

BIGS Neuroscience Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting guidelines

The Bonn International Graduate School (BIGS) of Neuroscience requires doctoral candidates to regularly convene with a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) to ensure ongoing feedback on the progress of their thesis projects. Candidates are expected to present a progress report to the committee at least three times throughout their doctoral studies, typically once per year. The composition of the TAC mirrors that of a traditional dissertation committee, comprising the doctoral thesis supervisor and a minimum of two additional members. The composition of the TAC should remain the same for the entire duration of the doctoral program.

The typical composition of the TAC is:

1. The **supervisor**, who is a member of the Bonn International Graduate School of Neuroscience.
2. A second **member from the faculty dissertation committee**, if applicable. If not specified by the faculty, a second Principal Investigator (PI) or group leader may serve in this capacity.
3. An **external expert** selected freely by the student, at the postdoctoral level or higher, ideally a PI.
4. Additional members are welcome.

We kindly ask you to take note of the following guidelines. The composition of the TAC will vary depending on the faculty affiliation:

If you are registered for a PhD at the **Faculty of Medicine**, the second member is selected from the dissertation committee approved by the Faculty of Medicine. The third (and fourth) member may also be chosen from the Faculty of Medicine's confirmed dissertation committee, or alternatively, can be a different group leader or postdoctoral researcher possessing expertise relevant to the doctoral thesis's field.

If you are registered for a Dr. rer. nat. at the **Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences**, the second supervisor serves as the second member of the TAC. If no second supervisor has been designated by the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, a group leader authorized to confer doctorates may fulfil the role of the second TAC member. The third member can be either a group leader or a postdoctoral researcher possessing expertise relevant to the doctoral research field.

If you are registered for a Dr. phil. at the **Faculty of Arts**, a group leader authorized to confer doctorates may serve as the second member of the TAC. The third member can be either a group leader or a postdoctoral researcher possessing expertise relevant to the doctoral research field.

The following applies to **all three faculties**: If you select TAC members who have not been confirmed by the respective faculty, please notify BIGS Neuroscience of these additional TAC members **prior** to your TAC meeting.

Before the oral presentation, doctoral candidates are required to submit a **written report** on their doctoral project to the TAC. The TAC convenes for the oral progress report presentation. Note that (at least) three TAC members must be present and sign the TAC Meeting form. Following the oral progress report, there will be a discussion with the presenting doctoral student, followed by a discussion among the TAC members. Detailed instructions for preparing and conducting the TAC Meeting are provided in the TAC meeting form. Please use this form for documenting the meeting.

Before your first TAC Meeting

Prior to arranging your first TAC Meeting, you must determine the composition of your TAC (see "the typical composition of the TAC"). Then, follow the guidelines outlined in the TAC Meeting form, which can be downloaded from the following link: <https://big-s-neuroscience.de/tac-meeting/>

Scheduling your TAC Meetings

Your first TAC meeting should occur within one year of your enrolment in BIGS Neuroscience. The subsequent required TAC meetings must be held at least 6 months apart. It is advisable to use the last TAC meeting to prepare your thesis defence.

Typically, your TAC meetings will be held in person, although your TAC members can participate online if necessary. To schedule the meeting, please use an event scheduling tool (e.g. Doodle or DuD-poll).

Please follow these steps:

1. Coordinate with your supervisor to identify **up to nine** 1.5-hour time slots. Please vary the times and days of the week whenever possible.
2. Generate a poll; please keep the visibility of responses enabled. Avoid adding more than nine timeslots to your poll; if no common date is found, create a new poll.
3. Distribute the poll to all TAC members.
4. If you have not received responses within a week, send a kind reminder.
5. Promptly finalize the date, time and location, and notify all TAC members accordingly.
6. If one or more of your TAC members are attending online, generate a link for a videoconference (e.g. Zoom) and send it in a timely manner.
7. Send a reminder about the date, time and location (and the link for the videoconference, if applicable) one or two days before the meeting. Ensure all TAC members know how to find the room where the TAC meeting is held.

Final Steps After Your TAC Meeting:

1. Gather the signatures of all attending TAC members and sign the TAC Meeting form yourself. Signatures can also be placed electronically.
2. Scan the signed form and upload it onto the internal online system under "Achievements – TAC Meeting."
3. The BIGS Neuroscience office will subsequently endorse your TAC meeting, marking it as completed in the curriculum progress overview.