

Conflict guidelines of the RTG2344 “MeInBio”

Conflict situations are totally normal, and it is important not to hesitate when a conflict arises. These guidelines aim to help all member of the RTG MeInBio to solve arising conflicts during their RTG related work. The guidelines are organized in three steps with increasing escalation levels. Only if resolution of the conflict is not successful following step 1, you proceed to step 2, and if necessary to step 3.

Many conflicts arise from misunderstandings or unclear expectations. In the very early stages of a conflict, an escalation can be easily prevented by just talking about it with the other party. These conversations should follow the rules below:

- The conversation should take place in a neutral environment
- Both parties should be allowed to speak and lay out their point of views. It is crucial for the listening party to actively listen and not interrupt the other.
- The parties should talk in I-messages like this:

non-blameful and specific description of the listener's behavior (give example)
the effect of that behavior on the speaker
the speaker's feelings about that effect
(a wish or suggestion for the future, e.g. new behaviour)

- To prevent misunderstandings, you can repeat the point of the other party in your own words before answering
- During this talk it should be possible to find a consensual solution or a compromise

If this form of contact is not possible, or the conversation leads to a dead end you can proceed with the steps listed below.

Contact information is either directly mentioned or in the footnotes.

Conflicts are very stressful situations, so here is some additional helpful information:

Institutions of the university that can help you in crisis or emergencies: https://www.zuv.uni-freiburg.de/hilfe-notfall-en/hilfe-notfall-en?set_language=en

Link to the psychosocial counselling of the Uniklinik: <https://www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/psychosoziale-beratung-und-konfliktklaerung.html> (only in german)

Page on the PhD reps of biology website regarding mental health and additional contact information: <https://www.phd-bio.uni-freiburg.de/mental-health>

Step 1: Low-threshold points of contact, very unbureaucratic (low escalation)

Aim: Find out if your problem is an actual problem or just normal supervision etc., identify potential solution strategies.

Address your problem when speaking to other PhD students, e.g. colleagues or PhD Reps, or other neutral points of contact. Get advice if the problematic behavior is an actual misconduct or if it is the other party's good right to do and "normal supervision struggles".

Points of contact:

- colleagues, PostDoc in your lab
- RTG MeInBio: coordinator (Christine can be contacted any time: christine.hacker@anat.uni-freiburg.de)
- RTG MeInBio: PhD Reps (Camila Fullio [\[mail\]](#), Sarah Jäger [\[mail\]](#), Luisa Hemm [\[mail\]](#))
- Faculty: PhD Reps¹ (phd-bio@biologie.uni-freiburg.de)

If you do not want to address the problem with other PhD students or RTG members you can also get help from the IGA ombuds office. They can give you advice and coach you to resolve your conflict situation.

Points of contact:

- Ombuds office: Coaching by IGA staff²

After consulting with possible contact persons, try to solve the problem with the other party and to find a better way of working together → **Aim for consensual solution.**

Only If this should not be possible, proceed with Step 2.

¹ Biology/Medicine: <https://www.phd-bio.uni-freiburg.de/>
Technical faculty: https://www.tf.uni-freiburg.de/en/study-programs/Doctoral%20and%20Postdoctoral%20Studies/contact?set_language=en
Faculty of Physics and Math: <https://www.phd.mathphys.uni-freiburg.de/>
² https://www.frs.uni-freiburg.de/en/ombudsstelle-en?set_language=en

Step 2: Still unbureaucratic, Include more points of contact (moderate escalation)

Aim: Get input from further people who can give advice on the topic, know "research culture", could influence the other party / are respected by him*her, get help for communicating with the other party

Points of contact (additional to Step 1):

- RTG MeInBio: coordinator (Christine can be contacted any time: christine.hacker@anat.uni-freiburg.de)
- Faculty of Biology: Doctoral Board (Professors who volunteered as contact persons for this kind of conflicts)³
 - write mail and ask for confidential conversation
- Additional to the professors of the faculty of biology, MeInBio PI Thomas Manke has volunteered as contact person for the RTG (manke@ie-freiburg.mpg.de)
- TAC committee: other members of your TAC committee
 - either address problem in time for discussion of problems with other PIs or write mail to other PIs for confidential conversation

With the help of these persons, you can now address your problem with your PI, if necessary with mediation (Christine or other PIs).

³ Faculty of biology: <https://www.phd-bio.uni-freiburg.de/ombuds-process-for-doctoral-candidates-and-supervisors>

Step 3: Bureaucratic: Ombuds process and / or change of project / PI (High escalation level)

Based on input from Step 1 and Step 2: If it seems there could be a problem related to employment right, you can inform yourself about employment law. If there are indeed problems concerning employee's rights: document respective problems.

Points of contact:

- Personalrat (staff council): Employment law⁴
- Legal Counseling at SWFR⁵ and StuRa⁶ (only for enrolled PhD students)

Start an ombuds process- this is highly confidential, you are in full charge of which steps are taken, so you can try to still aim for a consensual solution to your problem.

Points of contact:

- Ombuds office: Ombuds person²

With the ombuds process you can aim for a consensual solution, but if this is not the case, you might be able to change your project/PI. Together with Christine, evaluate whether main supervision of your project could be taken over by another PI.

Points of contact:

- RTG MeInBio: coordinator (Christine can be contacted any time: christine.hacker@anat.uni-freiburg.de)
- doctoral board: inform doctoral board - Only if the doctoral board knows about those cases, they can act

These guidelines have been laid out by the MeInBio PhD representatives, and have been discussed with and approved by the RTGs Managing Committee in spring 2021.

⁴ University: <https://www.personalrat.uni-freiburg.de/> (only in german)

Uniklinik: <https://www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/personalrat.html> (only in german)

⁵ <https://www.swfr.de/en/social-services/legal-advice-mediation/legal-advice>

⁶ <https://www.stura.uni-freiburg.de/service/beratungen> (only in german)