

378

PhD
students

58% women
41% men
<1% non-binary

55

nations



66%

coming from
abroad



2024 PHD RECRUITMENT

FALL 2024 - cancelled

SPRING 2024



378 applicants



50 nations



55% women
44% men
<1% non-binary



39 interviewed candds.



77% international



54% women
46% men



13 new PhDs

10 central positions
3 group positions

69% international

62% women
38% men

TRAINING

The MDC training offer for the PhD students in 2024 contained a variety of scientific courses, as well as courses in science communication, management and career development. The PhD students Orientation Week was held twice, featuring a Newbies Symposium and an engaging After Hour, together with a new format, the **PhD Core Course**, a scientific training program provided by the MDC group leaders!



2024 Courses

Good scientific practice

Scientific and research-related training

Introduction to R and Graphics with R
Machine learning

Introduction to Statistics and Mixed Models

Data analysis in R and Python

Research data management

ChatGPT in Action: Enhancing Your Writing and
Coding Workflow

Science communication

Presentation skills

Coping with talk anxiety

Introduction to scientific writing

Visual science communication

Storytelling techniques for scientists

Presenting your research proposal: Pitch or Talk

Preparing to write your thesis

Thesis defense preparation

Grant writing

Intercultural communication

Project & Time management

From surviving to thriving

Project Management: Applying essential project
management tools

in cooperation with Helmholtz

Helmholtz Research Skill Development Course
Helmholtz Career and Leadership Courses

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Intercultural competence

Inclusive language

Mental health literacy

Transforming bias

Managing upwards

The power of introversion and
extraversion at work

Active bystander

Science and Skepticism: from facts to
respectful dialogue between research
and society

3

Student seminar series

Student Seminar in Medical Sys Biology

Student Seminar in Sys Medicine

X-Roads in Imaging and Data Science

2

Orientation Weeks

for new PhDs

1

Scientific Core Course

for new PhDs

HIGHLIGHTS 2024



Activities of the MDC Diversity project



In 2024, our DEI project application, "**MDC Diversity – a sustainable approach to an inclusive research community**" was engaged in organizing campaigns, training activities, and events aimed at fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment.

MDC DEI week 2024: Speak up!

From November 11–15, we came together for the second MDC Diversity Week. The week featured a variety of activities, including a kick-off session with an inspiring talk by Prof. Dr. Isabell Welpe, and trainings on topics such as “The Power of Introversion and Extraversion at Work” and “Active Bystander”. Highlights included a hands-on workshop illustrating the barriers faced by elderly individuals and people with physical or sensory impairments in daily life, and a screening of the captivating documentary “Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years – Power of Words.”

Forming ESSGs

Employee Support and Social Groups (ESSGs) are self-organized communities that create spaces for connection, support, and shared interests among colleagues. In 2024, three ESSGs were launched: the Neurodivergence Group, the LGBTQ+ Forum, and MDClimbs. They are also active on Mattermost. Explore these groups or take the initiative to start a new one!

European Mental Health Awareness Week

Our PhD-Rep Awareness team ran a great campaign to mark the European mental health awareness week, May 13 - 17. Throughout the week, they sent daily emails spanning the topics awareness, stress and depression, harassment and more. They organised a city hangout, a health-oriented coaching session with the MDC, and Coach Sylvie Tappert, launched a postcards and mental health slides campaign, organized exciting seminars in cooperation with Dragonfly, and much more. **Thank you all!**

HIGHLIGHTS 2024



Pride @ MDC - Equity in Science and Society

Organized by the MDC community for the third year in a row, the LGBTQ+ symposium was held on June 28, 2024, with the goal of building the network of diverse allies, and immersing in conversations that explore the topics of relevance to LGBTQ+ community. The event encompassed

several talks, touching upon topics such as “LGBTQI+ Economics,” or “On the operationalization of sex, gender and sexuality,” a session on “My MDC Experience,” and a panel discussion.



Our new DEI Manager and Inclusion Officer: Introducing Dr. Dilek Güven

*My name is Dr. Dilek Güven I am a political scientist and historian. I worked before on topics like racism, discrimination and multiculturalism at universities in Berlin, Athens and Istanbul. My role is to ensure that we foster an inclusive, supportive, and diverse environment. I work to address barriers, promote equity, and celebrate the unique backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences that you all bring to our community. Whether you have questions, need support, or want to get involved in diversity initiatives, please don't hesitate to reach out. **I'm excited to connect with all of you!***

EVENTS

17th International PhD Student Cancer Conference (IPSCC) Berlin 2024

From June 11–13, 2024, PhD students from the MDC hosted the 17th International PhD Student Cancer Conference (IPSCC). Organized by students for students since its inception in 2007, the IPSCC brings together PhD students from leading cancer research institutes across Europe. While the conference primarily focuses on basic and translational cancer research, it also welcomes students working in clinical, epidemiological, and other areas of cancer research. Keynote talks were given by Prof. Klaus Rajewsky (MDC), Prof. Sir Stephen Jackson (CRUK Cambridge), Prof. Florian Markowitz (Uni Cambridge) and Prof. Gabriele Bergers (KU Leuven). Program included student talks, poster sessions, workshops on topics of career progress or democratisation of science, a Patient Advocate panel session, and networking activities.



