

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN



GUIDELINES FOR  
MASTER STUDENTS

GRADUATE TRAINING CENTRE  
OF NEUROSCIENCE



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5<sup>th</sup> Edition

Tübingen, October 2019

Comments & feedback are welcome! Send to: [marc.himmelbach@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:marc.himmelbach@uni-tuebingen.de)

## Dear students,

In this booklet, we have compiled a set of guidelines that are meant to support you during your masters studies at the *Graduate Training Centre of Neuroscience*. We have structured these guidelines into three parts. **Part 1** addresses rather general issues that are particularly relevant at the beginning of your studies. In **Part 2**, we outline a few specifics of course work that you have to deal with mainly in the second year of your studies. And finally, in **Part 3**, we address the aspects regarding your masters thesis and graduation.

Knowing and adhering to these guidelines at hand ensures that your studies will run smoothly and your graduation will be completed in the envisaged period of time.

Another very important document for you as a masters student is the '**Module Handbook**'. It comprises largely complementary information to the guidelines compiled here, addressing various aspects around the masters course (1. Qualification goals. 2. Modules overview. 3. Timeline. 4. Semester - courses taught - credits awarded. 5. Examination schedule. 6. Modules and courses. 7. Descriptions of individual modules.). The Module Handbook can be downloaded from the GTC website and we strongly recommend that you store it as a 'general reference book' on your laptop for immediate access at any time!

In addition to the information compiled in this booklet and in the Module Handbook, you will find answers, explanations, and forms to download on the GTC website. The **Study and Examination Regulations** for the masters programs (*Studien- und Prüfungsordnung*) can be downloaded from the GTC website as well:

<http://www.neuroschool-tuebingen.de/>

In case you still have questions – even after carefully reading these guidelines and browsing through our website – don't hesitate to contact GTC staff members.

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# Part 1

The guidelines and information contained in **Part 1** address rather general issues that are particularly relevant at the beginning of your studies.

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- People: Boards – Committees – GTC staff
- General information
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- Exams and re-examinations

## DOWNLOADS (referred to in Part 1 - download from the GTC website)

- Module Handbooks
- Study and Examination Regulations

## People: Boards – Committees – GTC staff

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The graduate programs in neuroscience at the University of Tübingen are provided cooperatively by the Medical Faculty and the Faculty of Science together with the Max-Planck-Institute for Biological Cybernetics. The Graduate Training Centre, comprising the three graduate schools (Neural & Behavioural Sciences, Neural Information Processing, Cellular & Molecular Neuroscience) is governed by an **Interfaculty Committee** (*Gemeinsame Kommission*), comprising members of the medical and the science faculty whose background matches the scientific fields covered in the respective schools.

For each of the three schools, there is in addition a:

- **Selection Board** (*Auswahlkommission*) according to § 4 of the 'Admission Regulations',
- **Examination Board** (*Prüfungsausschuss*) according to § 4 of the 'Study and Examination Regulations' and, finally,
- **Education Board** (*Studienkommission*) according to § 26 of the 'Baden-Württemberg State Laws on Universities'.

Check out the GTC website, if you are interested to learn more about these committees and the actual committee members: <http://www.neuroschool-tuebingen.de/people/boards-committees/>. As you will see, these boards also comprise masters and/or doctoral students of the GTC, which are YOUR representatives in the respective boards and advocate the students' interests. The students' representatives are re-elected annually.

### The GTC staff - who is doing what?

Marc Himmelbach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of the GTC: Representation and Organization</li> <li>• Member of Selection-, Education- and Examination Boards</li> <li>• Lecturer; tutor of lab rotation seminars</li> <li>• Recruitment and support of lecturers</li> <li>• Counseling of master and PhD students</li> <li>• Supervisor lab rotations, master theses</li> </ul>
Katja Thieltges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course coordinator master programs</li> <li>• Accounting and finance</li> <li>• PC-Pool &amp; Printers, Software and WiFi contact person</li> <li>• Books &amp; library contact person</li> <li>• Counseling of masters students</li> <li>• Responsible for ILIAS and Campus databank maintenance</li> <li>• Management of infrastructure (lecture hall allocations)</li> </ul>
Susanne Kamphausen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator of the doctoral program / IMPRS</li> <li>• Counseling of master graduates</li> <li>• Counseling of doctoral students</li> <li>• Management of infrastructure (lecture hall allocations)</li> </ul>

## General Information

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**What does it cost to study at the University of Tübingen?** GTC masters students from Germany and European countries are **not** required to pay tuition fees! Students from outside the European Union are required to pay a tuition fee of 1,500 EUR per semester. In addition, all students must pay a 'per-semester' registration fee of **€158.30** when they enroll. It is made up of €84.80 for social services provided by the student union (*Studentenwerk*), €3.50 for *Verfasste Studierendenschaft* and a €70 administration charge.

