

Guidelines for the PhD Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings

The PAC

The PAC is a committee consisting of at least three senior scientists who guide the PhD researcher in all aspects of her/his PhD. The PAC includes

- the direct supervisor (IMPRS faculty member) **plus** an IMPRS faculty member from the same institution, in case the direct supervisor is not a faculty member,
- another IMPRS faculty member from the partnering institution (FSU Jena or MPI-BGC),
- an external scientist, ideally related to the foreign research visit

Other scientists strongly involved in the supervision should also participate in the PAC meetings.

Preparation of the meetings

- The PhD researcher is in charge to initiate the meetings and to inform the IMPRS coordinator about the date and place of the meeting.
- In case finding the external advisor takes longer than 5 months, the first PAC meeting should take place nevertheless.
- PAC members and coordinator receive a proposal (for the first meeting) or a progress report (for subsequent meetings) not later than one week before the meeting.

During the meeting

- max. 15 min presentation of proposal / progress report by the PhD researcher, then ca. 60 min discussion, guided by [the report form](#) (*details on next page*).
- PAC members or coordinator fill in and sign the report form and hand it to the coordinator.

After the meeting

- de-briefing of the PAC meeting (with coordinator)
- possibly the PhD researcher submits a revised version of the thesis proposal to the PAC members and the coordinator by a specified time.

During regular PAC meetings, the PhD researcher and all of the above advisors deliberate extensively about results, past and future development as well as strategic decisions regarding the PhD project.

Career planning and networking are also important aspects of the PAC meetings.

PhD proposal / progress report — check list

- clear development of the research questions out of a detailed overview of the recent research in this specific area
- method section on how to answer the research questions
- possible results and their implications for recent research in this area
- a timeline with defined milestones, including publications (Gantt chart)
- a preliminary program for the additional curriculum, tailored to fit this research program and considering the minimum requirements detailed in the IMPRS agreement (including a suggestion for 3-month research stay with another research group)

Report of the PhD Advisory Committee meeting

(report form available on <https://www.bgc-jena.mpg.de/en/imprs/pac-meeting>)

Topics to be addressed during the PAC meeting

(One PAC member is responsible for filling in the form, in agreement with the other PAC members)

- Do you expect the PhD candidate to finish on schedule (i.e. within the agreed funding period)?
- Estimate the overall progress of the project. Are there any limitations?

- Please comment on the **research questions & the work plan** of the project (original and relevant research, sufficiently focused, considering the funding period?).
- Which publications have been / should be written as part of the PhD thesis? When? Conditions for success? Is there a plan B? Comment on the proposal.

- Which **conferences & meetings** should be attended?
- Which collaborations in addition to the PAC are crucial for the project?
- What should be achieved during the research stay? When should it take place? In which lab? (*Consider relevance for the PhD researcher's future career.*)

- Is the PhD candidate able to **orally present** his / her work adequately?
- Is the PhD candidate able to **present** his / her work in **writing** adequately?
- Which **methods** should be learned / improved? Any recommendations to improve the background knowledge?
- Do you recommend any **transferable skill or language courses**?
- Comments on the choice of courses and other elements of the additional curriculum (*During the period of the PhD project 20 credit points must be collected according to the guidelines of the IMPRS agreement in a way that is most beneficial for the scientific development of the PhD researcher.*)

- The PhD candidate is asked to briefly describe her/his **working environment**. **The main adviser will be asked “What could be criticized in your supervision?” to stimulate the discussion. Then she/he should leave the room.**

List important facilities and equipment available to carry out the PhD project. The PhD candidate should comment on the feasibility of the project from his / her point of view. Are there any problems? (3-5 minutes, and return for a wrap-up).

- **Discussion among PAC members**

The PhD candidate should leave the room for some minutes.

- Fix a date for the next PAC meeting & the de-briefing of the PAC meeting

PAC meetings should take place at least 5 months, 12 months, 20 months and 30 months after the start of the PhD project. In between and afterwards on demand. The de-briefing between the PhD candidate and the coordinator should take place a few days after the PAC meeting.

If substantial changes to the work plan / the research questions have been discussed, the PhD proposal or progress **report** should be **revised** and circulated again. In this case, a deadline should be specified.