

**Concept of the Thesis**

**Advisory Committee**

**Doctoral study Geology**

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# INTRODUCTION

The concept of the **Thesis Advisory Committee** (TAC) is used at the Department of Geological Sciences, Faculty of Science, MU, as a standard tool for the PhD Program Geology to provide a comprehensive system of **individual quality assessment of PhD students** during their way to the dissertation thesis defence.

This document aims to clearly define the whole concept of the TAC, including the structure and set up of the TAC, processes related to the operation of the TAC, the expectations of the TAC concept, and the schedule of the implementation.

The concept of the TAC has replaced the previously used system of quality assessment and progress reporting, represented by Annual Reports.

# TAC – STRUCTURE

## Establishment of the TAC

**Every\* PhD student** enrolled in the PhD Programme Geology must be supervised and mentored during their studies by the TAC. The TAC is responsible for monitoring the student's progress and providing external advice and support to both student and supervisor.

Setting up the TAC is the responsibility of the student, but the selection of committee members is done in cooperation between the student and the supervisor. TAC members should be selected and appointed during the first semester of study.

The proposal of TAC members approved by the PhD student and the supervisor must be delivered by the end of the first semester to the Chair of the Doctoral Board for assessment and final approval.

* *Except for the students who started their studies before 2022, who continue in the Annual Reports system.*

## Composition of the committee members

The TAC should consist of at least three members. There is no upper limit on the number of TAC members; however, the TAC consisting of five members can be considered as maximum. At least two TAC members should have experience with the supervision of doctoral students.

The TAC should include the supervisor and two members; at least one of them should be external – from outside of the Dept. of Geological Sciences (affiliated with other institute of the Faculty of Science, other faculty of MU, or other institution). Appointments of international members of the TAC are highly recommended.

In the nomination to the TAC, the student must explain what is the proposed TAC member’s relevant experience and specialization and what is the expected benefit from his/her participation in the TAC.

The TAC composition may change during its existence. The TAC changes will be assessed individually by the *Chair of the Doctoral Board* or *Doctoral Committee*.

# TAC MEETINGS

The TAC should convene at least **three times\*** between the PhD student's enrolment and dissertation thesis defence. All scheduled meetings are mandatory and must take place in predefined periods. It is necessary to register for the course *GD651 TAC Meeting* in semesters when the Meeting is planned and realized. The Meeting can be held online *(see Chapter 4.2).* Initiating the organization of the meetings (both on-site or online) on time is very important. It is the PhD student's responsibility to invite the TAC members, arrange TAC meetings, sending the TAC committee members the TAC Progress Report before the meeting, and submitting the fully completed and signed reports to the Homework Vaults of the course GD651.

* *Except for the students who started their studies in the year 2022 or 2023, who have established the TAC in the second or third year of study.*

## Schedule of meetings

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year of Enrolment** | **1st Meeting** | **2nd Meeting** | **3rd Meeting** | **Follow-up Meetings** |
| **2024 or later** | 2nd semester | 4-5th semester | 7th semester | 9, 11th, etc. |
| **2023** | N/A | 4-5th semester | 7th semester | 9, 11th, etc. |
| **Before 2023** | TAC concept is not applied – progress is monitored by annual reports |

## The course GD651 TAC Meeting

Every semester the Meeting is planned and conducted, the PhD student needs to register for the course GD651 *TAC Meeting*. The *TAC Progress Report* and *signed TAC Assessment Report* are then uploaded to the *Homework Vaults* of the course.

## Procedures of meetings

### Before the Meeting

Two weeks before every TAC meeting, the PhD student submits to all TAC members a written material:

* + A thesis proposal (for the 1st Meeting)
	+ A brief report on the project's progress (for following meetings) – the *Progress Report* template can be used (see Annex)

### During the Meeting

One of the TAC members (other than the supervisor) acts as a chairperson, who summarizes conclusions of the Meeting and finalizes the *TAC Assessment Report*.

The Meeting is divided into four parts.

* + The PhD student gives a short (approximately 20 min.) presentation of his/her current research. The presentation should avoid technical details and focus on the key points needed to assess the project and/or for which advice is wanted. A discussion with the TAC members follows it.
	+ A obligatory discussion\* between the PhD student and the TAC without the supervisor - a discussion about PhD student's satisfaction with his/her supervisor or any other sensitive topic.
	+ A obligatory discussion\* between the entire TAC committee, without the PhD student. It should reveal the satisfaction of the supervisor with the student.
	+ Final discussion – the chairperson finishes the Meeting with a summary and recommendations.
* The part of the Meeting where the supervisor or PhD student is not present is **confidential**. If the outputs of this section are important, they should be mentioned in the report in an anonymized form. Any potential misunderstandings should be identified and treated in time.