**Semesterticket:** Enrolled students are entitled to a discount on the *Semesterticket* (€99.70 per term = 6 months), valid for travel on the local buses and trains (**naldo**-transport association / **naldo Verkehrsverbund**). *Semestertickets* can be purchased as soon as you have obtained your student ID-card.

**NEW:** In case you do not hold a *Semesterticket*, you may use **naldo Verkehrsverbund** (including local buses in Tübingen) **at limited times** with your student ID, i.e. Monday – Friday from 7pm (19:00 Uhr) on (until 'closing time') and also on weekends (Sat./Sun.) and holidays. For the remaining times (Mon. – Fri. from early morning 'starting time' until 7pm) you do need a *Semesterticket* or a local bus ticket. For more details, see:

<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/study/student-life/semester-ticket/>

**Re-enrollment periods:** Master students are required to re-enroll every semester and to pay the registration fee (4 x during your masters studies). The periods of re-enrolment (*Rückmeldefristen*) for the summer terms are usually around mid January to mid February and for the winter terms in July to mid August. Delayed reenrollment will result in overdue fines. Please check the University website for exact dates of the re-enrolment periods:

<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/study/organizing-your-studies/semester-and-study-planning/semester-dates/>

**Housing:** For those of you staying in the dormitories, the lease contracts will end after two years, i.e., on September 30 by the end of your 4<sup>th</sup> semester. Please be aware that an extension is not possible! In case you plan to move out of the dorm earlier, you may cancel the lease contract by the end of a term (summer term: March 31, winter term: Sept. 30), in written form and 2 months in advance. However, this can only be done with good reasons.

**Keys:** Master students of the GTC can get a key (30 € deposit) that allows for entering the Anatomy Building and the rooms of the GTC at any time (the main doors of the building will be locked at 5 pm during weekdays and have to be constantly locked at weekends and holidays). At night and weekends, you are not allowed to wander around in the building – please stay in the rooms of the GTC.

Please note that it is strictly prohibited to hand over your key to another person, in particular people who are not registered students of this Graduate School. GTC-students violating this proviso must return their key instantly!

**Use of the GTC rooms:** In addition to the lecture hall and the offices of the course coordinators, the GTC provides a study room with a reference library, PCs, printers and WiFi connection. To access the WiFi, you will need your **ZDV login** (same as needed for your Tübingen University e-mail account). The rooms are accessible for you at any time and have been extensively used and appreciated by many generations of master students in the past years.

However, in order to ensure that this will also be the case for future generations of GTC students, we urge you to **take responsibility for the rooms and equipment!** If you leave the GTC for the day, in particular if you are the last one leaving the GTC, close the windows, switch of the lights and lock the GTC door.

**Social events:** Now and then students organize social events in the GTC rooms, such as gaming nights or a Christmas party. This is - in general - perfectly fine with us. However, you have to inform us beforehand and, afterwards, you must clear the rooms, clean up the dishes, remove empty bottles, etc. The cleaning personnel in our building is not responsible for party-messes.

**The GTC-kitchenette:** GTC students are in the fortunate situation of having access to a small kitchenette to prepare tea or coffee during their lecture breaks and to store fruits or sandwiches in the fridge for their study nights. It is your responsibility to keep the kitchenette clean, to wash your dishes and clear the dishes away. We therefore suggest that you organize a weekly **cleaning-crew** who will take full responsibility and clean up the place regularly. Again, the cleaning lady will not take care of a messed-up kitchenette or empty bottles.

**Lecture halls:** In the first year of your studies, most of the courses take place in the lecture hall of the GTC (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) or, occasionally, in another room in the Anatomy Building. A few courses will run elsewhere in the university such as the seminar room of the Hertie Institute or in a lecture hall on the science campus. Please check out the GTC website to find out where specific courses will take place.

**Attendance in class:** All students are expected to attend lectures, lab visits and seminars steadily. Scheduled classes play an important role in supporting progress through the academic year. Students are therefore expected to keep up a consistent rate of good attendance so that performance later in the term will not be adversely affected.

