

Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

TAC Meeting Goals

The TAC is responsible for the individual scientific guidance of doctoral candidates in addition to their advisor. The main purpose of TAC meetings is to keep track of and discuss the scientific progress, and to offer advice on the thesis project's development. At least one mentor is not part of the advisor's research group and thus provides an external view of the project and an independent opinion. The mentor should be experienced in supervising PhD projects. If necessary, this independent mentor can mediate between the doctoral candidate and the (official) advisor. In case of serious conflict, the TAC can hand over to dedicated ombudspersons. Additionally, the TAC should advise doctoral candidates on career planning and professional development.

TAC composition

1. The TAC consists of the advisor and, if applicable the official advisor, at least one mentor and the doctoral candidate.
2. At least one mentor must come from outside of the research group of the advisor in order to promote independence. Mentors may come from outside the University of Cologne.
3. All TAC members should be present at each TAC meeting (TAC meetings can be conducted using an online conferencing tool).

TAC Topics

1. Project progress and timeline:
 - The main focus of the TAC should be to provide scientific guidance to the doctoral candidate and offer scope beyond the input from the doctoral candidate's research group.
 - record of on-the-job training in (experimental) techniques, evaluation methods, theoretical background, literature, network, outlook /research plan /proposal
 - Adjustments of research plans /change of topic /unexpected developments
 - (First) results
 - Finishing up / rounding off the project
2. Publication strategy, especially the format of the thesis
3. Conference attendance
4. Career plans, recommended workshops/ trainings
5. Conflict prevention. In addition, the TAC should point out the different contact points at Department, Faculty and University level for complaint management.

Suggested TAC meeting format (at least annually, first meeting after one year)

- ca. 20 min scientific presentation by doctoral candidate
 - 20-40 min progress discussion with all TAC members
 - ca. 10-15 min discussion without advisor (mandatory)
- ⇒ Duration: 1 - 1.5 hours

Glossary

Advisor / Betreuer*in des Promotionsvorhabens: Person usually at the research institution where the doctoral project is being worked on.*

Mentor: Person holding a doctorate or PhD degree who joins the TAC alongside the advisor(s), without having an advisor role.

Doctoral candidate: Person, who works on the doctoral project.

Note: *TAC members are not necessarily the people who will serve on the examination board for the thesis defence, especially in the special cases listed in the appendix.*

***Special Cases (see §14 Promotionsordnung)**

In case the advisor does not hold the right to supervise doctoral projects in the intended field at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, an official advisor needs to be chosen. This might be the case if the doctoral project is conducted externally (i.e. MPI, DLR, FZ Jülich, TH, Med. Faculty) or if the advisor is not yet a professor.

Official Advisor / formale*r Betreuer*in: Person holding the right to supervise doctoral candidates at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. He/she will be serving in addition to the advisor. Official advisor and advisor can be regarded as one person in respect to the reviewing process. The official advisor is the corresponding person for the central doctoral office.

For **IPMM-GSfBS-CGSC** cases: The official advisor is a member of the Med. Faculty and a professor. All professors of the Med. Faculty are entitled to supervise, provided that the project has been evaluated and recommended by the IPMM committee. In addition, some ZMMK and CECAD group leaders have the right to supervise, but only for projects in their own working group, so they cannot be the official advisor. The MNF professor, who must also be named for IPMM cases, is the pre-registered second reviewer, has no supervisory role and does not have to participate in the TAC as a mentor.