



In addition to the individual supervision by their primary supervisor, (AC)<sup>3</sup> doctoral researchers are co-supervised and mentored by a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC), which meets at least once a year. The goal of the TAC is to assist the doctoral researcher in working on their PhD project and in planning their future career in academia and other relevant fields such as industry, politics, education, or government.

### Why TACs are important

The TAC should assist and support doctoral researchers. This support can take many forms, including PhD project development, assistance with methods, letters of recommendation, and career development. In addition, TAC members can help mitigate and resolve problems between the doctoral researcher and the scientific supervisor. This can be as simple as a TAC member asking a doctoral researcher questions that the supervisor may not have thought of (e.g., have you thought about presenting your results at a particular conference?). In some cases, however, the TAC member may identify problems (e.g., a supervisor who has unrealistic goals for the dissertation), and be able to work with the supervisor and doctoral researcher to find a solution. TAC team members often offer the doctoral researcher new, interdisciplinary perspectives to the doctoral researcher. TAC members are there to support the doctoral research. TAC meetings are not evaluations.

### Who forms the TAC?

The TAC consists of the primary/scientific advisor and, if applicable the academic supervisor, at least one mentor and the doctoral researcher. The scientific advisor is central to the TAC, and should be present at all TAC meetings. He or she will assist the doctoral researcher in forming the TAC.

Mentors/co-advisors should be active researchers and hold a PhD degree. We encourage mentors from different career stages and institutions. At least one of the mentors should represent a different research group/field than both the advisor and the academic supervisor. (AC)<sup>3</sup> encourages interdisciplinary and integrative PhD projects, and it is important to include expertise from different approaches in the TAC. Mentors may come from outside (AC)<sup>3</sup>.

All TAC members should be present at each TAC meeting (TAC meetings can be conducted using an online conferencing tool).

### Your tasks as a TAC member

- Attend the TAC meetings and read the TAC documents prepared by the doctoral researcher
- Ensure that the PhD project plan is clear, realistic, and achievable within the planned timeframe – help to adjust the plan if necessary
- Review the progress of the PhD work against the milestones set and help to resolve any questions or problems
- Provide constructive and supportive feedback
- Assist in building a professional network and in aspects of career planning both within and outside academia
- Serve as a personal contact for individual advice
- Support in case of problems and conflicts with the primary supervisor

### Tasks of the doctoral researcher

- Convenes, organizes and chairs the TAC meetings
- Reports on the progress of the PhD project (i.e. milestones, publications, delays) » [IRTG reporting guidelines](#)
- Prepares TAC documents (i.e., supervision agreement, project plan, progress reports) and sends them to the TAC for reading prior the meeting

### TAC topics

- Project progress and timeline
  - Main focus of the TAC: to provide scientific guidance to the doctoral researcher and to 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 to research plans / change of topic / unexpected developments
  - (First) results
  - Finishing up / rounding off the project
- Publication strategy, especially thesis format; conference attendance
- Career plans, recommended workshops/ training
- Conflict prevention. In addition, the TAC should identify the various contact points for grievance management.



### In order to monitor the PhD progress, regular TAC meetings are required!

At least once per year, the doctoral researcher will invite to the TAC to meet (beginning with the kick-off meeting, followed by annual progress meetings).

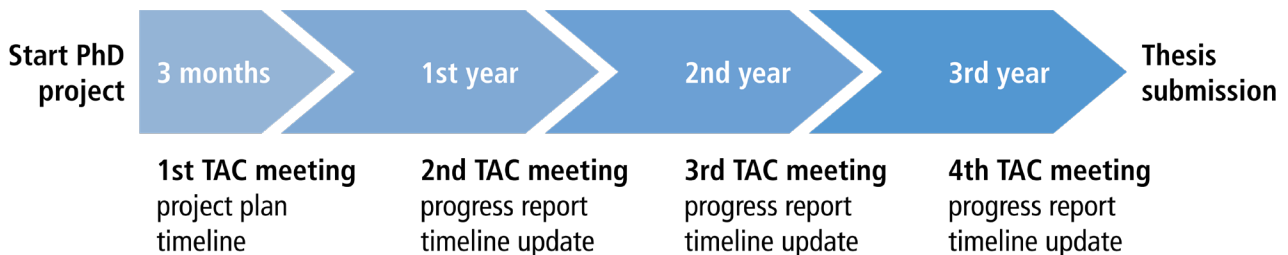
#### Goals of the TAC Meetings

The TAC is responsible for the individual scientific supervision of the doctoral researcher. The main purpose of the TAC meetings is to review and discuss the scientific progress, and to give advice on the development of the PhD project. At least one mentor should not be a member of the academic supervisor's research group, thus providing an external view of the project and an independent opinion. If necessary, this independent mentor can mediate between the doctoral researcher and the academic supervisor. In cases of serious conflict, the TAC may refer to dedicated ombudspersons. In addition, the TAC should advise the doctoral researcher on career planning and professional development.

#### Suggested format for TAC meetings

- The doctoral researcher prepares the TAC documents (supervision agreement, project plan, progress reports) and sends them to the TAC members (please read these documents carefully).
- You can invite the IRTG coordinator to the TAC meetings whenever necessary (e.g., in case of supervision conflicts).
- At the meeting, the doctoral researcher presents his/her/their project / progress / challenges / questions to the TAC (questions can also be related to, e.g., PhD requirements at the faculty, trainings, conferences, career development).
- The TAC discusses the doctoral researchers' reports and advises him or her on the project and further questions.
- After the meeting, the TAC signs the (revised) report (digital signature is possible).
- Duration: 1 - 1.5 hours

#### Schedule of TAC meetings during the PhD project



### Glossary

#### Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC will guide the candidate throughout the independent research phase. The doctoral researcher and supervisor jointly select the second (and third) committee members.

#### Scientific Advisor / *Betreuer\*in des Promotionsvorhabens*

Person usually at the research institution where the doctoral project is being worked on.

#### Academic supervisor / *formale\*r Betreuer\*in*

Person holding the right to supervise doctoral candidates at the Faculty (only necessary in addition to the advisor, if the advisor does not hold this right). This person usually signs the Application for Admission as Doctoral Student / *Antrag auf Zulassung als Doktorand*

#### Mentor

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

Please note that the (AC)<sup>3</sup> Data Policy (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7570328>) and the DFG Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6472827>) apply to all TAC members. These guidelines aim to promote ethical conduct and best practices to prevent scientific misconduct and any form of bullying, harassment or discrimination.

For further information, please visit the IRTG webpage: <https://www.ac3-tr.de/phd/>

In case of questions regarding your tasks as a TAC member or the TAC process please feel free to contact the IRTG coordinator Christa Genz: [irtg@ac3-tr.de](mailto:irtg@ac3-tr.de).