Students who have missed class are responsible for updating themselves on any information provided during those classes. If you fall ill during the examination week you will need a medical certificate.

Please note that our lecturers set great value on starting their courses on time (commonly '15 minutes past the hour' = cum tempore = c.t.). Being late is very impolite and entering the lecture hall belated is very disturbing for both lecturers and classmates.

**GTC website:** We strongly recommend to bookmark the GTCs website on your laptop: <http://www.neuroschoool-tuebingen.de>. The website is being updated regularly and is a reliable source of information for your studies: Most importantly, on the GTC website you find all the important **dates and times** that are crucial throughout your current semester:

<http://www.neuroschoool-tuebingen.de/courses/important-dates/>

## Guidelines for Borrowing Books

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Please respect the following guidelines when borrowing books from our reference library:

- Books can be borrowed from the library and taken home if there is more than one copy of the textbook. The copy marked with a **red dot** must remain in the library.
- Do not forget to sign out the book: fill out a card by indicating your name, the complete book No. including lower letter, and the date. Place the card on the shelf in place of the book. You should **never** list more than one book on one card.
- The books have to be returned within two weeks! In case another student does not need the book, the same person can borrow the book again two days later.
- After you have returned the book, take out the card and erase your name from the card.
- If there is only a single copy of a book in the library, it is marked with a **red dot**. In general, these books do not leave the room. They can only be used in the reference library of the GTC. This procedure ensures that a student has access to a copy of every book in the GTC library at any time.
- In case there is a desperate need to borrow one of these **red dot**-books, e.g. for photocopying or for preparing a seminar talk, you may do so, however, only after you have informed the staff. Sign out the book - fill out the card! The books should be returned the following day, at the latest. With permission, a **red dot**-book may also be borrowed over the weekends.
- In case there is a shortage of widely used textbooks or you want us to purchase a specific book we don't have, please let us know. Hand in an informal request along with a precise description of the book (ISBN No. or print out the respective Amazon page).

A senior student of the GTC is responsible for the reference library. You may contact him/her in the first place, in case you have questions or suggestions regarding the library.

# ILIAS – CAMPUS – ZDV-Webmail – WiFi/eduroam

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## ILIAS

ILIAS (acronym for the German term *Integriertes Lern-, Informations- und Arbeitskooperationssystem*) is a web-based learning/teaching management system. For teachers, ILIAS offers efficient administration and communication tools and students can access their course materials.

For **access to ILIAS**, please go to the following website:

<https://ovidius.uni-tuebingen.de/ilias3/ilias.php?baseClass=ilPersonalDesktopGUI>

At the very bottom of this side, you can choose a language. In order to finally access ILIAS, you will need your **ZDV login** (same as needed for CAMPUS, for your Tübingen University e-mail account, as well as for 'eduroam' or '802.1X').

You can then find the **GTC courses** as follows:

- Wintersemester (year) or Sommersemester (year)
  - 7 Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät
    - Graduate Training Centre of Neuroscience
      - Graduate School of Neural & Behavioral Sciences
      - Graduate School of Cellular & Molecular Neuroscience
      - Graduate School of Neural Information Processing

For questions regarding ILIAS, please contact your course instructors or the GTC staff. The individual lecturers will provide you with the required password in order to access their course-site and the respective lecture slides or any other course materials.

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## CAMPUS

CAMPUS is the University of Tübingen administration system for students. Many issues concerning your studies can be done and checked here, including printable PDFs of your enrollment certificates.

In order to access CAMPUS, you have to use your **ZDV login**. For further information on the use of CAMPUS, see the screenshot-picture book '**How to Campus**' in the appendix or follow this link:

<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/study/organizing-your-studies/semester-and-study-planning/campus-portal/>

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## ZDV-Webmail

Once you have registered at the university and received your student ID-card etc., you will also be assigned your **ZDV login** and a university e-mail address (firstname.lastname@student.uni-tuebingen.de). You can then check and write e-mails worldwide through your ZDV webmail account.

Via 'mail -> filters -> forward' you can also have every incoming e-mail forwarded to another e-mail address of your choice.

Login to ZDV-webmail: <https://webmail.uni-tuebingen.de/>

The GTC would greatly prefer that the masters students make use of their University of Tübingen e-mail address. This is one way to ensure that important e-mail messages send to **you** by **us** do reach you!

