

## Guidelines for Scientific Advisory Boards at the University of Basel

Version 2.1 | Approved by the Rectorate 26.01.2021

*This translation of the document "Richtlinien für Scientific Advisory Boards an der Universität Basel" is provided for information purposes only and has no legal force.*

### Purpose and validity of the guidelines

The "Guidelines for Scientific Advisory Boards at the University of Basel" apply to the Scientific Advisory Boards (SABs) of the organizational units of the University of Basel, in particular its departments and mono-departmental faculties. The guidelines serve the purpose to standardize the processes that relate to SABs and to set minimum standards.

The regulations and recommendations outlined herein are reviewed periodically and adapted if necessary.

### 1. Objectives of the Scientific Advisory Boards

Quality development in research is primarily a subject-specific process that is based on individual researchers' striving for scientific excellence and an active quality culture within the respective scientific communities. Scientific Advisory Boards (SABs) at the University of Basel aim to support the organizational units in striving for research excellence and in their quality development. To do so, recognized experts from outside the university (peers) assess the quality and innovativeness of research and make recommendations from their external perspective.

SABs are mandated to accompany the quality development and to advise the Executive Committees of the organizational units. This includes questions concerning the organization of the units, their strategic orientation, research output and performance, research infrastructure, framework conditions for research, services, academic talent promotion, doctoral training, gender equality and diversity efforts, and the acquisition of third-party funding. In addition, the SABs give expert advice about the research orientation and performance of individual researchers or research groups.

### 2. Organizational level the boards are established at

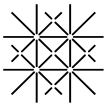
Scientific Advisory Boards are established at the level of departments, in the case of mono-departmental faculties at the faculty level. They are integrated into existing structures and processes.

In consultation with the respective faculty and the rectorate, other organizational units (e.g. institutes) can also establish SABs.

### 3. Composition of the boards and election procedure

SABs are constituted by at least three members from outside the University of Basel. SAB members are proven, internationally recognized scientists with no vested interests or conflicts of interest with members of the respective organizational unit.

The fields of expertise of the members of an SAB reflect the research areas of the respective unit. The composition of the boards is furthermore guided by the principle of excellence through diversity, in particular



by the criteria of gender, age, leadership experience, and scientific background in relation to the scientific system in which a scientist works. At least one member should be familiar with the Swiss research landscape. The term of office of SAB members is usually four years, a re-election is possible.

The members of an SAB are proposed by the organizational units.

In mono-departmental faculties, the rectorate approves the proposals.

In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Natural Sciences the SAB members are nominated by the departments, the faculty leadership comments the proposal with a short statement, and the rectorate approves the proposals.

In the Faculty of Medicine, both the respective departmental council and the rectorate approve the proposal.

SABs have a chairperson who serves as a contact person and represents the board.

#### **4. 'Aims and tasks' document and confidentiality agreement**

The organizational unit defines the role of the SAB and regulates the rights and duties of SAB members in an aims and tasks document ('Aufgabenheft'). SAB members sign a confidentiality agreement.

#### **5. Frequency and procedure of board meetings (SAB Site Visit, SAB Dossier)**

The Scientific Advisory Boards usually meet once a year, but at least every two years for an SAB Site Visit. In justified cases, participation by electronic means is possible.

The frequency, duration and agenda of the SAB Site Visit is determined by the organizational unit.

The organizational units define focus topics for every SAB Site Visit in consultation with the members of the SAB, the faculty, and the rectorate. The doctoral training/level should be addressed as a focus topic at least once every four years.

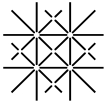
As a basis for the SAB Site Visits, the organizational units prepare a written report, the SAB Dossier. The SAB Dossier is divided into two parts: The first part focuses on the organizational unit as a whole and describes its organization, strategic orientation, development and framework conditions. The second part is dedicated to the activities of the individual researchers or research groups and gives them the opportunity to present their contribution to the research performance of the organizational unit.

Structure and content of the SAB Dossier is determined by the organizational unit and informed by "best practice" recommendations of the university. The SAB Dossier is made available to the members of the SAB, the faculty leadership and the rectorate no later than three weeks prior to the SAB Site Visit.

The Executive Committee of the organizational unit may contact the SAB for specific questions during the year.

#### **6. Debriefing and report (SAB Report)**

The SAB assesses the framework conditions as well as the research performance of the organizational unit and its researchers on the basis of guiding questions. The SAB presents and discusses its findings both orally on site and in a written report.



SAB Site Visits conclude with a debriefing. In this debriefing, the SAB presents its findings and recommendations for action to the organizational unit, the faculty leadership and the rectorate. The SAB summarizes its findings in a report (SAB Report), which is addressed to the Executive Committee of the organizational unit.

The written report is used for internal processes of quality development at the University of Basel and is not published. The SAB Report is used for strategic planning in committees and boards of the department or faculty. For this purpose, the Executive Committee of the organizational unit forwards the relevant parts of the SAB Report to the stakeholders involved.

The faculty leadership (if applicable) and the Vice President's Office for Research receive the first part of the written report (without chapters related to individual researchers).

Sections in the second part of the SAB Report that concern the assessment of individual research groups or professorships, will only be shared with the evaluated persons themselves. The department and faculty leadership may furthermore use sections of part two for purposes of personnel, career-, and organizational development (e.g. recommendations in the context of promotions). Beyond that, the person-centered parts of the report may in principle not be shared outside the unit.

## **7. Management response (Commentary on the SAB Report)**

The Executive Committee of the organizational unit is responsible for the internal discussion and distribution of the SAB Report, as well as for the implementation of the recommendations made by the SAB. The Executive Committee assesses and comments the findings and recommendations of the report, also formulating measures it intends to take, in a short Commentary on the report.

The SAB Dossier, the SAB Report and the Commentary are discussed in the context of the Research Exchange Meetings.

## **8. Fakultätsversammlung (Faculty Assembly)**

After each SAB Site Visit, the organizational unit presents a summary of the results and major conclusions of the SAB Site Visit to the corresponding Faculty Assembly.