HIGHLIGHTS 2024



MDC-FMP PhD Retreat 2024: “The Olympic Games”



The MDC/FMP PhD retreat 2024 brought together 78 PhD students from two institutions for three days of scientific and networking activities at AHORN Seehotel in Templin. The event program featured presentations by PhD students (in the form of talks, "Chalk-Talks," or posters), keynote

address from Prof. Dr. Heribert Hofer (IZW Berlin), troubleshooting talks and social activities and workshops. Workshops were organized by the students and included team challenge games, career speed dating, an ultimate frisbee session, yoga, a mushroom-hunting excursion, and of course, the Olympic Games themed party.

The event was organized coordinated by MDC and FMP PhD representatives and volunteers.

Thank you again for your outstanding work!

(photo: Jose Nimo)



iNAMES meets WAMBIAN (in Berlin and Dakar, Senegal)



WAMBIAN is a network of scientists and researchers in West Africa dedicated to promoting the use of microscopy and bioimage analysis techniques in the region. It aims to provide training and support, foster collaboration, and encourage the sharing of resources among its members. Starting in early 2024, iNAMES doctoral researchers have been actively participating in the network's activities.

The imaging training course for 21 BSc, MSc, and PhD students, titled “WAMBIAN-iNAMES Course – Frugal Microscopy & Image Analysis Senegal 2024,” took place from December 2–7, 2024, in Dakar, Senegal, in collaboration with partners from Université Cheikh Anta Diop. The course was given by Peran Hayes (Systems Biology Imaging), Paula Santos (Birol Lab), Lison Guillaume (Niendorf Lab) and Facundo Rueda (Wolf/Klipp Lab).

(photo: Miriam Leuschner)

4 SPECIALISED RESEARCH SCHOOLS

iNAMES



iNAMES - MDC-Weizmann Helmholtz International Research School for Imaging and Data Science from the NAno to the MESo

- 1st iNAMES graduate: Marius Weismehl, Daumke Lab
- Successful iNAMES mid-term evaluation
- 1 first-author & 1 middle-author publication in 2024
- Monthly Student Seminars "X-Roads in Imaging and Data Science", Lecture Series "Frontiers in Biomedical Imaging and Image Analysis", Peer Mentor Group meetings
- iNAMES Summer School 24 "Intro to Statistics"
- iNAMES Winter School 24 "Intro to Machine Learning"
- 2 research stays of WIS researchers at the MDC

- **Outlook 2025:**

iNAMES PhD retreat 2025

iNAMES Summer School + Winter School

iNAMES Symposium 2025



Most recent paper: Northall, A., Doehler, J., Weber, M., **Tellez, I.**, Petri, S., Prudlo, J., ... & Kuehn, E. (2024). Multimodal layer modelling reveals in vivo pathology in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. *Brain*, 147(3), 1087-1099.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/awad351>

HEIBRiDS



4 Einstein Center Digital Future (ECDF) partners (Charité, HU Berlin, FU Berlin, TU Berlin)

6 Helmholtz Centers partners (MDC, AWI, DESY, DLR, GFZ, HZB)



- 9 first-author & 3 middle-author publications in 2024
- Participation in 11 national/international conferences
- 8 lectures at the HEIBRiDS Lecture Series
- HIDA/HEIBRiDS Hackathon on Computer Vision, February 27-29
- HEIBRiDS Retreat, April 9-10
- HEIBRiDS Looking back and ahead, end-of-project event, December 5

- **Outlook 2025:**

Joint events with the BIFOLD Graduate School

Paper highlight: ·M. Schott, **D. León-Periñán**,..., T.M. Pentimalli, ..., N. Karaiskos, and N. Rajewsky (2024). Open-ST: High-resolution spatial transcriptomics in 3D. *Cell*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2024.05.055>