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## WiFi / eduroam

'Education roaming' is a secure, worldwide roaming access service developed for the international research and education community. It allows students and researchers from participating institutions to obtain Internet connectivity (LAN/WiFi) across campus and when visiting other participating institutions. Sign up with your {ZDV [username](#)}@[uni-tuebingen.de](#) and your ZDV password to go online wherever you encounter an 'eduroam' network around the globe!

## Choice of Electives

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In the course of the most recent revisions of the curriculum we considered the request of the student body to provide – in addition to the compulsory course program – more electives (modules NB-08 / CM-08 / NIP-08).

Depending on your program, you are free to choose 3 to 4 courses (NB: 11 CPs, CM: 12 CPs, NIP: 9 CPs) from the GTCs neuroscience masters programs or from any other **masters** program offered by the Faculty of Sciences or the Medical Faculty.

The electives should impart you with specific knowledge and competences in subject areas of your choice and may either **deepen your knowledge** in fields of your specialization or **complement the training** already provided with the compulsory curricular courses. By doing so, you can pursue – at least to some extent – your broader interests and can better understand contexts and co-relations beyond the limits of your major discipline.

**Before the start of the winter term**, we will get you in contact with senior students from the three masters programs who will guide you in finding and choosing elective courses at our university. In addition, we will provide a list of courses to choose from on our webpages. If you choose courses beyond those listed by the GTC, they need to be **approved beforehand** by Marc Himmelbach.

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### See also Module Handbooks:

Neural & Behavioural Sciences:	Module NB-08 – Electives – <b>11</b> CPs
Cellular & Molecular Neuroscience:	Module CM-08 – Electives – <b>12</b> CPs
Neural Information Processing:	Module NIP-08 – Electives – <b>9</b> CPs

## Exams and Re-examinations

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Many of the courses/modules are completed at the end of the term with a graded written exam. The general examination schedule is depicted in your respective Module Handbook (see: 5. Modules and examinations). The exact dates, times and locations of the exams will be announced ahead of time both on the GTC website and by bulletins posted in the GTC.

According to the 'Study and Examination Regulations' an exam is passed when the grade is at least 'adequate' (grade 4.0 or better). In case the exam is failed, it can be repeated **once**. The GTC staff notifies you about your fail and provide you with further information regarding a resit.

The repetition of a module examination that has already been passed is **not permissible** (for example, in order to improve a previously achieved bad grade).

Please be aware that a second repetition of the same examination is **not possible**. A 'fail' in the re-examination will result in an **irrevocable dropout** from the master's course.

Percentage	Number Grade	
≥ 95 %	1.0	very good
≥ 90 %	1.3	very good <sup>-</sup>
≥ 85 %	1.7	good <sup>+</sup>
≥ 80 %	2.0	good
≥ 75 %	2.3	good <sup>-</sup>
≥ 70 %	2.7	satisfactory <sup>+</sup>
≥ 65 %	3.0	satisfactory
≥ 60 %	3.3	satisfactory <sup>-</sup>
≥ 55 %	3.7	adequate <sup>+</sup>
≥ 50 %	4.0	adequate
< 50 %	5.0	fail

The table displays the '**grading scheme**' applied to exams during your masters course.  
The percentage refers to the percentage of points achieved in the exam.

# Part 2

The guidelines and information contained in **Part 2** address compulsory course work that takes place in the first & second year of your studies and that differs from the remaining, generally classroom-based courses such as lectures, tutorials or journal clubs. We feel that information on the common procedures – in particular of the retreat and the lab rotations – are quite useful, as this course work requires your own initiative and needs to be planned and organized by YOU ahead of time.

## CONTENT

- NeuroColloquium
- Retreat – weekend seminar
- Laboratory / essay rotations
- ***External*** laboratory rotations

## DOWNLOADS (referred to in Part 2 - download from the GTC website)

- Notification of commencement of an essay rotation
- Notification of commencement of a laboratory rotation
- Cover page & structure of a laboratory report
- Form 'evaluation of a laboratory rotation'

# NeuroColloquium

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The **NeuroColloquium** is a long-standing, fortnightly seminar series that has run continuously since the early 1980s. It has always been organized by the Tübingen neuroscience community, with the TübingenNeuroCampus now being responsible for organization and coordination of the event.

