Second assessor guide

Research project

Health Sciences / Clinical Research

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Table of content

Introduction

Dear second assessor,

This document provides an overview of the main tasks of the second assessor throughout the research project.

The student for whom you are the second assessor is either enrolled in the two-year research master programme, or in the one-year MSc programme. The (only) difference is that students in the two-year programme will spend more time on their research project.

	Programme duration	**EC for research project**	**Previous experience**
Research Master	2 years *120 EC*	65 EC *1820 hours*	Bachelor's degree, no significant research experience
Master of Science	1 year *70 EC*	28 EC *784 hours*	Master's degree, previous research experience

The main task of the second assessor is to provide objective feedback and to ensure the research is of sufficient epidemiological nature. The second assessor is therefore not involved in the research. The research paper, along with the content of the rest of the programme allows our students to register a Epidemioloog A with the Dutch Association for Epidemiology (VvE). It is therefore important that the second assessor holds a VvE registration (either A or B).

The paragraphs below explain the role of the second assessor for each component of the research project, and the timeline for this.

If you have any additional questions about your role as second assessor, please contact the programme administration at osc.gs@erasmusmc.nl.

Research project components

As second assessor, your most important role is to help students gain the most from their experience writing their research paper by providing useful and constructive feedback. There are several feedback moments throughout the project and the writing of the paper, all of which are elaborated on in the following paragraphs. As feedback is an important tool for learning, we ask you to try and share as much feedback as possible for each of the assessed components during the different feedback moments. Your feedback will help our student excel!

OSIRIS Case

Health Sciences/Clinical Research uses the online tool OSIRIS Case for the research assessment procedure, for all programmes and majors. All assessors (supervisors, second assessors and members of the Clinical Research Advisory Board) have to register their assessment in OSIRIS Case. In order to log into and use this tool, assessors can use their microsection number and password. OSIRIS Case sends out an email when action is required in the research assessment procedure. More information about OSIRIS Case will be send out to all assessors before first use.

Research proposal

Main workload: February/March

Students are assigned a second assessor after submitting their research proposal in February of their first year. Assigning students to second assessors is done by the Associate Programme Director (APD) of the student's major, based on the topic of the student's research project. The APD matches the student with a second assessor from a department related to the topic of the project.

Once a student has been assigned, the second assessor will be linked to the student's research proposal in OSIRIS Case. The system will send out an email alerting the second assessor that a new task is waiting for them in OSIRIS Case.

In OSIRIS Case, you are asked to do the following:

1. Assess whether the proposed research project is of sufficient epidemiological nature.
   This is necessary for registration as Epidemioloog A with the VvE.
2. Provide feedback on the research proposal, on the following elements:
   - Objectives
   - Study design
   - Data collection procedure
   - Data analysis procedure
   - Time schedule

Once you have completed this assessment, there are no additional tasks for you as second assessor until the midterm report.

Midterm report

Main workload: December/January (research masters) and late April (1-year programme)

About halfway through their project, students are required to submit a midterm report: a progress report in which they elaborate on their progress thus far. For the students, this component of the research project also includes a presentation for their supervisor, but as second assessor you will only receive a written report on the progress.

Students submit a written progress report (max. 4 pages excl. references and appendices) to OSIRIS Case. After that, the system will send out an email alerting the second assessor that a new task is waiting for them in OSIRIS Case.

In OSIRIS Case, you are asked to do the following:

1. Assess whether the student has shown sufficient progress to be able to adequately complete their research project before the deadline.
2. Provide feedback on the midterm report, on the following elements:
   - Objectives
   - Study design
   - Data collection procedure
   - Data analysis procedure
   - Results so far
   - Potential issues
   - Additional points of attention

Once you have completed this assessment, there are no additional tasks for you as second assessor until the final research paper assessment.

Research paper assessment

Main workload: June/July

At the end of their research project, students hand in a research paper, including all required elements for publication in an international English-language scientific journal with a good reputation in its field. As an attachment to this paper, the student is required to add an integration paragraph describing their research project and their specific role in the research, as well as elaborating on the way the elective courses they completed contributed to their research project. The assessment of this paragraph is included in the research paper assessment.

The research paper is the main product of the research project, and together with the student's performance during their project it is the only part of the research that is graded with a numerical grade.

