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**Advice Education Committee Research Masters
TOE and Visitation master programs**

Topic

TOE and Visitation of research master programs

Submitted by ECRM members

ECRM board 2018-2019

Date final advice

[Click here to enter a date.](#)

Date ECRM meeting

21-03-2019, 16-05-2019

Topic area

- New policy or new educational component
- Revision of policy or educational component
- Topic of annual planning ECRM from PDCA cycle
- Topic of annual planning ECRM put on the agenda by ECRM member
- Other: [Click here to enter text.](#)

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Advice Education Committee Research Masters Site visits Master programs

Contents of advice

1. Question/issue leading up to the advice

In the current academic year, all research masters have had a TOE visitation. Unfortunately, these visitations did not all run smoothly. The Education Committee has been made aware of some of the difficulties that arose during these visitations. Given the extent of the difficulties, the EC discussed this matter during their meetings.

A quick overview of the problems is given below.

1. Scheduling of all visitations was difficult. Some were rescheduled multiple times or scheduling was not ideal given the academic calendar.
2. EC representation and obligations differed per visitation and per program.
3. Deadlines for documents from institutions, teachers and students were not upheld or communicated correctly.
4. Documents were not available or forwarded to the parties needing the documents for their part in the process.
5. Communication between all involved parties was far from ideal i.e., some parties were told they would get a visitation invite, but didn't, while some parties were invited on multiple occasions.

To give an example of the problems occurring during the visitations, a detailed report on the I&I visitation can be found in the attachment to this advice.

Given the long list of problems that occurred during the visitations, the EC advises a reorganization of the TOE visitation process.

Reason for advice

An advice for improvement of future visitations was requested on January 17th, 2019.

2. Advice

Adjusted and agreed upon on ECRM meetings

Thursday, January 17th, 2019 and Thursday, March 21st and finalized on Thursday May 16th. 2019

It has become clear to the Education Committee that the organizational structure of the TOE and TOE visitations should be revised. The goal of the visitations is to evaluate and improve the quality of the master program in question in order to prepare the master for NVAO re-accreditation in three years. However, evaluation can only be efficiently performed when the process used to evaluate the program is of quality itself. In this respect, the current lack of consistency of the TOE visitation process leads the EC to feel that there exists the possibility of the master program not meeting the standards required for re-accreditation, simply due to the inconsistency in the TOE visitation process itself.

Therefore, the Education Committee advises the establishment of an organizational structure to coordinate future TOE visitations for all research masters.

Main advice

The Education Committee advises a revision of the organization of site visits. For future site visits, the following points should be made clear in advance of the visit:

1. Planning and deadlines must be clear and made available at an early stage, at least a year in advance. The Program Director and Secretary should also be made aware of these visitation plans before the agreed deadlines.
2. Organization of the TOE and the visitation process itself should ideally begin at least 12 months before the visitation. Additionally, a list of candidates of student- and teacher-participants should be drawn up within the first month of organizing activities i.e., before month 5 of the visitation.
3. At the beginning of the TOE, a kickoff meeting should be organized for all parties involved. The goal of this meeting is to align expectations and make agreements on the visitation process.
4. It is desirable to have a detailed document available during the kickoff meeting that describes the visitation process, its steps and the responsibilities of all parties involved. Quality advisors on the visitations are responsible for the organization of this meeting and for providing all involved with the correct documents.

3. Conclusion – Core Advice.

Given the problems that occurred during the previous round of master program visitations, the Education Committee recommends a revision of TOE organization and visitation processes. This new structure should be mandatory for all EMC research masters. The Education Committee recommends to use EUR guidelines and documents for these visitations as a guideline for the new structure.

4. Request for reply.

In this advice, the Education Committee has proposed clear, structural building blocks for such changes. The Education Committee therefore kindly requests a reply from the Educational Director regarding the advice provided in this letter, including the steps to be taken to ensure its implementation. Additionally, the Education Committee requests to be kept regularly informed during the decision-making process.

Attachment

Detailed report on earlier mentioned difficulties for the I&I visitation.

Attachment

Detailed report on the I&I Visitation difficulties stating the different views on the organization of two parties involved.

Some organizational issues were experienced regarding the site visit for the MSc Infection & Immunity program.

Firstly, information over the requirements during the visitation was either lacking or became available too late for those involved to use as agreed beforehand. Additionally, there were some communication difficulties between the organizing parties and students. On both accounts, students and the organizing team had different stories on the matter at hand. Details on the lack of information:

- The students writing text for the 'Student Chapter' did not receive the 'Teacher-Chapter' section, even though the student chapter was supposed to be written as a reaction to this 'Teacher Chapter'. Students asked for these documents' multiple times, but did not receive a response. Later on, they were made aware that the teacher chapter was available for the organization on time, but not send to the students.
- The organizing team admitted that students did not receive the required 'Teacher-Chapter'. However, it was the institutional document that wasn't available until two weeks before the actual, last planned site-visit, which had been rescheduled multiple times. This was the document needed to react upon.

Secondly, there was a series of communicational difficulties:

- Students who were invited to write the 'Student Chapter', had been told that they would be invited to the site visit. However, these students did not actually receive an invitation to attend the site visit. Furthermore, despite trying to contact the organizing team on several occasions, they did not receive any reply to their email request.
- The organizing team eventually reacted after the site visit by stating that the students writing the chapter were indeed invited to the site visit, but that the site visit was rescheduled two times and some of the invited students could not attend due to the fact that the students had already graduated when the site-visit eventually took place. According to the organizational team, most students did send a response to the invitation.
- One student was invited to the site visit who had not been invited to contribute to the writing of the 'Student Chapter'. The name of this student had only been brought to the attention of the organizing team after the 'