

Evaluation results: Retreat Heldrungen (February 17-18.2020)

Event Details

The retreat is our networking event for a lively exchange between all members of the IMPRS. It is an important aim of the PhD program to facilitate the exchange among the doctoral researchers and with experienced scientists. This targeted support is important since doctoral researchers, advisors and course facilitators are spread across several institutes.

More information is provided on the webpage: <https://www.bgc-jena.mpg.de/domains/imprs-gbgc.de/index.php/Internal/Retreat2020>

Participants

32 PhD researchers and 16 faculty members, postdoctoral researchers & group leaders attended the retreat 2020. 27 out of 48 participants filled in the survey.

Survey results

The retreat was well organised and pre-information was sufficient.

0 (0%) Very poor
0 (0%) Poor
0 (0%) Average
12 (24%) Good
37 (76%) Very good
0 (0%) N/A

The duration was adequate.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
0 (0%) Disagree
5 (10%) Neither agree nor disagree
20 (41%) Agree
22 (45%) Strongly agree
2 (4%) N/A

The agenda matched the purpose of the event well.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
0 (0%) Disagree
1 (2%) Neither agree nor disagree
25 (51%) Agree
23 (47%) Strongly agree
0 (0%) N/A

I liked the venue in Heldrungen.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
1 (2%) Disagree
4 (8%) Neither agree nor disagree
25 (51%) Agree
19 (39%) Strongly agree
0 (0%) N/A

The overview talk addressed all topics that are important to me.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
1 (2%) Disagree
7 (14%) Neither agree nor disagree
28 (57%) Agree
8 (16%) Strongly agree
5 (10%) N/A

I could follow & understand the 3-min talks.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
3 (6%) Disagree
11 (23%) Neither agree nor disagree
28 (57%) Agree
7 (14%) Strongly agree
0 (0%) N/A

The poster session was helpful (contribution of presenters & audience).

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
1 (2%) Disagree
3 (6%) Neither agree nor disagree
12 (25%) Agree
32 (65%) Strongly agree
1 (2%) N/A

The breakout session was helpful.

1 (2%) Strongly disagree
1 (2%) Disagree
8 (16%) Neither agree nor disagree
21 (43%) Agree
13 (27%) Strongly agree
5 (10%) N/A

The evening was fun. I enjoyed it.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
1 (2%) Disagree
2 (4%) Neither agree nor disagree
15 (31%) Agree
13 (27%) Strongly agree
5 (10%) N/A

I attended the horizontal discussion among the faculty. It was fruitful.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
0 (0%) Disagree
3 (6%) Neither agree nor disagree
7 (16%) Agree
2 (5%) Strongly agree
32 (73%) N/A

I attended the horizontal discussion among the PhD researchers. It was fruitful.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
1 (2%) Disagree
4 (8%) Neither agree nor disagree
16 (33%) Agree
14 (29%) Strongly agree
13 (27%) N/A

Overall, I am satisfied with this event.

0 (0%) Strongly disagree
0 (0%) Disagree
0 (0%) Neither agree nor disagree
23 (47%) Agree
25 (51%) Strongly agree
1 (2%) N/A

Please rate the individual items of the retreat.

organization & amount of pre-information

21 (77%) Very good
5 (18%) Good
1 (3%) Average
0 (0%) Poor
0 (0%) Very poor
0 (0%) N/A

venue

15 (55%) Very good
10 (37%) Good
2 (7%) Average
0 (0%) Poor
0 (0%) Very poor
0 (0%) N/A

welcome by Gerd

10 (37%) Very good
 12 (44%) Good
 1 (4%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 3 (11%) N/A

overview by Steffi

13 (48%) Very good
 10 (37%) Good
 1 (4%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 3 (11%) N/A

introduction round by faculty members

5 (18%) Very good
 17 (63%) Good
 5 (18%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 0 (0%) N/A

3-min talks by the PhDs

14 (54%) Very good
 12 (46%) Good
 0 (0%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 0 (0%) N/A

questions by the audience

6 (22%) Very good
 14 (52%) Good
 6 (22%) Average
 1 (4%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 0 (0%) N/A

poster presentations by the PhDs

13 (48%) Very good
 14 (52%) Good
 0 (0%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 0 (0%) N/A

poster discussion with the audience

12 (44%) Very good
 13 (48%) Good
 2 (7%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 0 (0%) N/A

discussion during breakout session

5 (18%) Very good
 15 (55%) Good
 4 (15%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 1 (4%) Very poor
 2 (7%) N/A

discussion among faculty during horizontal session

3 (11%) Very good
 6 (22%) Good
 4 (15%) Average
 1 (4%) Poor
 1 (4%) Very poor
 12 (44%) N/A

discussion among the cohort of PhD researchers (horizontal session, 1st day)

