I OBJECTIVE

1. Good research supervision is a vital determinant in enhancing the quality of NTU graduate education. As NTU moves towards a more robust framework for graduate supervision, the Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) would play an invaluable role in providing critical guidance to the graduate research students during their candidature in NTU.

2. The TAC is set up to monitor student progress and provide timely advice for every NTU graduate research student in all Schools across NTU.

3. In the TAC, the graduate student can have the benefit of receiving inputs from at least two other faculty staff other than their supervisor(s). This will enrich the research experience and allow for greater collaboration outside his/her immediate research group.

4. The external TAC member, who is not from the same School as the graduate student, shall serve as the student’s mentor. The external TAC member need not have expertise in the research area of the graduate student. The student may seek the mentor’s advice in the event that he/she encounters any difficulty with his/her supervisor(s).

II COMPOSITION OF THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

5. The TAC will comprise 3 or 4 members as follows:
   • 3 members consisting of the main supervisor (as co-ordinator of the TAC) and 2 committee members (for student who does not have a co-supervisor); or
   • 4 members consisting of the main supervisor (as co-ordinator of the TAC), the co-supervisor and 2 committee members.

6. The TAC will consist of a minimum 3 members. A minimum of 2 members will be from the same School as the PhD candidate and preferably there is 1 external member from outside the School.

7. The TAC members for PhD students must have an earned PhD or its equivalent doctoral research degree. The internal members are expected to have sufficient knowledge and expertise to advice in the student’s research area.

8. Only the internal and external TAC members as defined above have voting rights. In the
case where there is a co-supervisor, both the supervisor and the co-supervisor have a combined tally of only one vote.

Special considerations

- ADM faculty (tenure-track Associate Professors and Assistant Professors) who do not hold a PhD degree may serve as members of the TAC and they should possess the relevant domain knowledge and expertise in the student’s research area.

- In the case of a PhD student under the EDB-funded Industrial PhD Programme (IPP), an additional Industry TAC member may be appointed. The industry collaborator who is appointed an Industry TAC member should preferably have an earned PhD but this is not mandatory. He/she should possess at least a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree plus substantial research experience in industry. He/she should have sufficient knowledge and expertise in the student's research area. An Industry TAC member role is advisory in nature with no voting right.

9. The TAC is formed by the School in consultation with the student's main supervisor.

10. The TAC should ideally be formed within 8 months but no later than the qualifying examination of the graduate student.

11. The TAC is a separate committee from the PhD Qualifying Examination panel (sometimes referred to as the confirmation panel), but some members from the TAC can form part of the confirmation panel provided there is no conflict of interest and that these TAC members do not have joint publications with the PhD candidate.

III MEETINGS AND ROLES OF THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

12. The TAC should meet the student at least once a year to determine his/her progress.

13. The TAC should provide a critical review of the student's research aims, methods and progress and give guidance and advice where appropriate. The committee shall provide constructive criticism and provocative discussion of the student's ideas, thereby ensuring that the student is exposed to a wider range of expertise and ideas than can be provided by the supervisor alone.

14. At least two weeks before each meeting of the TAC, the student must provide each member with a written statement, about 2-3 pages in length, of his progress from the last meeting and plans for the following months.

15. The TAC should assess the student's knowledge in the research area, the ability to synthesize theory, concepts, research and practice in their disciplines, and the ability to reason and critically analyse issues and problems related to their fields.
16. The TAC should evaluate the integrity of the research thesis with respect to the content of the proposal, the research aims and the accepted standards in the research field.

17. The TAC is responsible for monitoring the student's progress and completing the annual research progress report. The TAC shall recommend the continuation or termination of candidature.

18. The TAC should assess the student's annual report and determine if it is satisfactory.

19. Following a research presentation by the student, the TAC should submit a Thesis Advisory Committee Report endorsed by TAC members to the School. The supervisor can also separately submit a progress report.

20. The TAC may recommend that the student terminate his candidature should the progress be minimal or unsatisfactory.

21. The TAC may recommend the renewal of scholarship.

22. For a research student who is close to the completion of his/her research, the student shall make a presentation to the TAC who shall decide if the student has done sufficient research and has enough data for the writing of the final thesis.

23. For the annual presentations for scholarship renewal and for the writing of the final thesis, the final outcome is generally expected to be made by the TAC based on consensus. In cases where such consensus is not possible, the majority view will prevail. In such cases, a written record of the reasons for dissenting view and the name of the TAC member must be put on record and this should be submitted together with the final recommendation/report.

24. In the case of a student whose thesis has been examined, the supervisor shall guide the student on the preparation for the oral examination.

VI  DISPUTES BETWEEN STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR

25. The external TAC member (from a different School) shall act as an independent person and a first point of contact for the student in the event that there is any conflict between the supervisor and the student. The external TAC member will act as a mediator to resolve the conflict in an amicable manner.

26. Separate independent channels are available for raising serious disputes between the student and the supervisor(s). At all times, the concerns and issues raised by the student should be handled confidentially.

27. Should there be a dispute between the supervisor and the student on whether the student has done sufficient research and has enough data for the writing of the final thesis, the other members of the TAC should review the progress made by the student thus far and
make a recommendation to the School Chair for the best action.

VI DISAGREEMENT

28. Any disagreement among the TAC members should be referred to the School Chair. If unresolved, it should be brought for consideration by the College Dean and if necessary, thereafter by Associate Provost (Graduate Education).

29. Separate independent channels are available for raising serious disputes between the student and the supervisor(s). At all times, the concerns and issues raised by the student should be handled confidentially and where necessary, the relevant Chair of School should be notified.