Policies and Procedures Manual
Preface

Dear doctoral students of the Research Training Group "Targets in Toxicology”,

The Research Training Group (RTG) "Targets in Toxicology" wishes to ensure high-quality supervision and education of its enrolled doctoral students. This manual is intended to help you on your way to achieving a doctorate within our qualification programme.

In this manual, you will find information on the organization of the RTG, the general structure and procedures of the qualification programme, information sheets, as well as templates for all essential forms which you - together with your supervisor - will need to fill in at the beginning of and at defined checkpoints during your thesis work.

In order to continuously improve this manual and the quality of our doctoral programme, we welcome any feedback from your side.

We wish you all the best and every success for your thesis project.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Gudermann Dr. Claudia Staab-Weijnitz
Speaker, RTG “Targets in Toxicology” Vice-Speaker, RTG „Targets in Toxicology“
# Table of Content

Preface ........................................................................................................................................... 2  
Table of content ................................................................................................................................. 3  
1. General Information ..................................................................................................................... 4  
   1.1. Organizational Structure ....................................................................................................... 4  
   1.2. Definition - Doctorate .......................................................................................................... 5  
   1.3. Duration and structure of qualification programme and doctoral projects ....................... 6  
   1.4. Examination regulations (Promotionsordnung) ................................................................... 6  
   1.5. Information sheets on doctorate procedures ....................................................................... 7  
2. Programme Modules .................................................................................................................... 8  
   2.1. M1: Lung Basics and Principles of Toxicology ................................................................. 8  
   2.2. M2: Ph.D. research project and dissertation ...................................................................... 9  
   2.3. M3: International Lecture Series “Toxicology of the Lung” ............................................. 9  
   2.4. M4: Status quo Seminars, Journal Clubs ......................................................................... 10  
   2.5. M5: Educational Courses of the German Society of Toxicology (GT) ............................ 10  
   2.6. M6: Transferable Skills Training and Career Development Programme ...................... 11  
   2.7. M7: Translational Skills ..................................................................................................... 12  
   2.8. M8: Control of Success ....................................................................................................... 12  
2.9. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) - Reporting ........................ 14  
2.10. Specific guidelines for medical students (Dr. med.) ............................................................ 14  
3. Regulations for the working area .................................................................................................... 15  
   3.1. General regulations ............................................................................................................... 15  
   3.2. Tutor .................................................................................................................................... 15  
4. Supervision .................................................................................................................................. 16  
   4.1. Supervision agreement ......................................................................................................... 16  
   4.2. Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) .................................................................................... 16  
   4.3. Target agreement .................................................................................................................. 17  
   4.4. Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings and target amendments ............................ 17  
5. Contact persons / Links ................................................................................................................ 17  
   5.1. RTG “Targets in Toxicology” ............................................................................................. 19  
   5.2. MMRS office (Ph.D.) ......................................................................................................... 20  
   5.3. Doctoral office (Dr. med.) ................................................................................................... 20  
   5.4. FoeFoLe Programme ........................................................................................................... 21  
   5.5. Graduate Center LMU ......................................................................................................... 21  
   5.6. Early Career Funding Opportunities .................................................................................... 22  
   5.7. Miscellaneous links and information .................................................................................... 22  
6. Anhang ......................................................................................................................................... 23
1. General Information

The Research Training Group (RTG) “Targets in Toxicology” implements a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary qualification programme with the long-term aim to educate a new generation of highly qualified toxicologists. Constituting an associated research training group within the Munich Medical Research School (MMRS) at the Medical Faculty of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), the RTG “Targets in Toxicology” provides a structured Ph.D. programme (Ph.D. in Medical Research) with a modular organization which requires the acquisition of 180 ECTS points in a 3-year curriculum. Medical students may also enrol in the programme for a minimum of 18 months to obtain a medical doctor (Dr. med.).

1.1. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the RTG “Targets in Toxicology” is depicted in the following schematic overview.

