

Note: TAC members are not necessarily the people who will serve on the examination board for the thesis defence.

TAC Meeting Goals

The Thesis Advisory Committee (from here on referred to as TAC) is responsible for the individual scientific guidance of doctoral candidates in addition to their (official) advisor. The official advisor can be a TAC member. 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 (official) advisor's research group and thus provides an external view of the project and an independent opinion. If necessary, this independent mentor can mediate between the doctoral candidate and the (official) advisor. In cases 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(s) of both the advisor and the official advisor in order to promote independence. Mentors may come from outside the University of Cologne.
3. In their first meeting, the TAC appoints a TAC chairperson. The TAC chairperson moderates the meetings and ensures the documentation of the TAC meetings.
4. 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

- short presentation by doctoral candidate
 - progress discussion with all TAC members
 - 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. This person signs section 5.1 of the Application for Admission as Doctoral Student / *Antrag auf Zulassung als DoktorandIn* (see <https://mathnat.uni-koeln.de/en/doctoral-candidates/forms-guidelines>)

Official Advisor / *formale*r Betreuer*in*: Person holding the right to supervise doctoral candidates at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (only necessary in addition to the advisor, if the advisor does not hold this right). This person signs section 5.2 of the Application for Admission as Doctoral Student / *Antrag auf Zulassung als DoktorandIn* (see <https://mathnat.uni-koeln.de/en/doctoral-candidates/forms-guidelines>)

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

TAC Chairperson: Person with a doctorate or PhD degree appointed by the TAC from among its members to chair the meetings and ensure its documentation.