



# Arusyak Harutyunyan Supervision Principles at HBIGS, Heidelberg University

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**H B I G S**



# Supervision and mentoring at HBIGS

A close, professional and trustful relationship between the main supervisor and the student forms the basis of a successful and rewarding PhD thesis.

The HBIGS program strengthens the relationship between the supervisor and the doctoral researcher. In addition, HBIGS has implemented several checks and balances.



# Bond of Trust

- **A bond of trust** and a mutual understanding is essential for any successful and productive doctoral researcher.
- The main supervisor of the student is, therefore, expected to be available for in-depth discussions with the students at least once a week.



## TACs

- The **thesis advisory committees (TACs)** are a crucial cornerstone of the HBIGS mentoring and supervision concept. There is one TAC for each doctoral researcher.
- The TAC consists of the main supervisor and two additional members. The additional members of the TAC should hold expertise relevant to the student's project. Additional members can be faculty members of HBIGS or external experts from academia or industry.



## TACs

The doctoral researcher, in consultation with the main supervisor, suggests appropriate TAC members for approval by HBIGS.

The TAC monitors the student's scientific progress on an annual basis and recommends future directions and strategies, as well as the structure of the curricular activities. The student must present a short written progress report (4 pages) describing the accomplishments and problems encountered within the past year and proposing solutions to these problems.



# TACs

In addition, the doctoral researcher gives a 20 minute oral presentation of their work. The TAC discusses the progress of the PhD work with the doctoral researcher and advises the doctoral researcher on the future research direction, including how to overcome technical difficulties.



# TACs

The TAC keeps an eye on the time-line of the PhD and recommends an extension, if warranted. In confidential and closed-door discussions with the supervisor and doctoral researcher, respectively, the two additional members assess the supervisor-PhD student relationship.



# TACs

The two additional members will give advice should problems between the doctoral researcher and the supervisor arise. The TAC further takes an active role in the development of an individual career development plan.

The TAC prepares minutes of the meeting to be submitted to the Director of HBIGS. The student receives a copy of the minutes. Both the supervisor and the doctoral researcher can ask for additional TAC meetings.



# TACs

The first TAC meets within the first six months post-commencement of the PhD. During the first meeting, the TAC, together with the student, defines provisional benchmarks that will later help judge the progress of the work.

Although the TACs cannot prevent scientific fraud they raise the bar for doctoral researchers to err.



# TACs

The student should maintain close interactions with their TAC members via discussions and exchange of ideas and results. The curricular and extramural events organized by the Graduate School provide a basis for regular discussions. Irrespectively, the graduate student is encouraged to directly contact the TAC members on their own.



# Mentoring Agreement

A **mentoring agreement** signed by the doctoral researcher and the main supervisor specifies the responsibilities of both parties. It sends a clear signal to the supervisor to take their mentoring role seriously and it reminds the doctoral researcher that a PhD is an independent contribution of scientific work that requires the full attention and dedication.



# Progress Form

The minimal requirements for a PhD are outlined in **progress forms** that are handed out to new doctoral researchers. The progress forms list the minimal number of courses, lectures, workshops, meetings and publications required in order to be admitted to the defense.



# Supervising at IMB

As a rule, a scientific supervisor should hold a degree of Doctor or Candidate of Sciences (PhD). PhD mentoring permission is given to those researchers who have at least 30 published articles in respective topic. To have a balanced workload, no more than 5 doctoral candidates are allowed per supervisor.



## Supervising at IMB

In addition, PhD student is also co-mentored by a non-formal mentoring team, which is formed by all supervisors from IMB (usually 3-4 people). The mentoring team works in close collaboration with the doctoral candidate and supervisor, monitors the progress of the study independent from their annual assessment and participates in handling supervisor-student conflicts.



# Supervising at IMB

The Supervisor is chosen by the Scientific council of IMB based on the following criteria:

1. Research activity, which is indicated by the number of publications in peer-reviewed 14 journals, books/chapters, participation in the international scientific events;



## Supervising at IMB

2. Sufficient resources and funding, which is indicated by the number of previous and ongoing projects funded by local and international agencies; 3. Previous history of PhD student supervision (not required for “newcomer” supervisors). The young scientists start their supervisor career, usually after completing the PhD degree, by supervising master theses, then working with PhD students as co-mentors.



# Evaluations of Supervisors

Evaluations of supervisor are conducted as a part of periodical evaluation of overall activities of the research staff of IMB.