

Guideline for reports to your thesis committee

During your doctoral studies/PhD courses, regular progress reports to your thesis committee are compulsory. Those progress reports have to be submitted at least once per year. The aim of the report is to get a comprehensive and constructive feedback for your studies at an early stage. With this, you can make adjustment/ improvements and deal with possible different opinions of the members of your thesis committee in time. The frequency and quality of the mentoring is quite high for most doctoral students and small current problems can be solved directly but this does not replace the yearly overview that shows similar to an inventory by how far you have reached your goal of the doctoral studies.

The report is **to be organized by you independently and unrequested**.

If you end the studies in standard course length, the **following meetings take place**:

1. Meeting (after ca. 6 months)
2. Meeting (after ca. 18 months)
3. Meeting (after ca. 30 months)

The times stated refer to the date of admission or, if the admission is not a date during the current semester, to the first day of the semester stated in the admission. Additional meetings are necessary, if a prolongation of the studies applies.

In the following, you find **suggestions and requirements** for the structure of the report to the thesis committee according to formal aspects and content and about the confirmation record:

1. Form:

- The date of the reporting is to be agreed upon in time with all members.
- The **majority of the members of the thesis committee (at least 3 members of which at least 2 authorized examiners) have to participate**. You can meet online.
- The results and previous findings of the studies should be send one week before the presentation or meeting to the members of the thesis committee in the form of a presentation or an adapted work plan including a short report.
- You can present your report to the thesis committee as a presentation but at least as a summary of the present status followed by questions from your side and questions, concerns and suggestions from members of the thesis committee. You can combine your thesis committee meeting with other meetings (e.g., project meetings, presentations that you give in your working group) if the questions, concerns and suggestions can be clarified accordingly.
- Ideas, suggestions and the prospects for further research should be discussed and agreed. Please write a short protocol of this meeting, which can serve you as a guideline for the next stage of your doctoral studies. You should also include deadlines and important agreements, dates/ appointments or events to keep them in mind.
- For your convenience, you will find both sample minutes and a form that you can use to write your minutes on our website: <https://uni-goettingen.de/en/570044.html>.

2. Content

You should be able to answer the following questions:

2.1 In general

You should contrast your set goals and results that you reached to identify problems. It is important to clarify if your work plan is still up to date or if and how far you are behind. You can record what should be done to return to the original work plan or how it could be adapted.

Which problem arose during the implementation of the work plan and how should they be avoided in the future?

The reports are always individual for every doctoral student and in the end you decide the priorities of your report for the thesis committee.

Please consider: Constructive feedback is your aim. The report gives you the opportunity to make an inventory of your current work status and progress compared to the final goal of completion of your degree.

2.2 Modules

Make a list stating how many credits you have already obtained and how many still have to be completed.

You can find information about the modules that are to be completed in the respective doctoral studies/ programmes in the module handbooks. These you can find here: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/545730.html>.

2.3 Publication

Here you should record when you plan your first or next publication and if those aims could be met. Was the paper accepted and where? Maybe you can discuss the reasons for a rejection of the paper and what can be done differently in the future; or which journals could be considered for a resubmission of your paper.

2.4 Participation at conferences etc.

If you participated in conferences or something similar, you could record your response and feedback or discuss the work on your improvement. Are there more possibilities to participate in such events? If yes, which ones?

2.5 Schedule

In table form, specify the order of research phases and the time you will probably need for each phase. Sometimes you have to estimate the required time. Please make clear that you have an idea about the timespan that you need for each step. The schedule has to cover the entire doctoral period, and is updated at every thesis committee meeting.

You should consider internal project dependencies. E.g. which data is required for which article or which chapter? External project dependencies should also be taken into account. Do I need data from other subprojects? When will they be available? Do I have to provide data at a certain point in time?

When scheduling, keep in mind that you cannot influence all steps and schedule time buffers accordingly. For example, the acceptance of an article in a scientific journal can take a long time or crucial devices can cause trouble. In order to avoid long waiting times, you can plan other work steps in parallel. Please assure realistic and feasible planning of the timeframes for structuring, literature research, data acquisition, preparation, analysis and evaluation as well as the creation of illustrations, followed by the first version of the text up to revision and publication. By a detailed schedule, you can easier identify occurring problems at an early stage and take appropriate countermeasures. An example structure can be found in our example protocol for the report to your thesis committee:

<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/570044.html>.

Please note that from the sixth semester on, according to § 9 (1) doctoral degree regulation, an agreement with the thesis committee is necessary for exceeding the standard period of study. This is shown with the signed schedule of your minutes.

3. Confirmation record

A short protocol, recording in bullet points the topics that were on the agenda and the results of the meeting, is to be written. This can be done before hand. The protocol **needs to be signed by all attendant members of your thesis committee**. Digital signatures are accepted. In the case of digital signature, the persons signing must receive a copy when the minutes are sent (receiving the mail in cc). The minutes must show that they have been agreed upon with all members of the thesis committee and that the missing members receive a copy of the minutes.

An example protocol can be found here <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/570044.html>.

Unrequested, this confirmation record needs to be **handed in digitally as one file to the GFA central office**. This guideline for reports to your thesis committee applies to all meetings that took place after the 1st of October 2017.

Aim of the report is to communicate, transparently, expectations between PhD candidate and the thesis committee members.

If you are facing problems during the planning or implementation of the thesis committee meetings according to this guideline, please inform the GFA Central Office, which will find a solution together with you.

If you are facing critical situations in the context of supervision, you can contact the PhD consultants (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences – [Dr Nina Härter](#)) or the Graduate School ([Dr Inga Mölder](#)), which will help you.

If needed, thesis committee members and/or PhD candidates are allowed to hand in an additional page with the protocol, which has not be signed.