![Organizational structure of the Research Training Group "Targets in Toxicology"

Figure 1: Organizational structure of the Research Training Group "Targets in Toxicology"
The Executive Board consists of the designated speaker, the vice-speaker, and one additional PI, and is elected by the RTG assembly. The board will manage the RTG, officially represent the RTG, and ultimately be responsible for the qualification programme, quality control, and finances of the RTG.

The Coordinator supports the Executive Board in scientific and administrative affairs. Most importantly, the coordinator organizes the qualification programme including the international exchange programme.

Two Doctoral Researchers’ Representatives are elected on a yearly basis by the doctoral researchers. They represent the doctoral researchers in the RTG assembly. To assure gender equality, one of them must be female.

The RTG Assembly is the main forum for discussion and decision making including the selection of doctoral students. It consists of the participating scientists, the doctoral researchers’ representatives, and the coordinator. The RTG Assembly shapes the scientific programme. Except for the coordinator, all members of the RTG Assembly have the right to vote and decisions are made with a majority vote. The assembly will meet at least twice a year; more meetings will be scheduled on demand.

The Advisory Board is appointed by the RTG assembly and consists of three (inter)national scientists with a strong expertise in lung (patho)physiology and/or toxicology as well as in the management of graduate programmes. The Advisory Board will be invited once a year and will advise the Executive Board and the RTG Assembly.

1.2. Definition - Doctorate

A doctorate serves as a formal proof of qualification for autonomous scientific work. Within this RTG, the following academic degrees can be obtained at the Munich Medical Research School (MMRS) at the Medical Faculty of LMU Munich:

- Medical Doctor (Dr. med)

- Ph.D. in Medical Research
1.3. Duration and structure of qualification programme and doctoral projects

For a structured Ph.D. in Medical Research, the qualification programme is based on a 3-year curriculum, in accordance with the regulations of the MMRS (cf. Figure 2). For a detailed description of module content, please refer to 2. Programme Modules.

For a Medical Doctor, medical students are obliged to work on their thesis project for a minimum of 18 months, at least 8 of which must be spent full-time in the laboratory. During this time, medical students must attend a course on good scientific practice, one annual Research Retreat and participate regularly in modules M3 and M4 (cf. Figure 2). Medical students apply for membership in the Munich Medical Research School (MMRS) and will become affiliate members of the FoeFoLe programme as well as the RTG and have the possibility to choose lectures and courses from both programmes.

![Figure 2: Structure of the qualification programme](image)

1.4. Examination regulations (Promotionsordnung)

The doctorate procedures are managed by the doctoral examination board (Promotionsausschuss) of the Medical Faculty of LMU Munich. Accordingly, the examination regulations of the Medical Faculty of LMU Munich apply in their currently valid version.
You will find these here:

http://www.uni-muenchen.de/studium/studienangebot/studiengaenge/studien-faecher/medizin_p/prom/pruefstudord/index.html

An English version for international Ph.D. students is available here:

http://www.en.mmrs.med.uni-muenchen.de/structured-phd/med-research_english.pdf

### 1.5. Information sheets on doctorate procedures

**Medical students:**

You will find an information sheet on acceptance and procedures for the academic degree Medical Doctor (Dr. med.) in the supplement (in German: *Merkblatt über die Zulassung zur Promotion zum Doktor der (Zahn-)Medizin und zum Verfahrensablauf*).

Medical students will be integrated into the RTG according to the guidelines of the structured graduate programme for medical students, Förderprogramm für Forschung und Lehre (FoeFoLe). The guidelines can be found here:

http://www.med.uni-muenchen.de/promotion/experimentell/ordnung-foefole.pdf

and here:

http://www.med.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/foerderprogramme/foefole/foefole_merkblatt.pdf

**Ph.D. students:**

You will find an information sheet on acceptance and procedures for the academic degree Ph.D. in Medical Research in the supplement ("The structured Ph.D. in Medical Research").
2. Programme Modules