The requirements for the research paper are as follows:

- The paper should be entirely the student's own work, despite collaborating with their supervisor and their research group. The student is expected to write all parts of the

paper themselves. However, feedback from supervisors and others is of course allowed (and encouraged!). If the paper is submitted to a journal for publication, it is therefore likely that the draft version submitted as a thesis cannot be the same version of the paper as the one submitted to the journal.
- The paper should include all required elements for publication in an English-language scientific journal with a good reputation in its field. This includes an abstract.
- There are no set guidelines for the layout of the paper, but the student should use a consistent reference style, such as AMA or Vancouver style. The most fitting style to use will mostly depend on which style is most commonly used in the specific research field.

In the event the research project culminates in multiple papers, the student is allowed to hand in a maximum of two papers. This can only be done under the following conditions:

1. The papers are written under the guidance of the same supervisor;
2. The papers are a result of the same research project and the topics of the papers are sufficiently related;
3. The papers can be graded by the same assessors;
4. The student has permission from both their supervisor and programme management to submit two papers.

Students are also required to add an additional paragraph to their thesis, in which they discuss the integration of the courses they have followed over the course of their programme and their research. The assessment of this paragraph is included in the research paper assessment.

The assessment procedure for the research paper and project is different for students in the Research Master (120 EC) programme than for students in the Post-initial Master (70 EC) programme. The different forms and guides relevant for both assessment procedures are available in this Sharepoint folder. Make sure to check you are using the correct form when assessing your student!

Assessment procedure for the Research Master programme (120 EC)

Note that this assessment procedure was changed in Fall 2024!

Students in this programme are required to complete a defence as part of the assessment of their research project. The current full procedure is as follows:

1. The student writes their draft research paper, including an integration paragraph that details the role of the student in the research process, and submits this in OSIRIS Case.
2. The supervisor provides written feedback on the submitted research paper, and assesses the student's performance during the research project.
3. At the same time, the second assessor is asked to provide **written feedback** on the submitted research paper using the form provided in OSIRIS Case.
4. The written feedback is shared with the student, who is expected to use this to prepare for their defence. The defence should take place at least 5 days after the feedback has been submitted by supervisor and second assessor, to ensure the student has sufficient time to prepare for their defence.

5. The student's defence session takes place with all assessors present. A thorough explanation of the defence and the role of the supervisor and second assessor in this is available in the defence guide.
6. Immediately following the defence, the supervisor and second assessor discuss the student's work and defence performance. They collaboratively complete two assessment forms: one for the research paper, and one for the defence. Both forms can be found here.
7. The supervisor is required to submit both completed forms in OSIRIS Case as soon as possible after the defence.
8. After the supervisor has submitted the assessment forms, the second assessor is asked to confirm the assessment in OSIRIS Case.
9. All components of the submitted assessment are sent to one of the Associate Programme Directors for final approval, as they are appointed as examiner for the research project.

PLEASE NOTE:

The defence for Research Master students can only take place if all feedback of the research paper has been submitted in OSIRIS Case in time, because the student is required to respond to the received feedback during their defence. If feedback is not provided on time, the defence will be postponed.

Assessment procedure for the Master of Science in Health Sciences (70 EC)

Students in the one-year Master of Science in Health Sciences (70 EC) programme are **not** required to complete a defence as part of their research assessment. The research paper and project for these students are assessed as follows:

1. The student writes their draft research paper, including an integration paragraph that details the role of the student in the research process, and submits this in OSIRIS Case.
2. The supervisor is asked to assess the student's performance during their project, the submitted research paper, and the integration paragraph.
3. At the same time, the second assessor is asked to assess the submitted research paper and integration paragraph using the form provided in OSIRIS Case.
4. The final grade of the student is calculated by taking the average grade between the assessments of the supervisor and the second assessor.
5. The submitted assessment is sent to one of the Associate Programme Directors for final approval, as they are appointed as examiner for the research project.
    a. In the event of a significant disagreement between the different assessors on the quality of the research paper (grade difference of 1.1 point or more), the examiner decides on a final grade that lies between the already assigned grades. This final grade replaces the grades of the supervisor and second assessor.

Generative AI

The rise of publicly available generative AI tools such as ChatGPT has brought new challenges to the assessment of our students' research projects. While the use of generative AI is not necessarily prohibited in the research project, use of generative AI tools should be credited. A more comprehensive policy on the use of AI within the Graduate School is available on Agora. Students can find the guide in Canvas. We are currently working on finding ways to integrate AI use into the assessment of the research project, but as of now this is not included. However, what is of main importance is that the student maintains ownership over their research project and their paper.

