Quick Guide for Supervisors of Master Research Projects of the Graduate School of Life Sciences (GSLS)

The main part of the training of Master's students within the Graduate School of Life Sciences (GSLS) at Utrecht University (UU) consists of one or two research projects. The Graduate School of Life Sciences maintains a high standard of education. With many research projects being supervised both inside and outside the UU and UMC Utrecht, the uniform assessment of these projects is a major challenge. Although the majority of the non-UU/UMCU projects are carried out at renowned and excellent research groups, each institute / country has its own standards when it comes to assessing student research projects. In order to ensure a uniform and high standard of education, including assessment, we hereby provide a guideline for supervision and assessment of the research projects performed by GSLS students.

Supervision terminology and responsibilities

The student:
- is responsible for choosing a topic and finding a suitable research group and examiner;
- has to apply for approval from the Board of Examiners before starting the project;
- has to adhere to the rules of scientific integrity;
- has to finish the project on the agreed end date or takes the appropriate action in case of delay;
- has to stay in contact with his/her examiner and if applicable daily or host supervisor;
- is responsible for seeking help when problems (either professional or personal) arise.

The examiner:
- is responsible for the overall quality and academic level, and all aspects of assessment (including the final grading) of the project;
- In case of a project <u>inside</u> UU/UMCU, the UU/UMCU examiner will grade the research skills, written report and final presentation and (s)he determines the final mark in close consultation with the daily supervisor and the second reviewer.
- In case of a project <u>outside</u> UU/UMCU, the UU/UMCU examiner will grade the written report and final presentation[1] and (s)he determines the final mark in close consultation with the supervisor host institute. We ask you to stay in touch with the student every two months.
- An examiner can only assess maximum two of the following components: writing assignment, major research project and minor research project or business internship.
- is affiliated to Utrecht University or UMC Utrecht as a full, associate (UHD) or assistant (UD) professor with a tenured position. Professors on a UU/UMCU special chair (*bijzonder hoogleraar*), but in daily life affiliated to a non-UU/UMCU institute, can also act as examiner.
- Post-docs, PhD candidates, and professors not affiliated to UU / UMCU **cannot** act as examiner.

The daily supervisor:
- is responsible for the daily supervision of the student during his/her project;
- works at the institute where the project is carried out;
- does not grade the research skills, written report and presentation him/herself, but will advise the examiner on the grades;
- must be sufficiently capable of supervising an MSc student. If the daily supervisor is still rather junior (e.g. PhD candidate or postdoc) (s)he must be supported by a senior scientist (e.g. his/her own supervisor).

The host institute supervisor (in case of a project outside UU/UMCU):
- is responsible for the (daily) supervision of the MSc student during his/her project;
- works at the institute where the project is carried out;
- grades the research skills, written report and presentation;

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[1] *In case of a research project <u>outside</u> UU/UMCU the final oral presentation should therefore be given both at the host institute and in the group of the UU/UMCU examiner.*

- must be sufficiently capable of supervising a MSc student. If the (daily) supervisor at the host institute is still rather junior (e.g. PhD candidate or postdoc) (s)he must be supported by a senior scientist / staff member (e.g. his/her own supervisor).

The second reviewer:
- should only be appointed for projects <u>inside</u> UU/UMCU. The second reviewer evaluates the research report and final oral presentation;
- is a senior scientist (not a PhD candidate or postdoc) who is **not** directly involved in the research performed. Ideally, a second reviewer is a staff member from a different group than the examiner.

Duration of the project and extension
- The <u>duration</u> of a major research project is 36 weeks and for a minor research project 23 weeks. <u>This includes writing the report and preparing the final presentation</u>.
- During their project students might do courses or take days off. The final presentation and the final written report must be delivered on the end date of the project (as agreed on the general application form) or within a maximum of 12 months after the start of the project for a major research project or within 9 months for minor research projects.
- The student should apply for an extension (6, 9 or 12 credits) before the start of his/her project. This can be pointed out on the application form.
- After the project has already started, it can only be extended with the elective component as an exception after a formal request to the Board of Examiners.

Contents of the project
- A research project consists of several key stages: drawing up a timetable, reviewing literature, drawing up a research plan, carrying out experiments / collecting data, data analysis, writing the report and presenting orally.
- Participation in group meetings and other group activities are part of the project.
- Reports should be written in English and contain a summary specifically aimed at informing the general audience about the content of the project (laymen's summary – in Dutch or English, 500 words, the target audience is able to understand Biology at high school level).
- All students have to present their work orally (in English) to the research group of their examiner at Utrecht University / UMCU (and, if applicable, also at the external host institute).
- *For more information about the content of the research projects please read chapter 4 of the* <u>*Master Research Project Guide for supervisors*</u>.

Interim assessment (feedback during the project)
- A <u>mandatory evaluation</u> meeting between student and examiner, and preferably also the daily supervisor, should take place two or three months after the start of the project.
- During the evaluation meetings the student receives feedback on his/her work, progress and performance. We strongly advise you to use <u>rubric about research skills</u> as a tool to discuss the applicable strong points and points of improvement of the student.
- Afterwards the student has to either hand in the highlighted rubric or write a short report (½ A4) summarizing the meeting. Alternatively, (s)he can use <u>this form</u> to write his/her report.
- In case of a project <u>outside</u> UU/UMCU the interim assessment meeting is between the supervisor host institute and the student. The examiner must be informed about the outcome of this meeting (e.g. by sending a copy of the signed report or rubric via e-mail).- If the project is registered via Osiris Case (*Osiris Zaak* in Dutch), the student must upload the mandatory interim assessment form in Osiris Zaak, after which the examiner will be automatically requested to approve the submitted document.
- *For more information about the supervision of the research projects please read chapter 5 of the* <u>*Master Research Project Guide for supervisors*</u>.