Constituting an associated research training group within the Munich Medical Research School (MMRS) at the Medical Faculty of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), the RTG “Targets in Toxicology” provides a **structured Ph.D. programme** with a **modular organization** which requires the acquisition of **180 ECTS points in a 3-year curriculum**. For information on integration of medical students for the academic degree Medical Doctor (Dr. med.), please refer to 2.10. **Specific guidelines for medical students.**

### 2.1. M1: Lung Basics and Principles of Toxicology

The introductory Module M1 takes place in the first year of the curriculum and consists of lectures on fundamentals of lung biology and physiology (“Lung Basics”), lectures on the principles of toxicology, orientation and methods courses. Attendance of at least 75% (attendance lists will be circulated) and a score of ≥ 65% in the first exam is required for successful completion of M1.

#### 2.1.1. Lung Basics (1,5 ECTS)

This seminar series takes place at the very beginning of the curriculum in a two-day full-time seminar block and is presented by senior Post-Docs and PIs of the RTG partners' institutes. Collectively, the seminars aim at familiarizing doctoral researchers who will come from varying areas of undergraduate training with lung anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology including toxic lung injury.

#### 2.1.2. Principles of Toxicology (1,5 ECTS)

In this accompanying seminar series, the basic principles of toxicology are taught including core concepts in toxicology, toxicokinetics, toxicodynamics, molecular toxicology, hazard identification, lung toxicity, -omics technologies in toxicology, regulatory toxicology, forensic toxicology, chemical carcinogenesis, reproductive toxicology, and environmental toxicology. The lectures are presented by senior Post-Docs and PIs of the RTG partners' institutes as well as cooperating experts.

#### 2.1.3. Orientation and Methods Courses (2 ECTS)

An introductory seminar block including lectures on good scientific practice, ethics, security in the lab, and animal welfare takes place at the beginning of the curriculum, in the same two-day block as the Lung Basics. Methods are introduced by a seminar series organized as a peer teaching module. Here, the doctoral students themselves introduce methods frequently used within the RTG, in line
with a checklist of subtopics provided by the RTG assembly. These lectures are graded and constitute 20% of the final grade for the introductory module exam. Topics addressed include but are not restricted to: Cell culture techniques, animal models, functional analysis, cellular imaging, immunohistochemistry, biochemical analysis, -omics techniques, and modern data management.

2.2. M2: Ph.D. research project and dissertation (140 + 10 ECTS)

Doctoral researchers work on their research projects under supervision of the respective RTG PI at the participating institutions (140 ECTS). At the end of the Ph.D. programme, graduates will defend their Ph.D. project and written thesis. The thesis defence (10 ECTS) comprises an oral presentation of the research project followed by an oral examination.

A thesis may be submitted in the form of a self-contained book or as a cumulative thesis. Regardless of submission form, one co-authorship on a peer-reviewed publication is prerequisite for thesis submission. The minimal requirements for a cumulative thesis are two peer-reviewed publications where the doctoral student is first author on at least one. In general, a cumulative thesis should be the clear objective of all doctoral students.

All documents needed when handing in a thesis within the MMRS are available under:

http://www.en.mmrs.med.uni-muenchen.de/downloads/structured/index.html

For a more detailed description of the procedure and the required documents, please also refer to the supplement (information sheet “The structured Ph.D. in Medical Research”). Notably, a prerequisite for the successful submission of a thesis is an assessment of the text by the plagiarism detection software „iThenticate“. This can be implemented either by the thesis supervisor before initiating the doctoral examination procedures or by MMRS staff after submission of the thesis. A short description of the process can be found here:

http://www.en.mmrs.med.uni-muenchen.de/plagiarism-check/index.html

2.3. M3: International Lecture Series “Toxicology of the Lung” (3 ECTS)

In this module, monthly lectures are given by experienced scientists from national and international universities, research centers and biotechnology companies. The module covers latest trends in toxicology and lung research worldwide. Lecturers are basic scientists, responsible officers of regulatory institutions, clinical researchers, and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. Depending on the speakers’ schedules, lunch with the speaker is organized on the day following the
lecture, thereby allowing doctoral scientists to get to know the speakers on a personal level, interrogate him/her on topics like personal career planning or specific scientific aspects.

