

Supervision agreement

Signing a supervision agreement with a doctoral candidate is an important first step in what we call "[structured guidance](#)". It should normally take place in the first 3 months of a candidate's project and should be the start of an open dialogue between candidates and their Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC), which is what the GSGS aims to promote.

About TAC meetings

- Doctoral candidates meet with all TAC members 6 months after starting their project and at least once every 9 months thereafter. These will normally be joint meetings, but in cases separate meetings may be more helpful. All meetings are documented using the TAC Status Report;
- Guests can be invited to attend TAC meetings;
- Anyone can ask a GSGS Steering Committee member or Coordinator to attend a TAC meeting;
- You will find further information about the TAC (composition, meeting goals, topics, suggested meeting format) [on this webpage](#).

The TAC Status Report is a single document for each doctoral candidate, that will accompany them throughout their doctoral phase. It replaces multiple TAC/DC Feedback Forms collected every nine months. The aim is to have a better overview of their personal development and that of their doctoral project, both for themselves and for their advisors and TAC members.

You will find the new TAC Status Report in the [downloads section](#) of the GSGS website. Please only use Adobe Acrobat Pro or Adobe Reader DC (for Windows / iOS / Linux) to complete the form.

Who should use the TAC Status Report? In principle, all GSGS members should adopt the TAC Status Report as soon as possible. Doctoral candidates should download the GSGS TAC Status Report from the [downloads section](#), and fill out page 1. It is up to the doctoral candidate to keep a 'living' document in a safe space (e.g. in Docfile, the University's online registration portal for doctoral candidates). **Who completes it?** The doctoral candidate updates the indicated sections well before the TAC meeting and sends the updated TAC Status Report to their TAC at least 2 weeks before the meeting. The sections marked yellow are to be completed in the meeting itself. You will find details of the procedure on the [Reporting and TAC Meetings](#) webpage.

What is especially noteworthy about the TAC Status Report?

- Doctoral candidates must keep one "living" version of their TAC Status Report; make sure you never sign this living document, because this makes future editing impossible. The doctoral candidate collects the signatures of all TAC members after the meeting
- **Target meeting dates** have been programmed into Section 1.3 so that everyone knows when meetings are due. The **actual meeting date** should be within +/- 2 months of the target. In other cases, contact the GSGS office. In special cases (parental leave, prolonged absence due to illness), the target dates can be edited in the GSGS office.
- In their first meeting, the TAC appoints a TAC chairperson. The TAC chairperson moderates the meetings and ensures the documentation of the TAC meetings.
- New, more flexible reporting rules were introduced (see below).
- **We introduced a compulsory meeting without the advisor either at the end of the TAC meeting, or separately soon after it: doctoral candidates must meet at least briefly with an independent mentor.** The mentor has to sign for the meeting taking place. Aim of this meeting is to enhance the direct contact between doctoral candidate and TAC member(s) and to raise any emerging issues at an early stage.

- The confirmation that the TAC "have agreed upon the form and contents of the thesis" in accordance with Doctoral Regulations §7 (6). This statement appears in Section 2.6 of the TAC Status Report as soon as you have indicated that the current TAC meeting will likely be the last before the candidate's thesis submission (in Section 2.1).

New reporting rules. Since August 2023, the GSGS has new, more flexible reporting rules:

Compulsory

- For the first TAC meeting
 - o Research Plan (follow [this link](#) for reporting guidelines)
 - o Time Schedule
 - o pre-completed 'living' TAC Status Report
- For each subsequent TAC meeting
 - o updated Time Schedule
 - o updated and pre-completed 'living' TAC Status Report

Flexible

- In each TAC meeting, **the TAC decides** which further **documents the candidate needs to supply for the next TAC meeting** (see Section 2.5 of the TAC Status Report). These can be
 - o meeting minutes
 - o oral and/or written progress report
 - o a draft version of an academic paper
 - o any other documents.
- In the next meeting, the **TAC confirm (in Section 2.1) that the required documents have been received**. The GSGS checks the updated Status Report and Time Schedule.

Further compulsory items for GSGS doctoral candidates are:

- the attendance of the full induction module (parts A/B/C/D; two days in total). This includes a half-day workshop on "Good Scientific Practice", as required by the doctoral regulations.
- at least one (poster) presentation of the candidate's work at a GSGS Research Conference.

GSGS wiki. We offer useful resources to all members and alumni through the GSGS wiki pages: <https://wiki.uni-koeln.de/!gsgs/>. An example are the Academic English Information Sheet and Worksheets developed for the GSGS by Anne Wegner and Lesley-Anne Weiling of *Write English*. The resources on the wiki pages are for use within the GSGS only. Should you wish to use any of them elsewhere, please contact the GSGS for prior approval. No login? Please get in touch.

Should you have any questions about or suggestions for improvement or activities of the GSGS, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Your sincerely,

Prof Dr Boris Braun, GSGS spokesperson

Dr Karin Boessenkool and Dr Hannah Hartung, GSGS coordinators

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