The NeuroColloquium presents internationally renowned researchers covering various fields of neuroscience. The talks generally have a review-like character providing an overview of state-of-the-art neuroscience topics, within genetic, cognitive and computational fields of research, as well as covering new methodological advances. In this seminar series, students get to know a wide range of neuroscience research topics and methods, and thus are forced to 'look beyond their own noses'. One or the other talk/topic might not be in the line with your main interests. Nevertheless, there is always something you do 'take home' from a talk and this will contribute to broadening your insight into the ample fields of neuroscience.

Please be aware that the **NeuroColloquium** is a **compulsory curricular course** that earns credits (part of the module 'Introduction to Current Research'). Therefore, regular attendance is mandatory in order to pass the course. Attendance lists are displayed for master students as well as PhD students.

**GTC Students' Favorite:** Masters and doctoral students are encouraged to choose and propose speakers of their interest and meet with them before and after the talks. Of the 8 speakers visiting per semester, one will be selected, invited and hosted by GTC students. By doing so, students actively participate in organizing this seminar series and, thereby, gain organizational skills and social competence.

Please keep in mind that proposing and inviting a speaker and fitting him or her into the seminar schedule takes time and needs to be done long in advance. For example, if you intend to invite a speaker for the summer term NeuroColloquium, you have to contact him at least 6 months ahead of time, which is already at the beginning of the winter term! Furthermore, it is advisable to have more than one person in mind as renowned scientists often have a very tight schedule and might not be able to visit Tübingen on short notice for just one talk.

In case you plan to invite a speaker, please inform a GTC staff member (Dr. Susanne Kamphausen) as early as possible since we may need to adjust the existing draft-schedule for the upcoming semester with the organizer of the Neuro-Colloquium.

The final schedule of the NeuroColloquium will be announced and posted right before the start of every term.

## GTC Student Retreat

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Once a year in spring, all master students of the three graduate programs jointly attend a retreat where they present and discuss scientific topics that are generally not part of their curricular course work. The seminar topics are usually proposed and cooperatively chosen by students and lecturers and change every year. After successful completion of the retreat, students will have acquired general skills that are required for scientific work, including literature research and preparation and presentation of a talk on an unfamiliar topic.

In addition to discussing scientific topics, the retreat is also meant as a **social event** where students from the three masters programs meet with scientists and lecturers, get to know each other and potentially initiate local co-operations.

**How does it work?** There will be three seminars running in parallel and every student has to participate in one of the three seminars. Switching between seminar sessions is – for several reasons – not possible. However, it is intended that students of the three programs mix for the seminars – the range of single topics available is usually quite broad and there should be ‘something for everyone’.

The seminar topics will be announced at the beginning of your 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (summer semester). Your suggestions for potential topics are very welcome! On your topic of choice, you have to prepare and present a seminar talk of ca. 20 minutes. In addition to a few ‘key publication’ assigned for every topic, you should include in your presentation additional papers covering the scientific question addressed (it’s not a journal club, where you present the findings of one study only).

## Laboratory / Essay Rotations

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The laboratory and/or essay rotations (LRs/ERs) play an important part in your masters training as they provide you with the opportunity to engage in ongoing research projects in laboratories of your choice. The significance of the LRs/ERs in your studies is also expressed by the fact that they earn ca. 25% of the credit points awarded for your complete MSc-studies. For a description of the LRs/ERs, their teaching goals and requirements please check the module 'Laboratory Rotations' in your Module Handbook. Here I would like to emphasize on a few additional aspects:

- The curriculum requires students from the neural-behavioral and the cellular-molecular program to perform **two** experimental lab rotations, while students of the neural-information-processing program do **one** experimental lab rotation and **one** essay rotation (see descriptions in the Module Handbook). Please note that the rotation projects have to be **announced to the GTC beforehand**. To do so, please submit the filled in and signed form 'Notification of Commencement of a Rotation Project' (download from the GTCs website), which also serves as a 'agreement of supervision' between student, supervisor and the GTC.
- The two rotation projects should ideally be performed in **different research groups** with distinct scientific questions and different methods. We strongly recommend doing so in order to expand your 'neuroscientific horizon' as much as possible and to also acquire a wider spectrum of methodological competencies. This has often proven to be an asset when it comes to applying for masters and, eventually, doctoral theses projects.
- The rotation projects have to be concluded with a **written report** (formatted like a scientific paper) and an **oral presentation** during a seminar at the end of the rotation. We urge you to take both, the writing and presentation, seriously and to devote a great deal of time to accomplish them at the best possible. Presenting scientific findings – in written form and orally – are key competences for scientists and contribute, to a great extent, to their career-success! Start writing your reports as early as possible during your rotation and seek advice and support as often as possible. Writing a convincing, logical and concise report on your studies is as important as generating new data in the lab. Basic directions on how to structure your report or a scientific paper can be found in the appendix of these guidelines (Structure of a lab report / masters thesis).
- Furthermore, I would like to draw your attention to the problem of **'plagiarism'**, which is an important issue in scientific writing and publishing. Do not take it lightly, in case of lab rotation or essay rotation reports, finding evidence of plagiarisms means that you failed an exam.
- Your performance on the rotations will be **assessed and graded** by the supervisor. For the LRs, this will be done according to the following criteria: understanding of theoretical framework and literature overview (15%), practical work in the lab (30%), generation of own ideas (10%), oral presentation of the project and discussion in the seminar (15%), and written lab report (30%). Your performance on the ER will be assessed and graded based on the written report (80%) and the oral presentation of the project and discussion in the seminar (20%).