2.4. M4: Status quo Seminars, Journal Clubs (3 ECTS)

2.4.1. Status quo Seminars (3 ECTS)

Here, the doctoral researchers present their own research projects by posters and oral presentations. Scientific discussions are a central component of this seminar.

2.4.2. Journal Clubs (3 ECTS)

In these seminars, doctoral candidates present and dissect research articles within the fields of toxicology and/or lung disease from renowned scientific journals. This approach intends to familiarize students with retrieval, critical assessment, and intelligible presentation of the scientific literature. Attendance of at least 75% (attendance lists will be circulated) and a score of ≥ 65% in the second exam is required for successful completion of M4.

2.5. M5: Educational Courses of the German Society of Toxicology (GT)

(2 x 3 = 6 ECTS)

Participation in two 5-day advanced training courses offered by the German Society of Toxicology (GT) is compulsory for all doctoral candidates. Candidates are free to choose more courses, if compatible with the progress of their Ph.D. project.

These courses are organized by PD Dr. Hans Zischka and Prof. Dr. Martin Göttlicher, Helmholtz Zentrum München, Munich. More information including about how to register can be found here:

https://www.helmholtz-muenchen.de/toxkurse/fachtoxikologein-gt/uebersicht/index.html

Notably, membership in the RTG (3 years) will be recognized as a qualification period to obtain the title “Specialized Toxicologist DGPT” (“Fachtoxikologe/in”) after 5 years. The latter formal certificate justifies registration as “EUROTOX Registered Toxicologist” on the European level. A prerequisite for the certificate is the successful participation in such 5-day advanced training courses offered by
the German Society of Toxicology, in total 13. Module M5 therefore provides a first step towards this career option.

2.6. M6: Transferable Skills Training and Career Development Program (3 ECTS)

Complementary courses are offered by LMU central services, the MMRS, or, for students enrolled at Helmholtz Zentrum München, HELENA. They cover topics such as scientific writing, communication and presentation skills, basics in project management, intellectual property rights, statistics etc. All doctoral researchers are obliged to attend the equivalent of 5 two-day courses during their curriculum (2.5 ECTS).

A practical course on aspects of job applications inside and outside of academia is offered to third-year doctoral researchers. Here, the objective is to present alternative career options and confront doctoral researchers with different interview styles and cultural differences of applications. Doctoral candidates practice interviews and receive feedback about their individual performance (0.5 ECTS).

Furthermore, our programme takes advantage of the fact that the Munich area is characterized by a blossoming biotech scenery, epitomized by the “Munich Biotech Cluster m³” located at the high-tech campus Martinsried. Besides big pharma, the biotech sector offers job opportunities in different areas like research, development, and project management, but also in marketing, sales, investor relationships, public relations, finance and administration. Doctoral students are offered participation in biotechnology lecture programmes organized by the BioM biotech industry networking agency (http://www.bio-m.org/index.html) and the Industrielle Biotechnologie Bayern Netwerk GmbH (IBB Network) (http://www.ibbnetzwerk-gmbh.com/en/ibb-netzwerk/).

Notably, as mentioned before under 2.3. M3: International Lecture Series “Toxicology of the Lung” (3 ECTS), also representatives of biotech and big pharmaceutical companies are invited in the 2nd and 3rd year of the curriculum as key speakers to present their views on prospective career options and the job market in general and to engage in direct interactions with graduate scientists allowing for personal career counselling.
2.7. M7: Translational Skills (3 ECTS)

2.7.1. Clinical Visits (1 ECTS)

Doctoral candidates are required to participate in clinical visits offered by three different sites within the RTG. First, the department of Clinical Toxicology of the Klinikum rechts der Isar (Technical University of Munich, TUM) will offer clinical visits of hospitalized patients suffering from intoxications and present the poison information center of the department. Second, the Department of Internal Medicine V – Pneumology at the LMU, and Asklepios Fachkliniken München-Gauting will offer visits of hospitalized patients diagnosed with common chronic lung diseases. Finally, clinical toxicology case discussion rounds are offered by the Bundeswehr Institute of Pharmacology and Toxicology.

