



CNB PhD Training Program

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

In addition to the annual activities organized by the CNB Training Committee, and in our effort to improve the excellence of the PhD Training Program, we have recently implemented the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) at the CNB, based on the Salzburg Principles. This tool is established in internationally recognized research institutes, and has two main goals:

AIM-1. Pursues to provide a complete individual quality assessment of PhD researchers for their professional growth and thesis achievements

AIM-2. It will help to detect earlier conflicts and problems that otherwise might truncate the thesis success and satisfaction of PhD researchers and supervisors.

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TAC

The TAC will have three members:

- the thesis supervisor,

- and two advisor members with the following profiles:

a) a CNB scientist with PhD degree (internal member). This person must have a minimum period of 3 years postdoctoral experience and should have experience in the scientific and/or technical areas of the thesis project, or related to it. This member will chair the TAC. There is a list of volunteer-CNB postdoctoral researchers and PIs for that. It is recommended that the CNB-member of the TAC belongs to a different department than the supervisor and predoctoral researcher; this will also strengthen transversal connections between research plans.

b) a scientist with PhD degree, national or foreigner (external member), affiliated with another faculty or institution. This external researcher must have experience in the research field of the thesis and must be available for participating in the TAC meetings. Exclusion of close collaborators and previous members of the research group is recommended to keep impartiality and objectivity at the TAC.

The members will be selected in agreement between the supervisor and the PhD researcher. The proposal will be delivered to the CNB Training Committee (tac@cnb.csic.es) for further approval by the end of the first trimester of the thesis. The two advisory members of the TAC will sign a compromise of confidentiality (non-disclosure agreement, NDA) related to the data that the PhD researcher and supervisor will share with them, in order to protect unpublished data and potential patents.



2. TAC MEETINGS

The TAC must meet at least two times during the PhD period of the trainee, one by the end of the first-year of thesis and a second one by the end of the third-year. These meetings are mandatory. A second-year TAC meeting can be proposed by the PhD researcher and/or the supervisor (optional). Each meeting will be divided in four parts, and should be carried out in English language (at least the first part of the meeting):

- 1) the PhD researcher will give a short presentation (max. 20 min) of her/his current research, followed by a discussion with the TAC.
- 2) Time for discussion between the PhD researcher and the TAC without the supervisor, to tackle the level of satisfaction of the PhD researcher with the project and with the supervisor, and any other sensitive topic.*
- 3) Time for discussion between the entire TAC, in absence of the PhD researcher, to assess the satisfaction of the supervisor with the trainee.*
- 4) The chair (internal TAC member) finishes with a summary and recommendations. An assessment report (a format will be supplied) must be filled by the chair, signed by all parties, and sent up to two weeks after the meeting to the CNB Management Team (direccion.cnb@csic.es), that will preserve privacy and confidentiality.

*This part of the meeting will be CONFIDENTIAL. Potential misunderstandings should be identified, discussed and handled in time.

Meetings schedule and goals:

Considering that the thesis report is requested by the university doctoral programs by the end of each academic year (around June), we propose to synchronize the schedule of TAC annual meetings with that in order to optimize the PhD researcher and supervisor efforts as well as time-investment in these duties.

First meeting, by the end of the first academic year of the thesis. The PhD researcher will submit a written report to the TAC about the thesis proposal and initial results (a format will be supplied). As a guide, the TAC might evaluate the following points:

- background and milestones of the project
- expected impact
- potential risks and challenges
- methodological skills and knowledge required
- overall evaluation of the PhD candidate performance



Second meeting, by the end of the third academic year. In addition to evaluate the progress of the project, it will assess the status of the research performed by the PhD researcher in terms of readiness of the results for being submitted for publication, and time to complete the study and prepare the manuscript for thesis defense.

Ad-hoc meeting, by the end of the second academic year (optional) or whenever needed. They can be scheduled at any time that a TAC member (supervisor, PhD researcher or other TAC member) request or propose it to discuss about thesis related issues.

The comments provided by the two advisor members of the TAC will be of advisory (non-binding) nature.

3. FUNCTIONING OF THE TAC

3.1. The application of the TAC will be mandatory for all PhD researchers enrolled in the CNB doctorate program starting from 2022/2023 academic year and next academic years.

3.2. To facilitate the development of data presentation skills, PhD researchers must present their results at least twice along their thesis period at CNB. The TAC should guarantee that the PhD researchers accomplish those tasks related to presentation competencies, as it will be a preparation for thesis defense.

3.3. The thesis director, member of the TAC too, has a vital and major role for the appropriate progress of the project and PhD researchers training. He/She has to supervise the research activities, to provide support in experimental design and task coordination, and to guide the PhD researcher during the training period.

3.4. The TAC should also provide career consultancy to the PhD researcher.

3.5. The PhD researcher must accomplish the PhD Training Activities Program, organized by the CNB Training Committee, along the thesis period. That together with favorable evaluations of the TAC will be required to obtain a **CERTIFICATE OF THESIS EXCELLENCE** once the PhD dissertation has taken place. The certificate will summarize the training in soft-skills and TAC assessment that the PhD researcher received, a quality signature of the CNB doctorate program.