

SFB 1176

„Molecular structuring of soft matter“

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Short Guide “TACs in the SFB 1176”, for Ph.D. Students and PIs

TACs

So-called TAC-meetings (thesis advisory committee meetings) are a special instrument to support a Ph.D. research work performed in the collaborative research center (CRC, SFB in German) SFB 1176 „Molecular structuring of soft matter“. They give you help, feedback and advice from a small group of PIs. The TAC is a forum that should complement but obviously not replace the normal relationship you have with your supervisor. It also gives you a chance to practice giving talks, presenting and discussing your data with experts. For your PI it is also a useful way to get advice from others not directly involved in the project work.

The TAC really becomes a vital exercise when you or your PI have problems with the course of the PhD and then the TAC members are there to help you resolve these problems.

IMPORTANT: TACs are NOT exams!

NO ONE FAILS A TAC MEETING! They are there to help you! DO NOT BE AFRAID!

Members of the TAC

The members of the TAC are defined in the supervision agreement you have signed at the beginning of the Ph.D. work.

Obligatory Members:

- a) The direct supervisor
- b) The mentor
- c) One additional project leader (PI) of the SFB.

Additional members

- d) The speaker of the integrated research school, Prof. Manfred Wilhelm, and the equal opportunities officer, Dr. Leonie Barner, are invited to join each TAC-Meeting as fully entitled members.

Timing

First TAC within the first 6 months of your thesis.

Second TAC: after approximately 2 years of your thesis

If a student or PI requests extra TAC support, then the frequency of TAC meetings can of course be increased. The intention is that the structure of the TAC meetings matches the needs of the student! As an example: At the end of your thesis, you and your PI have to decide if the data you have acquired is sufficient to defend your thesis. If there are doubts, one additional final TAC meeting should be placed.

Prearrangement of a TAC

a) Ph.D. Student

For your TAC presentation, it is important that you know what work you are doing and why. You should, at later stages, be able to interpret your results in the context of previous published results. You should write the TAC proposal yourself, also the one before the first meeting. It will be vital to have your PIs advice.

Submit the proposal at least three days before your TAC-meeting to SFB 1176 and your TAC. It should be in English and occupy a maximum of 5 pages for the first TAC, for later TAC this proposal can be longer (max. 15

pages!). However, we strongly encourage you to keep this text as concise as possible. Excessively long proposals handed to your TAC 3 days before your meeting, risk not to be read completely by all TAC members!!

Reading this report and advising you requires a lot of time!

In addition, you will present your work at the TAC in an oral presentation, also in English.

Please keep aware that all necessary elements of a thesis are also included in your written proposal and your presentation. It is necessary to include:

- 1) **introduction** into the topic
- 2) **state of science**
- 3) **outcome** of the work
- 4) **plans** (outlook) for the remaining time of your thesis
- 5) the relevant **literature**

b) PI and TAC members

It is important to guide the PhD student and provide him with tips regarding the direction and progress of his project as well as more generally how to give a good presentation and interpret results. **Please fill out the TAC report immediately following or during the meeting. All TAC-members and the PhD student must sign it.** Then give it to SFB 1176 (SFB-Manager Dr. D. Voll, CFN-Building, Room 119, Wolfgang-Gaede-Str. 1a, 76131 Karlsruhe).

If there are important problems, please inform also the SFB-1176 administration.

Standard TAC meeting protocol:

The student should provide the TAC members with a written summary of the research project, at least three days in advance of the meeting. This should include: The scientific context, the aims, results, conclusions and perspectives of the project.

During the TAC meeting, the student gives an oral presentation of the research project, during which specific scientific problems can be addressed.

Following the oral presentation and discussion, the TAC members should meet alone with the group leader and with the student. Therefore the TAC should:

- a) invite the student to step out of the room momentarily
- b) invite the group leader to step out of the room momentarily

The TAC then should discuss and summarize their views and to formulate recommendations. In case of severe problems, both the student and the group leader may be invited to step out momentarily.

TAC report should be signed by all TAC members as well as the PhD student.

For the Qualifying Assessment (TAC report):

The quality of the written proposal, the oral presentation and the discussion should be evaluated. Critiques should be provided and suggestions for improvements specified. There should be a specific recommendation regarding the suitability of the proposed project as a „PhD Thesis project“ and a specific statement of whether or not the 'Qualifying Assessment' was considered to be satisfactory by the members of the TAC.