4 SPECIALISED RESEARCH SCHOOLS

MDC Exchange Program in Medical Systems Biology



NYU



MRC Human Genetics Unit



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH



- Modification to MDC Exchange Program in Medical Systems Biology
- 3 student publications in 2024
- Two new students were recruited at MRC HGU for collaborative projects with co-supervisors at MDC
- Philipp Roth (Metzger lab) completed his 2-months exchange visit at NYU
- Philipp Stachel-Braum (Grosswendt lab) has started his first exchange visit at NYU

Outlook 2025:

- New partner institutions will be added to the program
- First students from MRC HGU will come to MDC for exchange

Paper highlight: **Nitsch L**, Lareau CA, Ludwig LS. Mitochondrial genetics through the lens of single-cell multi-omics. Nat Genet. 2024 Jul;56(7):1355-1365. doi: 10.1038/s41588-024-01794-8. Epub 2024 Jul 1. PMID: 38951641; PMCID: PMC11260401.

Emerald

7

hosting research institutes



Emerald
International PhD Programme
for Medical Doctors

24

MD/PhD positions including 2 positions at MDC



Emerald - International PhD Programme for Medical Doctors

Bridging the gap between the clinic and the lab

Hosting centers: VIB (Belgium), The Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI; the Netherlands), Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC; Germany), Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (IGC; Portugal), Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG; Spain), Institut Curie (IC; France), Biotech Research and Innovation Centre (BRIC; Denmark).

- 1 MD/PhD student recruited for the MDC in 2022
- 1 MD/PhD student recruited for the MDC in 2023

EVENTS 2024



Photos & Images: Canva Pro, Jose Nimo, Eirini Kouskoumvekaki, Sanja Drakulic, Marta Cipinska, Communications MDC.

OUTLOOK 2025



Photos & Images: Canva Pro, Erini Kouskoumvekaki, David Ausserhofer, Sanja Drakulic, MDC Communications Dept.

GRADUATION CEREMONY 2024



On July 5, 2024, the Max Delbrück Center celebrated the achievements of 20 young researchers at the Graduation Ceremony 2024. Surrounded by family, friends, and colleagues, the graduates received their diplomas, marking the culmination of years of perseverance and rigorous research. The ceremony, hosted by Prof. Michela Di Virgilio, highlighted not only the scientific accomplishments of the graduates but also the invaluable support from mentors, lab mates, and loved ones throughout their journeys. The event included short speeches from group leaders, who shared personal anecdotes and celebrated the graduates' diverse talents. Keynote speaker Professor Cindrilla Chumduri inspired the audience with her motivational talk about overcoming challenges and embracing life's joys. A traditional competition for the most creative doctoral hats added a creative touch to the festivities. The celebration continued with dinner, drinks, and rooftop dancing, capping off an unforgettable day. **The Max Delbrück Center congratulates the PhD Class of 2024 and wishes them success in their future endeavors!** (MDC Communication Dept., photo: Duygu Atceken)





50 GRADUATES

Abel, Tim Felix Michael Johannes
Alp, Keziban Merve
Apaydin, Onur
Bahar, Yozlem
Baumann, Elisabeth
Bayram, Safak
Bei, Yi
Berangi, Mostafa
Chamorro Gonzalez, Maria del Rocio
Chen, Chia-Yu
Chung, Wai Yee
Dumbani, Malti
Esmati, Yasmin
Faxel, Miriam
Garcia Contreras, Jonathan Alexis
Gätjens-Sanchez, Ana Maria
Jumde, Gaurav

Kalnytska, Oleksandra
Kim, Seung Joon
Kortüm, Benedikt
Leva, Tobias
Lilienkamp, Henning
Mak, Sher Min
Misios, Aristotelis
Mordhorst, Alexander
Mota Gomez-Argente, Irene
Neuschulz, Anika
Pampols Perez, Mireia
Perovic, Tijana
Pfalz, Gregor
Pham, Thu Thi
Radscheit, Kathrin
Rosenberger, Leonie Milena
Rrustemi, Trendelina

Schnauß, Marina
Sholokh, Anastasiia
Singh, Kanishka
Soria, Audrey
Stadelmann, Christian
Stefanov, Stefan
Styp-Rekowski, Kevin Marcel
Sztanka-Toth, Tamas Ryszard
Trombke, Janine
Ugursu Isyar, Bilge
Vazquez Garcia, Clara
Vazquez Sarandeses, Elena
Wang, Lin
Welke, Robert-William
Zaupa, Margherita
Zeziulia, Mariia

11 PHD REPRESENTATIVES



Antonia Ibel, Johanna Elisabeth Fritsch, Daniela Sofia Valdes, Casper Silvis, José Antonio Nimo Cabrera, Munira Makhoulouf, Francesca Dal Pozzolo, Maike Gräff, Carlos Cordero, Guido Christian Krähenbühl.

Thank you for your devoted work!