

Focus Group at HIFMB

[The Helmholtz Institute for Functional Marine Biodiversity](#) at the University of Oldenburg (HIFMB) is calling for applications from early-career researchers who hold a PhD degree[§] to form a new Focus Group in the institution to establish themselves in the domain of marine sciences.

This is an open-topic, non-tenure track position with 5-years of support, and is meant to serve the successful candidate with a productive environment to develop their research program in a young and dynamic institution with support from senior scientists.

[§] See the requirements section for details

The HIFMB

Our research at the HIFMB focuses on marine biodiversity and its importance for the functioning of marine ecosystems. We aim to develop sensitive strategies to measure and understand environmental and social processes that influence or are influenced by the change in biodiversity in marine systems, and implement effective means to define a scientific basis for marine conservation, marine governance, and ecosystem management efforts.

HIFMB is a highly interdisciplinary research environment that currently brings together experts from 18 countries who focus on contemporary yet distinct topics of research. Our growing research portfolio to understand marine systems at the HIFMB spans from molecular ecology to human geography, microbial metabolism to mathematical modeling and art.

As a cooperation between the [University of Oldenburg](#) (UOL) and the [Alfred Wegener Institute Helmholtz-Zentrum für Polar- und Meeresforschung](#) (AWI), the HIFMB benefits from its access to a diverse set of resources for cutting-edge research. [The new building of the HIFMB](#), which is scheduled to start its service at the beginning of 2024, offers state-of-the-art wet-lab and computational resources. Our institution benefits from the large student body at the University of Oldenburg, and modern vessels and equipment for field experiments to study marine systems through AWI and our collaborators at the [Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment](#) (ICBM). The [Scientific Members](#) of the HIFMB include scientists whose primary affiliation is elsewhere, but represent natural collaboration partners to the HIFMB scientists due to their secondary affiliations with the institution.

The HIFMB is located in [Oldenburg](#), a city in Northern Germany, which is a region that is home to a large number of institutions dedicated to environmental and marine research. In addition to the AWI and the ICBM, the institutions with which the HIFMB researchers regularly interact include the [Max-Planck Institute for Marine](#)

[Microbiology](#) in Bremen, the [Center for Marine Environmental Sciences](#) (MARUM) at the University Bremen, and [Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research](#) in Bremen.

The Focus Group

The **purpose** for this search is to expand our research portfolio at the HIFMB with a new direction that complements our existing interests pursued by any of our core working groups at the institute, which include the **Biodiversity Theory** group, led by [Thilo Gross](#); the **Ecosystem Data Science** group, led by [A. Murat Eren](#); the **Marine Conservation** group, led by [Iliana Baums](#); and the **Marine Governance** group, led by [Kimberley Peters](#). Additionally, the **Plankton Ecology** group, which is in the process of being established, will be led by the HIFMB Director [Helmut Hillebrand](#), and will focus on community ecology and marine molecular methods (see representative work by [Silke Laakmann](#)).

The **budget** of the research group includes (1) 5-year salary support for the Focus Group Leader ([TVöD E14](#)) and funding for two additional researchers (i.e., salary support for two PhD students or one PhD student and one technician), (2) and start-up funds. The amount of start-up funds are not strictly defined and will be requested in the application material.

To provide optimal support for early career scientists in building their own research groups and to prepare them for leadership roles, participation in a leadership course (e.g., at the Helmholtz Academy or Graduate Academy of UOL) is strongly recommended during the first 1-2 years after the start of funding.

The **research area** of the new Focus Group is not explicitly defined, and can be related to any topic that (1) is relevant to the HIFMB mission, (2) can benefit from synergistic interactions with two or more of the existing groups, and (3) implements a research program that promises new insights into marine sciences. Thus, we invite early-career scientists from **any STEM discipline**, including but not limited to those who study **ecology, microbiology, genetics, mathematics, computer science, engineering, biochemistry, or biogeochemistry**, to consider the HIFMB as a new home for their cutting-edge science for the next five years.

Application Material

All application material must be submitted via the Umantis interface at [\[https://jobs.awi.de/Vacancies/1547/Application/New/1\]](https://jobs.awi.de/Vacancies/1547/Application/New/1). Please read the following sections that detail the application material. **We strongly encourage potential candidates to reach out to any HIFMB faculty with research scope and/or feasibility questions.**

Cover Letter

Please include an extended **cover letter** with your application (maximum of three pages) that describes your past and current research activities and details your future research program.

In addition to the considerations of excellence in research productivity as evidenced by peer-reviewed publications (as well as software or hardware tools, or community resources, when applicable), the evaluation process of the applications will primarily consider the following questions addressed in your cover letter, thus, we encourage applicants to organize their cover letter to include the following sections:

- **Past and Current Research.** Please explain your previous research accomplishments. Demonstrate your ability to conduct independent research. HIFMB is a research institution with a highly international workforce: Please highlight here any relevant work experience that prepared you to be a part of a diverse group of researchers.
- **Proposed Research Program.** Please explain how does the next five years of your research look like. Define individual projects you have in mind, include brief research plans for each individual project, and some information on who will accomplish those tasks considering the promised personnel support.
- **Proposed Research Budget.** Please mention the key resources you request for the proposed research program. Here, a very brief table with items (depending on the area of research, sequencing, consumables, software, hardware, chemicals, etc) and their estimated costs would be very helpful.
- **Research Feasibility.** Please describe what software, hardware, data, lab space, and/or equipment would be necessary to implement the research program successfully. Is the critical infrastructure and equipment accessible within or outside of the HIFMB? Are there risks you can envision? What are your best-case / worst-case scenarios and contingency plans?
- **Expected Research Outcomes.** Please detail the expected outcomes of your research program in the next five years.
- **Relevance to the HIFMB.** Please describe how the research program relates to the HIFMB mission and priorities.
- **Synergistic Interactions.** Please explain the synergistic interactions you envision to have at the HIFMB. Which groups at the HIFMB would serve you as natural collaboration partners? Please mention how is it going to help your career to implement your research program at the HIFMB?

Other requirements

In addition to the Cover Letter, please make sure your application includes the following items:

- **CV.** Please include your research, teaching and supervision experience as well as a list of publications (no more than 2 pages).
- **Mentorship philosophy** (a one-page letter that describes your philosophy in mentorship and group management).
- **Teaching statement** (this is an optional document - the Focus Group leader is not required to teach, however, if you are interested in teaching, please feel free to submit one).
- Official documents (i.e., scans or photographs) of **degrees and certificates** obtained.

The PhD Requirement

Applicants are required to have obtained their PhD within the last 2-6 years. Please note the legal requirements in Germany for non-permanent positions (such as this particular Focus Group), as defined in [Act of Academic Fixed-Term Contract](#), which is also known as WissZeitVG. We expect applicants to consider the WissZeitVG and their unique circumstances to determine if they qualify. Please note that the successful candidate may only be considered for appointment if they still have the respective qualification periods available in accordance with WissZeitVG.

Dates and Deadlines

- **March 15, 2024:** Deadline for submission of complete application documents via the UMANTIS interface (see link above)
- **April 15-19, 2024:** Presentation of your research idea , interview with the experts committee
- **April 30, 2024:** Final selection meeting and information about the outcome
- **August 1, 2024 (No more than 6 months after receiving funding approval):** Start of the HIFMB Focus Group

Contact:

If you have any questions or seek personalized feedback for your application, we encourage you to reach out to [Prof. Dr. A. Murat Eren](#) for research-related inquiries and to [Ruth Krause](#) for administrative and procedural matters.