8 (32%) Very good
 11 (44%) Good
 2 (8%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 4 (16%) N/A

discussion among the cohort of PhD researchers (horizontal session, 2nd day)

7 (28%) Very good
 10 (40%) Good
 5 (20%) Average
 0 (0%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 3 (12%) N/A

informal discussions and spare time in the evening

13 (48%) Very good
 10 (37%) Good
 2 (7%) Average
 1 (2%) Poor
 0 (0%) Very poor
 2 (7%) N/A

Wrap up & final discussion

9 (36%) Very good
9 (39%) Good
4 (16%) Average
2 (8%) Poor
0 (0%) Very poor
1 (4%) N/A

duration of the event

15 (55%) Very good
11 (40%) Good
3 (11%) Average
0 (0%) Poor
0 (0%) Very poor
0 (0%) N/A

agenda of the event

15 (55%) Very good
10 (37%) Good
2 (7%) Average
0 (0%) Poor
0 (0%) Very poor
0 (0%) N/A

Comments

- 1) We didn't have any faculty member joining us at the breakout session (running), so obviously it was impossible to discuss. 2) Next to that I want to note that there were some faculty members that were very vocal (even aggressive at some points) towards the summary by the PhD representatives. I understand the points addressed, but it is quite something to summarise all points for all PhD researchers and to vocal them in front of a group. Rather than being condescending, they could be more supportive as to why PhD researchers experience certain problems and help solve them instead of attacking them and proving their right... 3) I really liked the questions in the introduction of the faculty members.
- Well organised and good group cohesion. Of course the wrap-up discussion always gets a bit contentious, but it was still productive. I applaud the PhD students leading the talk for their patience.
- The discussion among faculty during the horizontal session was a little one-sided. Some valid points were raised but I feel that the discussion could have been more productive with less "finger-pointing".
- It was a pity not more MPI-BGC advisors made it to the retreat. It was nice to see more FSU members this year!
- discussion among faculty during horizontal session- I am not so sure which you mean by that? Is it what should have been the final discussion and wrap up? It kind of got mixed up?
- The quality of presentations was much higher than the past events. And the discussions after each presentation were more vivid than the past. This should be encouraged in some way. Maybe through a presentation prize (?) as short of what happened this year due to the upcoming IMPRS evaluation.
- We heard the same points 3 times, 1st in group discussions, then in PhD discussion, and finally in the wrap up

Did you feel comfortable at the retreat? If not why?

21 x yes

- Felt warm and familiar.
- relaxed atmosphere as always. fitting venue.
- Yes, generally the atmosphere was very good.
- Yes, except for the accommodation. Generally, its ok but it is always cold and they never turn on the heating so its not one cannot sleep well.
- very nice venue. super organisation!
- It was okay, thanks.
- Yes, it was a really good atmosphere.
- Yeh kind of
- Yes, it was comfortable!
- Yes. The atmosphere was very nice during the retreat.

Which parts of the course were especially good (and why)?

- 7 x 3-min talks
- 6 x quality of food improved
- 15 x Poster session
 - Liked the new location
- 4x Horizontal discussion improved
- 3 x Questions for introduction round of the faculty
- Quality of the presentations improved
- 2 x Break out session during the afternoon
 - This was a really nice break and after some light and fresh air one was fresh again for the last session and the schedule didn't feel too long. I also very much liked the 4 questions that the present faculty member should answer in the introduction round.

- I think the schedule has really been optimised over the years. The breakdown is quite nice to not get overwhelmed.
- The combination of 3-min talk and posters is very good to get an overview of everyone's work without dragging out too much.
- great people, all are highly motivated and help each other
- I appreciated the energy of the participation.
- Compliments to Shane and Jake for organising Monday night's cave rave :)

- I truly enjoyed the presentation sessions this year.
- the final discussion was good to hear everybody's opinion, but it might be helpful if it will be moderated/guided by an extra moderator to have a more fruitful outcome
- 3-min talks and poster, full of scientific spark

Which parts of the workshop were not so good / not so fitting / not well enough presented?

- 2 x Poster sessions:
 - the number of posters per session to the number of attendees made for good discussions overall, but it could be hard to ask questions if there were already a few people in line to talk to the poster presenter.
 - More time for poster sessions
 - Also on many posters figure labels are very small
 - too many presentations, most people don't understand all of them --> re-organise this part of the retreat to have more time per presentation and a more focused audience
- 3 x Light in the room for posters was too dim
- 4 x Faculty introduction
 - more info/updated pictures and slides. In particular for those that are absent, what is their field of research and which students do they supervise?
 - Too long
 - The people we should know we already know, and, to be honest, I don't care about the others. Maybe the introduction could be replaced by something new, more exciting...
 - improvised and time for each member not equal.

