an evaluation at the end of the year regarding the fulfilment of the requirements and claim back any travel funds awarded in that year. The repayment request will be addressed to the respective department of the PhD student.

## **§10 PhD Training Program Representatives**

The two elected PhD Training Program Representatives will serve as a general voice for the PhD Training Program participant body. The representatives are responsible for advocating for the PhD Training Program participant body and relaying information to and from the PhD Training Program participant body. Furthermore, the PhD Training Program Representatives will be in charge of organizing their annual iFIT Junior Academy Retreat together with the iFIT Representatives (Early Career and Equal Opportunities) and the iFIT Office. The PhD Training Program participant body can approach the representatives to effect change within the program. The term of office has a duration of two years and a one-time re-election of the individual representatives is possible.

**§11 Changes in the bylaws**

All changes in these bylaws must originate as agenda items at a regular meeting of the Executive Board or Steering Committee. If approved by a majority of members present, the change will be submitted for a ratification vote by the Executive Board or Steering Committee.

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024

iFIT Office