### After the Meeting

A scan of the *TAC Assessment Report,* signed by PhD student, supervisor, and chairperson, must be uploaded to the Homework Vaults of the course *GD651 TAC Meeting* within one month of the Meeting.

## Types of meetings

### First Meeting

The first TAC meeting takes place by the end of the **second semester**. Two weeks before the TAC meeting, the PhD student submits a short, written **thesis proposal** (pre-final draft of the **Dissertation thesis topic review and project**,necessary for the credits of the course **GD001)**, presenting the basic outline of the project and initial results.

The TAC will assess the following criteria, which will be recorded on the *TAC Assessment Report*:

* + Scope and the milestones of the research project
	+ Expected impact and opportunities of the project
	+ Potential risks and challenges involved in the project
	+ The readiness of the PhD student on the project (methodological skills and fundamental knowledge)
	+ Overall assessment of the student's performance and approach to the project

#### The dissertation thesis proposal, updated and corrected based on the TAC recommendations, will be consequently (the final version) submitted to the Chair of the Doctoral Board as the necessary step of the course GD001.

### Second Meeting

The second TAC meeting takes place between the **fourth** and the **fifth semester** and should be focused mainly on the progress of the student in meeting the set objectives based on a running report prepared by PhD student. An alternative project can also be considered if progress is not sufficient. Appropriate attention must be paid to any potential risks, and explicit measures must be taken to prevent any failures.

This Meeting should also serve as a **career consultancy**. Career development should be monitored further.

The TAC will assess the following criteria, which will be recorded on the *TAC Assessment Report*:

* + Status of the Project
	+ Progress made
	+ Goals for the coming year
	+ Career plans *(networking, soft skills, development of CV – conferences and publications)*

### Third Meeting

The third TAC meeting takes place during the **seventh semester**. It aims to evaluate the readiness of the PhD student to publish results, complete the research, and finish studies. The status of the project and duties needed for completing the study should be described in the running report provided by the PhD student to the TAC committee in advance. If more time for completion of the study is needed, a detailed research schedule must be submitted together with the *TAC Assessment Report* to specify precisely the timing and activities required for the successful defence. The student's funding after the eighth semester must be clarified.

The TAC will assess the following criteria, which will be recorded on the *TAC Assessment Report*:

* + Status of the Project
	+ Progress made
	+ Goals for the period until completion of study/for the coming year (in case more time is needed for completion of study)
	+ A tentative date for defence (year, month)
	+ Career plans *(networking, soft skills, development of CV)*

### Follow-up Meeting(s)

The follow-up TAC meetings after the third Meeting are scheduled for every other odd semester (i.e., 9th, 11th, etc.). During the meetings, the completeness of the research plan is checked and treated.

### Ad Hoc Meetings

At any time, any involved party (TAC member, PhD student, supervisor) can hold personal discussions with another party or can request additional TAC meetings.

# EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

## TAC process and TAC settings changes

Any necessary amendment of the TAC settings (postponement of the TAC meeting, addition of another TAC member, replacement of the TAC member, etc.) must be notified to the *Chair of the Doctoral board Geology* using the form *Amendment of the TAC Settings.*

## Online Meeting

The TAC meeting is usually held as an on-site meeting (i.e., all parties meet at one time and on one place); however, it can be held online. The PhD student is still responsible for the organization of the Meeting.

A seminar rooms of Dept. of Geological Sciences can be used for the Meeting, AV equipment is available for the meetings (portable surround microphone, surround camera). The contact person for the reservation: IT technician of the Department.

## Revocation of the TAC committee

The revocation of the TAC committee (e.g. due to the complete change of the Dissertation thesis topic) can occur by the PhD student's decision and the decision of the *Doctoral Board*. The former TAC must be replaced by a new one as soon as possible, ideally within one month. The process of revocation should be the last instance, and a sufficient effort to exploit existing TAC must come first. The procedure should be used exceptionally only. The *Doctoral Board* must approve the revocation.

## Exchange of TAC member

Any member of the TAC can be replaced by another, if necessary. The replacement must be announced to the *Chair of the Doctoral Board Geology* (see 4.1).

# ANNEXES

1. TAC Members Proposal
2. TAC Assessment Report 1
3. TAC Assessment Report 2
4. TAC Assessment Report 3
5. TAC Assessment Report 4+
6. Amendment of the TAC Settings
7. TAC Progress Report