- 2 x Group Leader participation
 - hard to fix, but it's always a pity that more group leaders (and this year, university colleagues) don't take the time to attend.
 - Very few group leaders / PIs participated this year
- 4 x Wrap Up and break out sessions
 - was largely dominated by single PIs and it was difficult to get the PhD perspective through. A moderator other than the presenters would have been useful to balance the sides.
 - it was the first time everybody was discussing together about certain aspects of the IMPRS at the retreat and the wrap-up should also summarise the final discussion which was not really the case
 - the long discussions, apparently without acceptance and empathy from some members of the Committee, were actually hindering the representatives to concentrate on the presentation the outcome of the horizontal discussion. A suggestion could be that maybe in the future first the results are presented with all the peace required and without having the feeling of a defence mode in the room for the representatives and clear intervention from besides the IMPRS Coordinator to enable that. I was feeling uncomfortable for them even though I think they all did a very good job.
 - We never seem to talk about retreat topics during the breakout sessions
 - letting the students grade each others talks was an improper choice, because it goes against the welcoming atmosphere of the event. the IMPRS retreat should not be about performance evaluation, especially not by one's peers. Instead, if you truly feel that you need help with finding a good presenter, give everyone the option to highlight their 'top 3' presentations of the event and go from there. it's much more positive and empowering.
- Break out sessions need to be organised better
- Feedback sheets was a good idea, but not always practical to keep track of the paper through the two days.
- Survey results not so clear: (how and where) is this feedback of the survey communicated further and how will it have an impact. This is really a shame since discussions at the retreat across departments can be quite fruitful. It would have been nice to present the survey results for everyone and discuss together.
- I feel every Ph.D. student has a different story, so in the horizontal discussion, it got quite confusing. Sometimes negative stories are too much to digest. I would prefer if one not only discuss the problems but something constructive.
- I do appreciate honesty, but the fact that none of the faculty members/ group leaders have a good work/life balance is rather disturbing. I think they missed the point, and they did not provide a single tip for how to make things better (maybe with the exception of Dr Gleixner). On the contrary, the fact that they openly admit it, imposes a heavier burden on the PhD students. Should we feel guilty for wanting a more balanced lifestyle?
- All the parts were good!

Do you have other suggestions for how to improve this event? (16 responses)

- The exchange during the wrap up and final discussion was a bit strange. Maybe it could be communicated that the PhD's are tasked with coming up with potential problems and improvements during the horizontal discussions, and if we bring up a point it should not be so quickly dismissed as whining but as points of discussion and concerns to be at least noted.

- We can support people to organise activities during the social on Monday evening. A beerpong tournament maybe??
- If possible, we can go to a different location so we don't get bored of the same location all the time. Also,
- Maybe shuffle the events at the end of the first day? Not sure if you can still fit everything in though.
- No, the event was well organised from your side! I just wanted to give the small feedback that there were not enough bed sheets in our room at the venue (3 beds, only 2 sets of sheets), so I slept on the plastic mattress. It was a rather cold night...
- Make the presentations even shorter as a 2 minute presentation and give more time instead to the discussion among all PhD researchers (horizontal session, second day) because it was very very beneficial for all of us to actually know more and better about issues younger PhDs might be facing in the future at each step (raise awareness) and older PhDs to share their experiences when they were able to answer questions arising from the younger ones. And the discussions at the posters were a bit more fruitful than the ones after the presentations.
- If the bus could take us closer to the entrance, (e.g. the big space in front of the gate of the castle) it will be perfect. Also with clip boards would definitely increase the rate for everybody to write down their feedbacks on the distributed sheets. Sometimes the difficulty of writing on the sheets only makes us simply not to write at all.
- Discussion among Ph.D. (since my last retreats) are sometime contradictory and not so constructive. It is good to share our problems but in addition to that, there should be some positive discussions on how one can learn from other PhDs and improve their skills. Also, the DJ music sucks(This is just a light joke)
- The idea of a presentation prize is actually good. It might motivate the presenters. But it should be announced well before the event, not at its beginning like this year.
- - it would be nice if more PIs from our institute would come/stay both days at the event - to mix the different types of sessions more, so that we do not have 3-4 oral/poster sessions in a row and then 2-3 discussion sessions in a row - not sure if this is realistic, but it might be also nice to have two separate retreats: one more scientific one and the other one more about the IMPRS in general - it is a little bit ambitious to cover both topics in less than two days
- Activities (i.e. castle tour, running, walking,....etc.) could be chosen before the retreat.