

School of Integrated Climate and Earth System Sciences (SICSS)

Guidelines to set up the SICSS Advisory Panel (Doctoral Program)

The advisory panel system is the central tool of the SICSS Graduate School to ensure a qualitative, structured, and continuous supervision for all doctoral projects within SICSS. It describes the guiding and supporting process by the supporting advisory panel (AP). The AP comprises the doctoral candidate and three (optionally four) supervising scientists: the principal supervisor, the co-supervisor (optionally two), and the panel chair. All members of the advisory panel agree to support the doctoral candidate while pursuing and completing their doctorate.

The advisory panel system proceeds as follows: Every six months an advisory panel convenes for an Advisory Panel Meeting (APM) to discuss the scientific development, challenges and further goals of the doctoral project. The purpose of the meetings is to ensure the doctoral project's scientific quality, scientific development and academic training, as well as the timely completion of the doctorate. At the beginning of the final year of the doctoral project, a more extensive APM is to be held in which the goals for the remainder of the doctorate and career options thereafter are discussed.

Note that APMs do not replace the regular discussion and supervision of the doctoral candidate by the supervisors.

STEP 1: Constituting the advisory panel (prior to 1st APM)

The **principal supervisor** has to be authorized to supervise doctoral candidates in accordance with the doctoral regulations of the respective faculty or university. The principal supervisor assumes key responsibility for both, scientific supervision and quality control of the doctoral candidate's research and academic training.

The **co-supervisor** (possibly two) should be an expert in the candidate's field of study, either from ESRAH or from external institutions. For interdisciplinary doctoral projects, principal and co-supervisor(s) should cover the two most relevant fields, ensuring access to scientific and technical support in more than just one area.

The **panel chair** may originate from ESRAH or external institutions. He/she acts as a trusted third party on the doctorate's overall progress. While the panel chair should not have any scientific self-interests in the doctoral project, they should have experience in supervising doctorates. The panel chair should be independent of the other panel members in terms of their position at the university or research institution.

The panel members' duties are described in detail in the Supervision Agreement.

Appointment of AP members: The members of the AP have to be appointed prior to the candidate's final membership admittance to SICSS. Principal supervisor and doctoral candidate suggest a co-supervisor (possibly two) and a panel chair to the SICSS-Office, which needs to



approve these. If necessary, the SICSS Office assists in appointing and inviting scientists to serve on the panel.

STEP 2: Supervision Agreement

As soon as the composition of the AP is agreed upon (in accordance with SICSS), the candidate fills the supervision agreement. The supervision agreement describes the role of all AP members in detail. It should be read thoroughly, possibly be discussed and agreed upon among the doctoral candidate and the other panel members. All AP members and the SICSS Office sign the document.

All members of AP receive a confirmation of their appointment together with these guidelines. SICSS introduces the APM system to all new doctoral candidates and also offers to a personal introduction of the SICSS APM system to the supervisors and panel chairs.

STEP 3: Set up the AP Meeting (APM)

The AP meets regularly every six months, and the doctoral candidate is responsible for scheduling the advisory panel meeting (APM) in due time. If possible, the APM should take place in presence, but may also be held in a hybrid or online format.

The doctoral candidate schedules a first APM within 3-6 months. He/she is responsible to schedule every **APM** in accordance with the AP members including invitations, time and venue. The SICSS Office may support in finding an appropriate room.

One week prior to the first **APM** the doctoral candidate sends a CV and a project summary or thesis outline (app. 2 pages) including a time line to all panel members.

With the start of the final year of the doctorate, a more extensive APM (an extra part of the APM report template) is organized by the doctoral candidate. This meeting explicitly serves the formulation of the targets and time schedule for the final year, the funding situation until the doctorate is finished completely and the career prospects thereafter. This extended APM also includes an extended feedback of each panel member. The doctoral candidate should inform the panel members about this extra and longer format and ask them to prepare their evaluations for this meeting.

For all APM: The doctoral candidate prepares a status report (e.g. a presentation), an adapted time line, and a draft of the report including courses/workshops publications. SICSS suggests to send the status report and time line to the AP members prior to the meeting.

STEP 4: The AP Meeting (APM)

During the **APM**, the doctoral candidate reports on the ongoing research and discusses the further progress with the panel. Most likely, the doctoral candidates do this with a digital presentation. The discussion and agreements are documented in the APM report template provided by the SICSS Office.



The discussion on the regular AP Meeting should focus on:

- Doctoral research project: main research focus, status & milestones, challenges/problems encountered, quality and progress
- Mutual feedback on collaboration, supervision, status and progress of the doctoral project
- Academic training: achieved and needed competencies, career perspectives
- Time schedule, including regular adjustments
- Open tasks and further plans

At the extended final year APM, sufficient time is dedicated to listen to the detailed feedback of all panel members and the doctoral candidate with respect to doctoral research as well as the scientific and transferable competences achieved so far. Additionally, an outlook on potential career goal and plans after completing the doctoral degree.

Modus operandi:

The panel chair documents the discussion in the **APM report** template during the meeting. At the end of meeting, the panel chair reads the report to all members; if necessary the report is adapted. All AP members and the candidate agree to the report before the meeting closes. If the APM takes place online, the APM report is sent by email to the AP members who then agree to the report via email. The signed APM report is uploaded via the geventis management system (or mailed to the SICSS Office) by the doctoral candidate. Also the scans of all course certificates are uploaded in geventis or sent to the SICSS Office.

APM Reports are cumulative: All consecutive meetings are documented in one single APM document, i.e. the new content is written directly into the first report document by inserting spare rows at each paragraph. The cumulative report thus provides the history of the doctoral project and allows a review of all achievements/comments at an early stage of the doctorate.

STEP 5: After the AP Meeting

The doctoral candidate uploads the APM Report via geventis together with all course/workshop certificates of workshops/courses he/she has attended since the last APM. After receiving the digital and signed report of the recent APM, the SICSS Office evaluates the report and responds with necessary comments to the candidate and all panel members asap. SICSS's school management reserves the right to intervene if regular meetings are not held.

Following these guidelines, the **APM** ensures the scientific quality of the dissertation and the progress of the doctoral project.

Please do not hesitate to contact Dr Berit Hachfeld (berit.hachfeld@uni-hamburg.de) or Dr Alexandra Franzke (alexandra.franzke@uni-hamburg.de) from SICSS Office, if further questions arise.

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