Fraud and plagiarism

Fraud or plagiarism is absolutely not allowed and will be dealt with as described in the Education-and Examination Regulations. The examiner:

- has the responsibility to ensure that no fraud or plagiarism took place. When you find or suspect that your student is committing fraud or is plagiarizing during his/her project, this must be reported to the Board of Examiners (BoE). You are invited to contact the BoE first for advice: more information on how to deal with plagiarism or fraud.
- must check the final research reports for plagiarism using Ephorus, or an alternative comparable plagiarism checker.
- When the reported percentage of plagiarism in Ephorus is >10%, but there is no case of plagiarism, a motivation written by the examiner explaining this should accompany the assessment form.

Grading

At the end of the project, the student is expected to have met the learning outcomes. In order to assess whether the student has achieved these learning outcomes we strongly advise you to use the rubrics for research skills (60% of final grade), report (30%) and presentation (10%). All three elements have to be awarded at least a 5,5 in order for the student to pass the final examination of the project.

- In case of an project <u>inside</u> UU/UMCU, the assessment is performed by the examiner in close consultation with the daily supervisor and a second, independent reviewer (see 'Supervision terminology and responsibilities').
- In case of a project <u>outside</u> UU/UMCU, the supervisor host institute[2] grades all three components. The examiner and supervisor host institute should contact each other in order to make sure that the assessment of all components are performed according to the guidelines of the GSLS-UU.
  - First, the supervisor host institute determines the grades according to his/her own marking system (e.g. Anglo/Saxon marking (F-A$^+$)).
  - Next, the supervisor host institute consults the UU/UMCU examiner. The examiner converts the grade according to the Dutch marking system. The conversion table is available here.

If the examiners and second reviewers or host supervisors marks differ by 2 or more points, the Board of Examiners should be notified by the examiner.

In order to meet the *cum laude* requirements a student should receive a 8.5 or higher for his/her project.

Procedure to complete the assessment

In case of assessment in Osiris Case/Zaak please read the instructions below

- The examiner and second reviewer must complete the assessment within 10 working days after the student has handed in his/her (final) report and gave his/her oral presentation.
- To make sure there are no delays, make agreements with your student beforehand about the dates for handing in his/her final report / presentation.
- It is the examiner's responsibility to deliver a scan of the assessment form and all other required documents to the Master's Administration Office as soon as possible.
- The assessment procedure for a project:
  - the student downloads the assessment form from the study guide;
  - In case of a project <u>inside</u> UU/UMCU, the examiner performs the assessment in close consultation with the daily supervisor and a second, independent review in case of an project <u>inside</u> UU/UMCU;
  - In case of a project <u>outside</u> UU/UMCU, the supervisor host institute grades the assignment first. The examiner contacts the supervisor host institute in order to make sure that the assessment of all components are performed according to the guidelines of the GSLS-UU.
  - the examiner fills in his/her own grade and signs the assessment form, after ensuring the grade of the second reviewer or supervisor host institute are correct.
  - The examiner signs the form and sends the following to the to the Master's Administration Office, Master's programme coordinator and the student:

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[2] *If the supervisor host institute is still rather junior (PhD candidate or postdoc), (s)he must be supported by a senior scientist (e.g. his/her own supervisor).*

- ▪ The assessment form
        - ▪ the written motivation for the final grade (e.g. all three rubrics) and
        - ▪ the summary of (Ephorus) plagiarism check (< 10%)
    - o The student sends a PDF of the final report (including laymen's summary) to the Master's Administration Office.
- When the Master's Administration Office has received both the assessment forms from the examiner and the final report from the student, the result will be registered in Osiris.

Osiris Zaak
- If the project is registered via Osiris Zaak, the examiner must submit the assessment digitally in Osiris Zaak within 10 working days after the student has handed in his/her (final) report and gave his/her oral presentation. In this case, it is not necessary to download and fill in an assessment form on paper.
- The assessment procedure for a project that is registered via Osiris Zaak:
    - o In case of a project inside UU/UMCU, the examiner performs the assessment in close consultation with the daily supervisor and a second, independent review in case of an project inside UU/UMCU.
    - o In case of a project outside UU/UMCU, the examiner contacts the supervisor host institute to be informed about his/her grading and to make sure that the assessment of all components are performed according to the guidelines of the GSLS-UU. The examiner is responsible for submitting the grades from both the supervisor host institute and him/herself in Osiris Zaak.
    - o The student will be requested to upload his/her report in Osiris Zaak after the examiner has submitted the assessment. After uploading the report, the Master's administration will be notified to finalize the results.

Problems or questions and further information
In case of any problems or questions, contact the programme coordinator first, or otherwise the academic counsellor or research project coordinator. Students can also be referred to the study guide page about guidance and counselling.

All official regulations of the GSLS are recorded in the Education and Examination Regulations, the Rules and Regulations and the Student's Charter and all other relevant documents and forms, can be found here.