Within the research project, concerns regarding data security when using generative AI tools are also relevant to note. All information shared with chatbots such as ChatGPT is automatically stored on the servers of the respective companies, outside of the control of Erasmus MC, Erasmus University or the student themselves. Specifying that the data may not be used for training these models is not guaranteed to prevent this. Therefore, students are not allowed to share data from patients, research participants, students, or employees with a chatbot. Sharing sensitive and/or confidential data with a generative AI model may even be seen as a data leak and could be in violation of laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, or AVG in Dutch).

We advise students to consult with their supervisor and/or other superiors in their research department before using generative AI as a tool in the research project, to safeguard the data security of Erasmus MC, the department and the research project. We urge students to remove all sensitive information, including unpublished research data and other Erasmus MC-specific information, from their texts before using it as input for generative AI.

For more information on the safe usage of generative AI, check out the University Library webpage on the topic.

Roles

Throughout their programme and research project, students are supported and supervised by a number of people who each take on a different role. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the tasks and responsibilities for each role.

Supervisor

The supervisor is the main support for our students during their research project. Students perform their research project at the department of the supervisor and work together with them and other colleagues at the department to bring their project to a successful ending.

The supervisor is the main point of contact for the student, as well as their primary assessor. They provide the student with adequate and useful feedback throughout their project, and help the student learn and grow.

Although the main supervisor carries the final responsibility for the student and the assessment of their work, it is possible to assign a junior (or daily) supervisor who is more involved in the day-to-day supervision of the student. This junior supervisor does not have to meet the requirements that are set for the main supervisor (see chapter 'Select supervisor'), as long as the junior supervisor works under the supervision of the main supervisor.

The guide for supervisors, with further information on their role and duties, is available via our website.

Second assessor

After submitting their research proposal, students are assigned a second assessor who provides them with feedback on each component of their research project. This is done from a distance – the second assessor is not involved with the research project itself. Second assessors are assigned by the Associate Programme Director of the student's major based on the student's research topic, and are chosen from a pre-compiled list of possible second assessors.

The main task of the second assessor is to provide objective feedback and to ensure the research is of sufficient epidemiological nature. The research paper, along with the content of the rest of the programme allows our students to register a Epidemioloog A with the Dutch Association for Epidemiology (VvE). It is therefore important that the second assessor holds a VvE registration (either A or B).

Associate Programme Director

Each of the different majors in our programme has their own Associate Programme Director (APD).

1. **10-minute meetings:** During the first semester of their programme, each student meets with the APD of the major they have expressed interest in when applying for the programme. In this short meeting, the student and the APD discuss the student's

research interests. Based on this, the APD proposes a number of possible suitable supervisors for the student's research project. In the case of students in the Clinical Research programme or major, the APD matches the student with one of the advisors from the Clinical Research Advisory Board who will in turn help them find a suitable supervisor.

2. **Examiner:** The APD also plays an important role in the final stretch of the research project, as the APD acts as examiner for the research project. It is a requirement that all assessment in our programme falls under the responsibility of an examiner appointed by the Examination Board. This role is performed by the APD for two reasons: firstly, there are a number of requirements that examiners need to meet, which not all supervisors meet. Secondly, by being examiner for a larger number of students, the APD can get a better indication of the fairness and quality of the assessment made by the assessors.

Advisor (Clinical Research only)

One of the major differences between the Health Sciences and Clinical Research programmes, is that research performed by Clinical Research students often takes place in the clinic. To ensure that these students still have enough support in their research project, they are each assigned an advisor. These advisors are members of the Clinical Research Advisory Board, made up of clinicians who are also highly experienced researchers.

The advisors provide secondary support during the research project, and act as second assessor for their students. Students in the Clinical Research programme are required to meet with their advisor a number of times over the course of their research project.

The guide for advisors, with further information on their role and duties, is available via our website.

Student

Of course, the main role in the research project is held by the student themselves. The research project is their work, and it is therefore important to note that the student carries responsibility for this project and their functioning within the project as well.

It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of what is required of them, including corresponding deadlines. The student is also responsible for proper communication between all parties involved, as well as for organizing timely meetings with their supervisor and, if applicable, advisor.

Information on the requirements for their research project is provided to students via Canvas. If anything is unclear or the student runs into any issues, they should contact Team Graduate School via STiP.