All of these visits start with an introductory presentation given by a faculty member of the host institution, also covering confidentiality issues and data protection before real clinical cases are discussed. At the end of the programme, all students are invited to report about their experience during a feedback seminar.

2.7.2. Industry Courses (1 ECTS)

Doctoral candidates will attend an organized two-day course at Roche Research and Development facilities in Basel, Switzerland, to get to know scientific activities of a worldwide leading industrial enterprise and broaden their horizon for future career perspectives.

2.7.3. Skills in Abstract and Paper Writing (1 ECTS)

During these practical seminars, young researchers learn about the norms and standards applicable to research abstracts and the writing of a scientific research article in English.

2.8. M8: Control of Success (9 ECTS)

2.8.1. Annual Research Retreats (3 x 2 = 6 ECTS)

Two annual Research Retreats are organized by the doctoral candidates where all doctoral researchers present the progress of their research project. Additionally, lectures are given by invited faculty and international guest speakers. Doctoral researchers are encouraged to come up with suggestions for international guests and are involved in the formal invitation of the speakers.
Beforehand, doctoral candidates are asked to submit an abstract summarizing their research project results. The RTG assembly will programme the sessions where doctoral candidates will serve as session chairs, thus getting familiar with introducing speakers and facilitating scientific discussions at an early career stage.

2.8.2. Symposium for master students

Organizing scientific events is part of a researcher's duties. Therefore, doctoral researchers will organize a one-day symposium for master students of biology, pharmaceutical sciences, chemistry, biochemistry, neurosciences, and human biology. Doctoral researchers will organize the symposium and all related issues. A programme organizing committee consisting of the doctoral researchers will be responsible to advertise the symposium, invite external and internal speakers and ask master students to send abstracts describing significant findings achieved during their lab rotations. Based on these abstracts the programme committee decides on designated master student speakers. Moreover, a poster session will be organized allowing RTG doctoral researchers and master students to present their data. Public relation affairs like poster and flyer design and printing, advertisements and invitation of interested audience is the task of the organizing committee.

2.8.3. (Inter)national Conferences (2 x 1 = 2 ECTS)

Doctoral candidates are expected to present and discuss their results at one national and one international scientific conference per three years.

2.8.4 Good Scientific Practice

Lectures and workshops on Good Scientific Practice (GSP) are another crucial component of control of success. From the very start of the programme, a mandatory GSP course is offered by the MMRS, which includes various topics relating to principles and safeguarding of GSP as well as procedural rules for dealing with scientific misconduct, plagiarism, and authorships. Data management and advanced statistics are also part of this lecture series. This course not only raises awareness for the importance of professional values and ethical norms like honesty, accuracy, and objectivity, but also imparts the necessary basic knowledge and required competencies to pursue scientific integrity.
2.9. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) - Reporting

For all courses, MMRS doctoral candidates will receive ECTS according to LMU regulations (30 hours workload is accredited with 1 ECTS). All courses offered by the RTG, if completed with satisfactory attendance and performance, are automatically converted into ECTS by the RTG Coordination Office. For attended external workshops/seminars/conferences etc., doctoral candidates are required to forward a scan of the participation certificate to the RTG Coordination Office at the end of each semester. Your ECTS status is communicated regularly to the MMRS Coordination Office (Dr. Antje Hentrich, mmrs@med.uni-muenchen.de).

