

Guidelines for Advisory Committee Reports and Meetings

The purpose of these reports is to provide your Advisory Committee (AC) with insight into your progress with your research program. The content, length and style of the report are flexible but, in general, the type of things the committee wants to learn from your report are:

1. Do you know the background and basic concepts important to your field?
2. Have you established concrete research goals and milestones?
3. What is your progress towards achieving your goals and milestones?
4. Are there any potential problems and how do you intend to deal with them should they arise?
5. How do you intend to schedule the completion of your project and the writing of your thesis?

How much time is dedicated to addressing each of these questions is determined by where you are in your program. You will need to write your first report approximately one year into your program (for MSc students) and it will likely focus on answering questions 1, 2, and 3. For most PhD students, this first report is the Qualifying Examination Report, see: Guidelines for Ph.D Qualifying Exams in the New Program. The committee want see that you have read the important literature and identified a clear direction for your work. What is the research question and why is it important? The report should represent a proposed road map for your research and, as such, it should identify the intermediate steps you expect to take along the way. By this stage, you should have been able to conduct some preliminary work that will also be summarized. In many respects, this first report is the most difficult to write but addressing these questions at an early stage will prove invaluable later; this report could serve as the basis for your introductory sections of your final thesis.

If you are a Masters student, this first report is particularly important given the short amount of time available to complete the degree. The first meeting will also give you an opportunity to discuss the possibility of transferring to the PhD program.

Subsequent reports usually focus on questions 3 and 4. They should summarize your work since the last report and highlight how it relates to with the research road map you established earlier. Focus on progress in your program since your last AC meeting. There is no need to reproduce the full details of published work in your report; publications that have occurred between meetings can be attached to the report and the report can contain a working summary of those publications. Research needs to be flexible and often goals change to take advantage of new opportunities or to overcome problems. If goals have changed during the course of the year, these changes should be discussed in the report. As you draw near to the end of your program, some of your report should be dedicated to addressing question 5.

Research carried out in different branches of chemistry varies and so does the style of writing a report. Typically, AC reports are between 15-25 pages in length. You should discuss the report format/content with your supervisor and/or AC before you start. Do not just write your report and hope that you have selected a suitable style. In all cases the report should be well organized, accurate, and should address the questions above. Supervisors can help you determine the format/content of the report, but the

written report itself should be your own work such that the AC can get a realistic sample of your writing ability. Your Report should be sent to the Graduate Secretary for distribution to your AC at least one week before the AC meeting date.

An AC meeting typically starts with a ca. 20-25 minute presentation by the student, followed by questions from each of the AC members. The purpose of the AC meeting is to adequately assess your progress in the program and give you guidance towards completion of your program.

Sections that typically appear in a report are:

Title: A suitable title for the project.

Abstract: May or may not have an abstract. If the report is too lengthy, it is generally a good idea to have an abstract, a condensed form of the entire report highlighting important points. It can vary from a few sentences to a paragraph.

Introduction: This section describes the aim or the specific objectives of the research. It includes theories and background literature related to the work.

Experimental: The experiments carried out to achieve the objectives of the research are described here with details. Additional information of this section may also be attached at the end of the report as supporting information.

Results and Discussion: This section describes the experimental results and the interpretation/discussion of these results, using proper figures, graphs, and schemes if necessary.

Conclusion and Summary: This section describes the conclusions derived based on the results. Prospects for future work should also be proposed here.

References: The format of this section should depend on the one suggested by the student's supervisor, since different groups follow different formats for citing references. Consistency is key.

Appendix: If necessary.

It is also useful to include a short paragraph describing any contributions by others to your report; e.g. have other students/PDFs or your supervisor made significant contributions to synthesis, data collection and/or data interpretation?

The above format is flexible and you may have more subsections or sections depending on your project. However, the report is expected to be of good quality. The report should have a logical flow of ideas and should be written in a concise and precise manner. You should be consistent throughout (for e.g. the font, font size, numbering of figures and tables, etc.).