## External Laboratory Rotations

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It happens now and then that masters students, who seek labs and projects for their LR or MSc thesis, find a research group outside of Tübingen where they would like to complete a project. There are several reasons why one may want to do this. Most often, it is a highly appealing project or a fancy method that ‘fires this desire’.

Regarding this particular issue, the GTC has an ambivalent perspective. On the one hand, the GTC is an educational institution and – according to its ‘mission’ – supports students in their training efforts impartially (as long as the requirements of the ‘Study and Examination Regulations’ are met).

On the other hand, the GTC does have a vital interest in transferring their well-educated graduated students into the local laboratories where they are needed and well received. Moreover, we are convinced that for the period of a masters’ education, the GTC has a sufficient variety of state-of-the-art labs, topics, methods, and projects to offer that should satisfy the needs of even the most ambitious graduate student.

From the GTC faculty and scientists we hear that they greatly appreciate getting to know students they have taught in the classroom better and especially during lab work. Moreover, they regret to ‘lose students’ to external labs without having had the chance to eventually get them interested in ongoing projects in their own labs.

In case you are a holder of a GTC-associated scholarship you should be aware that your **funding will be ceased** for the period of an external LR (or MSc thesis). Our commitment to the respective funding bodies obliges us to use the money provided appropriately. To this effect, we cannot justify the financing of students who spend their manpower in labs outside of Tübingen.

In conclusion, we urge you to carefully consider the arguments outlined above and to first check out the local laboratories with their multitude of practical training opportunities before you decide to embark on an external rotation project.

In case you are still considering an external LR project you will have to submit an informal application to the GTC. Your request will then be forwarded to the respective Examination Board for approval.

**The procedure and requirements are as follows:**

- Please submit a letter of request to the GTC stating where you intend to do an external LR, with whom (supervisor) you will be working, and what you are planning to work on. In addition, please state why you want to do the lab project elsewhere and why this or an equivalent project cannot be done in Tübingen.
- Your prospective supervisor must submit a short written statement on the envisaged project, state that he/she will supervise the rotation student, and that he/she is familiar with the general requirements (LR duration, talk, lab report, graded evaluation), and that the project can be accomplished and satisfyingly concluded within 10 weeks. Please advise your supervisor of the description of LR in your Module Handbook.
- After the board has approved your application, please submit the form 'Notification of Commencement of a Laboratory Rotation', signed by you and your prospective supervisor (form can be 'downloaded' from the GTC website).
- Finally, please be aware that your supervisor – if reasonable – is expected to attend the concluding LR-seminar where you present your rotation project to your fellow students.

# Course Evaluations

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In order to fulfill the universities **quality control-requirements\***, the GTC is **obliged** to regularly perform course evaluations, generally by the end of the winter term and the summer term. The course evaluations are done via an online system (**tuevalon**) where you basically have to **rate** a series of predetermined questions by ticking boxes or by giving brief written comments. The questionnaires are largely standardized and will take you no more than 5 minutes to complete. You access the 'questionnaires' through links, which you will receive by e-mail generally right after completion of the exam for the respective course. In case you don't get these e-mails, check your **spam-folder(!)** and adjust your webmail-settings accordingly (label as 'no spam'). The e-mail reads as follows:

*Dear student: We would like to receive your valuable comments on the course program of the winter term / summer term. Your criticism, comments and suggestions are important to us and are needed to further improve our courses.*

*The survey should take you around 5 minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely **anonymous**; responses will be analyzed in the aggregate only and will never be associated with individual participants.*