2.10. Specific guidelines for medical students (Dr. med.)

For a Medical Doctor (Dr. med), medical students are obliged to work on their thesis project for a minimum of 18 months, at least 8 of which must be spent full-time in the laboratory. During this time, medical students must attend a course on good scientific practice and attend at least one annual Research Retreat with all formal opportunities and obligations of the Ph.D. candidates (cf. 2.8.1. Annual Research Retreats (3 x 2 = 6 ECTS)).

All medical students of the RTG are affiliate members of the FoeFoLe (Förderprogramm für Forschung und Lehre) programme of the medical faculty of the LMU Munich. Therefore, they have the possibility to choose lectures and courses from both programmes. As to the RTG qualification program, medical students should participate regularly in the M3 Lecture Series “Toxicology of the Lung” and in the M4 Transferable Skills Training. The FoeFoLe programme comprises a weekly lecture series where selected project leaders from the medical faculty present their research work and a bi-weekly method colloquium where the doctoral candidates themselves present and discuss the methods applied in their projects.

In total, an attendance corresponding to an equivalent of 75% attendance in the FoeFoLe programme activities (≈ 45 h in total for 18 months) is required for successful completion of the programme. For confirmation of individual attendance, attendance lists will be circulated.
3. Regulations for the working area

3.1. General regulations

The Ordinance on Hazardous Substances (*Gefahrstoffverordnung, GefStoffV*), the Radiation Protection Ordinance (*Strahlenschutzverordnung, StrlSchV*), the genetic technology safety regulations (*Gentechnik-Sicherheitsverordnung, GenTSV*), the Ordinance on Biological Working Agents (*Biostoffverordnung, BioStoffV*) and regulations of the Maternity Protection Act (*Mutterschutzgesetz, MuSchG*) apply in their currently valid version.

All further regulations of the respective host institutions and the relevant working areas apply.

3.2. Tutor

For each doctoral candidate, a tutor (ideally a senior PhD student) will be nominated by the supervisor who will offer guidance for getting started in the host institution. This includes, but is not restricted to, an introduction into the desk and working area, organization of safety briefings, presentation of the doctoral candidate to institute staff, and help in administrative issues like setting up an institutional email account and getting access to the research facilities.
4. Supervision

4.1. Supervision agreement

Before the beginning of the doctoral thesis, a supervision agreement determines the subject area of the doctoral thesis and obligations of the supervisor and the doctoral candidate. By signing this form, the supervisor guarantees to provide the workplace including the necessary equipment and materials (in consultation with the host institute’s management) and declares his/her commitment to support the doctoral candidate throughout the whole period of the thesis project. In turn, the doctoral candidate declares his commitment to the doctoral programme as a full-time programme and undertakes to report about times of absence, to complete the thesis in written form within the settled time frame, and to comply with all regulations of the host institute (cf. also 3.1. General regulations). Finally, this form also states regulations about termination of supervision and exclusion from the programme.

The agreement has to be signed by the supervisor and the doctoral candidate, ideally also by the members of the thesis advisory committee (cf. 4.2. Thesis Advisory Committee), even if this is not strictly necessary for enrolment. The supervision agreement has to be submitted to the graduation office of the medical faculty, the coordination office of the RTG “Targets in Toxicology”, as well as to the directorate of the respective host institution.

4.2. Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)

The RTG PI who supervises the doctoral candidate establishes a thesis advisory committee (TAC) within the first 3 months of the project. The TAC must consist of three members:

- the direct supervisor of the RTG
- an advisor from the Medical Faculty of the LMU
- an external expert (i.e. not part of the same institute)

In compliance with the regulations of the MMRS at least two of the TAC members must be from the Medical Faculty of the LMU. In the course of the doctoral project, the TACs meet regularly (see below for recommended timelines) to evaluate the doctoral candidate’s progress and give advice for successful continuation of the project. These TAC meetings are coordinated by the doctoral candidate, in close consultation with the direct supervisor, including invitation of TAC members, scheduling, and reservation of a suitable meeting room.
4.3. Target agreement

The target agreement establishes the aims and details of the doctoral project and has to be signed by the TAC and the doctoral candidate. The target agreement consists of a short project description (research question, current state-of-the-art, methods, work plan), the aim of the thesis, milestones and potential additional qualifications and requirements to be fulfilled by the doctoral student. Of note, it is highly recommended to state the requirements of the RTG programme (75 % attendance, score of ≥ 65 % in each of the exams) in the target agreement.

