**PhD monitoring and PhD follow-up committee**

In accordance with the Doctoral School, the PhD-program promotes a **dynamic and constructive follow-up of the PhD advancement all along the three years of the PhD**.

The general requirements for the PhD follow-up established by the **Health and Life Science Doctoral School of Aix-Marseille University** (https://ecole-doctorale-62.univ-amu.fr/en and https://ecole-doctorale-62.univ-amu.fr/en/phd/Thesis%20Committee) are **mandatory for all PhD theses in Neuroscience at AMU**. In summary, during the first year all students must design, in agreement with their supervisors, the PhD follow-up committee members; the follow-up committee has to meet at least once before the end of the second year of PhD and fill a report for the Doctoral School.

In addition, the PhD-program proposes additional steps, with an additional meeting of the follow-up committee in the first year, and a few other requirements, as described below. The main reason is to allow for a better and earlier identification of potential pitfalls, offer contingency plans, if needed, and in general to provide helpful advice all along the PhD project.

The procedure of the PhD-program is **MANDATORY for all PhD students funded by a NeuroSchool PhD Program fellowship and OPTIONAL (but suggested) for the others students enrolled in the PhD Program**, considering that slightly different PhD monitoring procedures can be implemented in different labs.

IMPORTANT: in all cases, the PhD follow-up is designed as a **mentoring and helpful process** and not as an exam, or an evaluation of the student or the supervisor. In general, the PhD follow-up committee is different in its definition and function from the PhD defense committee (the two committees may share one member, though, as explained below).

Contact persons for PhD monitoring within the Neuroschool PhD Program:

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In the following text, the mandatory requirements of the Doctoral School are marked with an asterisk \*

**Detailed procedure**

**(1) PhD project**

At the beginning of the PhD (within the first 6-8 months), the student and his/her advisor(s) write a short PhD project, according to the following scheme:

1. Project summary
2. Brief literature review, with a short bibliography (10 references max)
3. Project description with an emphasis on aims and methods (1 page recommended, 2 pages max.).
4. Semestrial timeline with a description of the resources required for each step (animals, patients, materials, techniques, computing facilities...) and the main expected outcomes (1-2 pages max.).

This PhD project is sent to the members of the PhD follow-up committee as soon as they are selected.

**(2) PhD follow-up committee**

The goal of the follow-up committee is to guarantee that the student’s environment and the PhD project are adequate but also to make sure that the relationship between the student and his/her supervisor(s) is going well enough to allow the project to move forward.

**The follow-up committee is chosen** by the PhD supervisor(s), in agreement with the student, **during the first year of PhD\***; the PhD Program committee can provide help and advice if required. The committee must include (in addition to the PhD student and his/her supervisor(s)):

* an **AMU faculty member \***(researcher or university professor)
* a senior student\*(i.e. not in first year) enrolled in the PhD program (suggestions by the student are usually welcome and the student representative might be different between the first and second meeting).
* a **scientific (French or international) expert\***. The PhD program recommends that this expert is neither a member of AMU nor a collaborator on the PhD project or on other recent projects of the supervisor(s). We highly recommend thinking of this expert as a potential external examiner for the PhD oral defense, for which the above constraints are required for the eligibility of the expert.
* **other invited members** (e.g. the “parrain de these”) – optional.

If a *parrain* or *marraine de thèse* (i.e. typically a lab senior member who is elected as “thesis sponsor”, or “ moral tutor” for the PhD student all along his/her project) is designated, it is recommended that this person provide advice from the beginning and all along the PhD duration and that he/she participate in all the follow-up committee meetings.

Both the Doctoral School (at the time of the registration for the 2nd year\*) and the PhD Program have to be informed of the composition of the PhD follow-up committee as soon as possible.

**(3) Meetings of the follow-up committee and reports**

The PhD follow-up committee is expected to meet twice during the three years of the PhD (and at least once before the end of the second year\*)[[1]](#footnote-1)(1).

For each meeting, videoconferencing may be used. Please note that **the PhD Program cannot provide funding nor logistical help for inviting the external expert to Marseille**. The supervisor(s) must take care of this.

Thus, the recommended organization of the follow-up meetings is as follows:

**The first meeting is scheduled between 6 to 12 months** after the beginning of the PhD studies.

During this meeting, the student presents his/her project, assesses its feasibility, exposes the risks and alternative strategies, details the accomplished work, with a particular emphasis on the match between the project and the resources available to the student, as well as a timeline/schedule for the following months.

**The second meeting is scheduled between 18 to 24 months\*** after the beginning of the PhD studies. During this meeting, the student presents his/her research accomplishments, the data displayed during national and international conferences, the published papers or expected publications, as well as a timeline/schedule for the following months (experiments, publications, postdoctoral opportunities, for example).

**Additional meetings** of the PhD follow-up committee can be organized at any time if deemed necessary by the student or the supervisor. It is highly recommended to inform the PhD Program in advance in this case.

Duringthese meetings, some time is devoted to the potential problems or pitfalls encountered, and to offer solutions if needed.

Each of these meetings are organized as follows:

* A 15-minute oral presentation by the student, in the presence of the PhD supervisor(s)
* A general discussion with the follow-up committee and the PhD supervisor(s)
* A confidential discussion with the student, without the PhD supervisor(s), followed by a confidential discussion with the PhD supervisor(s), without the student.

After each meeting, a report is written\* (based on the downloadable form available on the [NeuroSchool PhD Program webpage, see the *PhD monitoring* section](https://neuro-marseille.org/en/training/phd-program/)). Specific points about the risks and feasibility of the project after the first meeting (+ 6 months) and on the research accomplishments and publications after the second meeting (+ 18 months) must be addressed.

**The report of the follow-up committee meeting(s)** must be sentto the contact person of the PhD program committee, to the local lab coordinator for the PhD follow-up, and to the Health and Life Science Doctoral School\* (email: edsvs-direction@univ-amu.fr).

An editable template for the report can be downloaded on the [dedicated webpage (see the *PhD monitoring* section).](https://neuro-marseille.org/en/training/phd-program/)

1. (1) Note that a single meeting during the first year is accepted by the Doctoral School for registration in the 3rd year but not for registration in the 4th year, if the latter is requested : in this event, a second meeting of the follow-up committee will have to be organized before the end of the 3rd year. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)