*Please comment particularly on the following points:*

- *expertise and commitment of the lecturer,*
- *level, coverage and overlap of topics,*
- *course organization.*

*Please fill out the following questionnaire (#survey) in due time and provide brief comments as well, where possible.*

*To access the questionnaire, please click on this link: #link.*

*Thank you for your cooperation. Yours, M. Himmelbach*

In case you have not attended to the request for course evaluation within a 2-3 weeks period, you will receive a **reminder** asking you kindly to finally fill out the questionnaire. We have learned from our students that these reminders might be annoying at times. However, we have to do this in order to increase the number of replies and, thus, strengthen the validity of our surveys. The reminder reads as follows:

*Dear student: You have not yet filled out the questionnaire regarding: #survey! Your feedback is crucial for improving the quality of teaching. Please take the time to fill out the questionnaire as soon as possible: #link.*

*Many thanks. Yours, M. Himmelbach*

**Printouts of the results of the course evaluations** from every term will be compiled in a folder and deposited in the GTC office. The student's representatives will be entitled to examine the evaluations. The course evaluations shall not be reproduced and/or spread among students or made public in any other way. The student's feedback on the evaluations should be addressed to the Dean of Studies.

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\* Evaluationsordnung für Lehre, Studium und Weiterbildung sowie diese unterstützende Dienstleistungen der Universität / Amtliche Bekanntmachungen der Universität Tübingen 2015, Nr. 7, S. 175-184

# Part 3

The guidelines and information contained in **Part 3** become relevant once you embark on your last course requirement, the masters thesis. You also find information on the graduation procedure and, eventually, on the transition into the GTCs doctoral program.

## CONTENT

- The masters thesis
- **External** masters theses
- Masters thesis vs. lab rotation - **Disclosures**
- Graduation and documents issued
- Continuing with doctoral studies in Tübingen

## DOWNLOADS (referred to in Part 3 - download from the GTC website)

- Notification of commencement of the masters thesis
- Cover page / second page / disclosures of the masters thesis

## The Masters Thesis

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Before embarking on your MSc thesis project (duration of 6 months), you must have fully completed your compulsory course work (assignments, exams, and potential resits) and your two laboratory rotations, including the project presentations and lab reports.

Your last compulsory 'classroom event' is the 2<sup>nd</sup> lab rotation seminar, which takes place approximately at the beginning of February (NB and CM students) or at the end of December (NIP students). The exact dates will be announced annually. This event marks a 'key date' as it determines **when** you have to start – at the latest – with your masters thesis project, if you want to conclude your studies within 4 semesters. Assuming the lab rotation seminar took place on February 15, then you will have to start with your thesis project on March 15 at the latest, to then submit your thesis until September 15 before the end of the summer semester.

You may, of course, also start working on your thesis right after the seminar or 1-3 weeks thereafter. In any case, you must hand-in the form 'Notification of Commencement of the Masters Thesis' on which you must provide details of the exact 'starting date' and the resulting 'submission date' (= starting date + 6 months) of your thesis (form available as download).

Please be aware that the 'Study and Examination Regulations' stipulate that the **processing time** of your masters thesis is limited to maximally 6 months (§ 17, clause 2). The submission deadline can only be extended on well-founded reasons ('**act of nature beyond control**') and for 4 weeks, at most! Requests for extension of the submission deadline – along with a statement of the reasons for the delay – have to be done in writing or by e-mail, signed by you and your thesis supervisor and are to be addressed to the Examination Board (*Prüfungsausschuss*) ahead of time.

## External Masters Thesis

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In general, the rationale and requirements regarding an external masters thesis are in line with those for external LR (see Part 2).

In case you aim for an external MSc thesis, you will have to submit an informal application to the GTC. Your request will be forwarded to the 'Examination Board' for approval (see GTC website: People – Boards & Committees).

The procedure and requirements are as follows:

- Please submit a letter of request to the GTC stating where you intend to do an external MSc thesis, with whom (supervisor) you will be working, and what you are planning to work on. In addition, please state why you want to do this particular thesis project elsewhere and why this or an equivalent thesis cannot be done in Tübingen.
- The prospective thesis supervisor must submit a short written statement on the envisaged project, state that he/she will supervise the masters student, and that he/she is familiar with the general requirements and regulations for a MSc thesis (§ 17 of the Study and Examination Regulations), and that the project can be accomplished and satisfyingly concluded within 6 months.
- After the board has approved your application, please submit the form "Notification of commencement of a masters thesis", signed by you and your prospective supervisor.
- Finally, and most importantly, you will have to find a second reader for your thesis here in Tübingen. He/she should be informed about your plans and your project beforehand (submit short thesis outline to him/her) and he/she has to agree to evaluate your thesis.