Of course, it is implicitly understood that any research work is subject to unforeseen events and changes. Therefore, the target agreement can be amended by mutual agreement. Notably, it is the purpose of the regular TAC meetings to review the doctoral candidate’s progress in comparison to the initially stipulated target agreement and record amendments if necessary.

The target agreement has to be submitted to the graduation office of the medical faculty and the coordination office of the RTG “Targets in Toxicology”. For the structured Ph.D. programme, submission of the target agreement has to occur no later than by the end of the second semester, otherwise the Ph.D. candidate will be exmatriculated from the programme. For a medical thesis, the target agreement should be submitted within the first two months.

4.4. Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings and target amendments

The aim of the TAC meetings is to review the doctoral candidate’s progress in comparison to the initially stipulated target agreement (cf. 4.3.), including the progress within the qualification programme, to discuss future steps within the doctoral project, and to encourage the student’s scientific activities and initiatives. After each TAC meeting, a progress report must be submitted to the graduation office of the medical faculty and the coordination office of the RTG “Targets in Toxicology”, clearly stating whether the student’s progress is adequate and whether amendments have to be made to the original target agreement.

Should the outcome of these meetings be in accordance with the target agreement, the research project can carry on as planned. If there are differences to the original target agreement, a target amendment needs to be recorded. If the TAC determines that certain elements have not been fulfilled by the candidate, it can decide that these need to be repeated. If the elements are not fulfilled within a retry, the TAC is safe to assume that the candidate will not be able to fulfil the other requirements from the target agreement for completion of the dissertation and the oral defence. In
this case, the TAC is terminated, the Ph.D. project is ended, and the student is exmatriculated from the programme.

For a Ph.D. in Medical research, three annual TAC meetings must be performed. The first and second TAC meeting should take place during the 3rd and 5th semester at the very latest.

For a medical thesis, at least two TAC meetings are obligatory. These should take place at least annually. It is recommended to perform the first TAC meeting during the first three months of the doctoral project and the second one 4 - 6 months after that.
5. Contact persons / Links

5.1. RTG “Targets in Toxicology”

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5.2. MMRS office (Ph.D.)

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5.3. Doctoral office (Dr. med.)

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5.4. FoeFoLe Programme

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5.5. Graduate Center\textsuperscript{LMU}

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http://www.en.graduatecenter.uni-muenchen.de
5.6. Early Career Funding Opportunities

German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD)
https://www.daad.de/en/

Graduate CenterLMU
http://www.en.graduatecenter.uni-muenchen.de/funding_young_researchers/index.html

Förderprogramm für Forschung und Lehre
http://www.med.uni-muenchen.de/promotion/foerderung/foefole/index.html

European Respiratory Society (ERS)
https://www.ersnet.org/professional-development/fellowships

Volkswagenstiftung
https://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/foerderung/

5.7. Miscellaneous links and information

Good Scientific Practice DFG:
http://www.dfg.de/foerderung/grundlagen rahmenbedingungen/gwp/

Homepage of the German Society of Toxicology (Gesellschaft für Toxikologie, GT)
http://www.toxikologie.de/

Homepage of the German Society of Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology
(Deutsche Gesellschaft für experimentelle und klinische Pharmakologie und Toxikologie e.V.,
DGPT): http://www.dgpt-online.de/

Federation of European Toxicologists & European Societies of Toxicology
http://www.eurotox.com/
6. Anhang

1. Information sheet - Dr med (dent)

2. Information sheet - Structured Ph.D.

3. Template Supervision Agreement

4. Template Target Agreement

5. Template TAC Meeting Protocol

6. Guidelines for a cumulative dissertation (English and German)