

Mentors as members of a thesis advisory committee (TAC): Information sheet

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Introduction

A thesis advisory committee (TAC) consists of the supervisor(s) of the doctoral thesis project, the postdoctoral members of the supervisory team (if any) and two or three mentors.

Mentors need to have at least senior postdoc level. One mentor needs to be external, i.e. from another research institution. Mentors provide advice and support to the doctoral student and supervisor(s) during the annual TAC meetings. They assess the student-supervisor relationship and mediate in case of misunderstandings or conflicts. (Former) mentors are not allowed to act as reviewers of the doctoral thesis.

Establishment of a TAC

- The doctoral candidate and the supervisor(s) should approach potential mentors together, ideally before the public presentation at the faculty and the completion of the doctoral thesis agreement.
- An application for the establishment of a TAC can be submitted after the doctoral thesis agreement has been submitted to the StudiesServiceCenter.
- If you have agreed upon the establishment of a TAC with all supervisor(s) and with the mentors whom you would like to suggest, please send an email to the administration team of the doctoral school (email to vds-sosci@univie.ac.at) including the names of the mentors. Please Cc all members of your supervisory team and the suggested mentors.
- Mentors need to be approved by the ViDSS Speaker.
- The composition of a TAC may change if a supervisor or a mentor leaves or joins the board. Any changes need to be communicated to the administration and approved by the ViDSS Speaker.

Annual TAC meetings

- The TAC members should meet at least once a year to discuss the progress of the doctoral thesis project, taking into account the original objectives and recent developments.
- The TAC meeting is organised by the doctoral candidate.
- In order to provide a basis for discussion, it is recommended that the doctoral candidate sends the last annual progress report and the draft of the next annual progress report as well as any other documents they want to share and discuss to all TAC members at least two weeks before the meeting.
- The TAC meetings should last at least 90 minutes and are not open to the public.
- The TAC meetings are chaired by a TAC member appointed by the doctoral candidate.
- After the meeting, the doctoral candidate sends the annual progress report including the statement from the TAC meeting to all TAC members. After the report has been approved by the supervisor(s) and all TAC members, the candidate submits it to the StudiesServiceCenter (doktorat.sozialwissenschaften@univie.ac.at).

- Please note that the University of Vienna cannot provide financial support for any expenses arising in relation to TAC meetings.

Format of a TAC meeting

- Short presentation by the doctoral candidate focusing on the progress of the doctoral thesis project, plans for the next year, current challenges and career planning.
- Q&A with all TAC members
- Feedback round 1 – without the supervisor(s)
- Feedback round 2 – without the doctoral candidate
- Short internal discussion among mentors
- Feedback and recommendations by the mentors to the doctoral candidate and the supervisor(s)

Guiding questions to be addressed during the annual TAC meeting

- What are the doctoral candidate's achievements, challenges and plans?
- Are the expectations of the doctoral candidate and the supervisor(s) in line with each other, and do they have the same perceptions regarding the progress of the project?
- Are sufficient resources and support available or targeted?
- Is the doctoral candidate well on track to become an independent researcher?
- Is the proposed plan for the completion of the doctoral thesis realistic?
- How can career development of the candidate be supported?