## Masters Thesis vs. Lab Rotation – Disclosures

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Before you start working on your masters thesis, I would like to remind you of an important issue that is relevant to those of you who perform the master thesis in one of the labs where you have already completed a lab rotation. In most of these cases, students pursue a project for their master thesis on which they have already been working on in their lab rotation, which is - in general - perfectly fine!

However, on no account can experiments and results from the lab rotation, which have already been presented in the lab report, be included in the masters thesis! Lab rotation + oral presentation + lab report comprise a discrete course work which earns credits. The same is true for the masters thesis, which is supposed to represent a genuine piece of work performed within a 6 months period, as stipulated in the “Study and Examination Regulations”. In your masters thesis you will have to affirm by signature that you have not included data generated in a previous lab rotation.

In order to make this fact even clearer to the GTC and to the second reader of your thesis (who is generally not familiar with your lab rotation projects) we ask you to submit - along with the 3 copies of your thesis - in writing on a separate sheet a brief statement on the relation, similarities and potential overlap of one of your lab rotation projects with your submitted masters thesis. Please try to be as explicit as possible in your statement in order to prove and to convince us that your masters thesis does not contain any data, figures, and/or larger copy & paste text blocks from a previous lab rotation or the respective report.

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Assuming you and your supervisor intend to write a publication on the project, you may of course ‘lump together’ data from the lab rotation and the masters thesis and also include data from co-workers!

## Graduation and Documents Issued

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The masters course is completed (i.e. the course requirements are fulfilled) after submission of three copies of your masters thesis at the GTC office and the 'general acceptance' of the thesis by the Examination Board (*Prüfungsausschuss*). Thereafter, the GTC office will send the thesis to two evaluators for review and for grading.

After receipt of the reviews and the grades by the GTC office, the graduation documents will be printed and signed. The documents you receive include:

- Master of Science-Degree Certificate (*Masterurkunde*)
- Transcript of Records (*Zeugnis*)
- Diploma Supplement (*ergänzende Angaben zum Masterstudium*)

The time period between submission of the thesis and issuing of the graduation documents may last up to **one months**. In case you need a proof of graduation promptly (e.g., for a scholarship or job application or for a working contract), we will issue a letter for you confirming that you have fulfilled all requirements for being awarded the MSc-degree. Such a letter of confirmation is usually accepted as 'preliminary proof of graduation' by foundations and employers. Please let us know if the required confirmation needs to address specific information in addition, such as dates, thesis title, expected time of issuing of final documents, etc. This kind of information can be included easily in your individualized letter.

## Continuing with Doctoral Studies in Tübingen

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Graduates of our masters programs often continue with a doctoral project in one of the many neuroscience labs at Tübingen University or at the Max-Planck-Institute. This is very much in the interest of the Tübingen neuroscience community since well-trained graduates with a profound interest in neurosciences are needed desperately and, therefore, are highly welcome in all research groups.

How to go about in finding a doctorate: In general, finding a doctoral position and defining a project should be quite easy as you have seen and worked with several research groups during your masters studies at the GTC. We encourage you to look out for potential doctoral projects and positions as early as possible during your masters studies. In case you spot something, approach the group leaders 'fearlessly and self-confident' and inquire about the possibility to do your doctoral studies with her or him. Most often, the masters thesis project evolves into a rewarding doctoral project.

Information: Once a year in spring, the GTC organizes an information session for future graduates addressing all the urgent questions you may have regarding the transition into doctoral studies (date will be announced ahead of time). In addition, we recommend as a comprehensive source of information the '**Guidelines for Prospective & Active Doctoral Students**' which can be downloaded from the GTC website.

Seeking advice: The transition from the masters to the GTC doctoral program is quite effortless and usually runs smoothly. Once you have come to an agreement on a doctoral project with a group leader, we strongly recommend to get in contact with **Susanne Kamphausen**, the coordinator of the doctoral program. She is in charge of most of the operational tasks and of counseling both doctoral students and supervisors and she will advise you on the next steps to take.

# Appendix

- Structure of a lab report / masters thesis
- 'How-to-Campus'