



## TAC MEETING GOALS:

The Thesis Advisory Committee (from here on referred to as TAC) meetings. The main purpose of TAC meetings are to monitor the pace and progress of the doctoral student and to advise on the development of their thesis project, to provide the doctoral student an opportunity to discuss their progress or lack of, and to gain new insights from other supporting members, besides the direct supervisor, with respect to a need to readjust (parts of) the project, to get it back on track towards completion with the remaining time. Moreover, by the 3<sup>rd</sup> TAC meeting, the TAC is encouraged to start shifting focus towards the question of how a successful project completion could be achieved within the anticipated time frame until thesis submission. Additionally, the TAC should advise doctoral student with regards to career planning and professional development. Members of the TAC may eventually mediate discussions between doctoral students and supervisor.

## TAC committee composition:

- a. The TAC should consist of 3 to 4 experienced scientists (including the doctoral student's advisor). Other than the supervisor, 2 TAC members must come from outside of the doctoral student's research group in order to foster interdisciplinarity.
- b. It is not required that all members of the TAC hold the position of professor, however those members that are included on the University paperwork, as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> supervisors need (to have the Prof. assist Prof. or PD title and) to be active members of your TAC. Make sure to discuss who best to include on the TAC with your supervisor, these members should be able to provide the doctoral student (and/or project) with insights from different scientific perspectives. Ideally, they are meant to complement each other.
- c. TAC members should be willing to remain on the TAC for the duration of the doctoral student's project, when possible. If necessary, additional members may join, should the project require further external input (or a member has left the TAC). -just inform the IMPRS coordination office.
- d. All TAC members should be present at each TAC meeting, if following the "classical TAC format".
- e. An important point of consideration; TAC members are not necessarily those who will serve on the evaluation board for the thesis defense.
- f. Keep in mind that you can ask a post-Doc to join the TAC, as a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> member, the idea here is to level out the hierarchical atmosphere in the meetings to the benefit of the doctoral student, at the same time, it provides a teaching opportunity to the post-Doc.
- g. A formal mentor-mentee relationship could be established between the post-Doc /doctoral student if agreed upon by both parties.
- h. Post-Docs that do become mentors to an IMPRS doctoral student are able to receive a confirmation statement from the IMPRS office of their supportive activities.

Amongst others, we would like to encourage the TAC to discuss the following aspects, during each of the meetings (checklist):

A. PROJECT PROGRESS AND TIMELINE:

1<sup>st</sup> TAC meeting + draft project proposal: should be completed before the first 6 months after the start of the doctoral project. This is to avoid doctoral students delaying their 1<sup>st</sup> TAC because their project proposal is not as complete as they would like.

2<sup>nd</sup> TAC + project proposal: no later than 6 months after the first (or one year after the start of the project). The project proposal should not be seen as “written in gold” and therefore, do not hesitate to complete the 2<sup>nd</sup> TAC meeting with, what you might still consider an improved draft of your project. It is more important to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> TAC, no later than 12 months after the start of the project, to gain new insights for the “actual project” than to be overly concerned about the written proposal at this stage. Your proposal will likely continue to change and develop until the end of the degree.

3<sup>rd</sup> TAC meetings: no later than one year after the 2<sup>nd</sup> TAC. Each doctoral student should have at least one TAC meeting for each year of their doctoral project from here on out.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> TAC meetings: Has the `revised `research plan so far been implemented successfully and is the doctoral student on track? If not, what steps are necessary to realign the project?

- B. DOCTORAL STUDENT TRAINING: Is the doctoral student’s training background and knowledge adequate to handle the project or is there a need for specific advanced training? Would additional training support the student’s development as a scientist?
- C. UNEXPECTED NEW DEVELOPMENTS: Are there unexpected new developments or complications that affect the impact/risk ratio or the outcome of the project? Is it necessary to redefine milestones or to focus on plan B?
- D. PUBLICATION STRATEGY: Please reflect on possible publication strategies. What could a potential story look like? What could be an appropriate journal for the anticipated publication? If publication has thus far been unlikely to succeed, talk about the option of writing a monograph instead.
- E. 3<sup>rd</sup> TAC (4<sup>th</sup> TAC) meeting, FINISHING UP: What still needs to be achieved in order to complete the thesis project? Is it realistic to reach these goals within the anticipated time frame left for the project, until thesis submission? If not, which steps could be further improved?
- F. CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE: Has the doctoral student already participated in scientific meetings/conferences? If not, please investigate the doctorate’s plans in this regard. What would be a good conference for the them to attend?
- G. DOCTORATE CAREER PLANS: The TAC is encouraged to mentor the doctorate regarding possible career decisions based on their aptitudes and skills portfolio.
- H. CONFLICT PREVENTION: If at any point the doctoral student or the direct supervisor feel the need for a moderator to be present at TAC meeting(s), these can be arranged with the IMPRS coordinator (or external faculty members).

### TAC MEETING PROCEDURES:

TAC meetings are mostly free to structure according to doctoral students & TAC members own preferences.

A classical TAC meeting format is:

- ca. 20 min presentation by doctoral student
- ca. 20 min progress discussion with all participants present
- ca. 10-15 min talk with doctoral feedback (not including supervisor)
- ca. 10-15 min talk with supervisor (not including student)
- ca. 20 min final discussion with all participants present
- Duration: Maximum of 1.5 hours

However, we would ask all TAC members to follow the routine described below at the end of each TAC meeting.

1.) DOCTORAL STUDENT FEEDBACK:

At the end of the TAC meeting, the direct supervisor should be asked to briefly leave the room and the remaining TAC members should allow the doctorate to give confidential feedback regarding supervision and related issues.

2.) PROGRESS DISCUSSION:

In a second step, the doctorate should be asked to briefly leave the room and the TAC (including primary supervisor) should discuss the doctoral student's progress. After the TAC has internally discussed all relevant issues, the doctorate should be informed about the outcome of the discussion.

3.) TAC REPORT:

The doctoral student will bring along the TAC form to the TAC meeting. The TAC should fill out the form and should briefly summarize the conclusions of the meeting.

4.) Or if preferred by the TAC members and the doctoral student (a Post-TAC meeting report, see 6-) below) can also be put together.

5.) After the TAC members and the doctorate have signed the form, it should be submitted to the IMPRS-QBEE coordination office, the doctoral student should keep a copy for their own records.

6.) Post-TAC Meeting Report: IMPRS doctorate should write a 1-page report about the discussion, suggestions made, and steps required to complete the project.

This report must be completed within a few days following the TAC meeting, and sent to all TAC members for review. Once approved by the TAC members the same should be signed (at least by supervisor and fellow) and the report handed into the IMPRS coordinator's office.

Important: The TAC report should serve as a reference for the doctoral student and the TAC members in the following TAC meeting(s), in order to better keep-track of the project progress. So please ensure you have a copy for yourself.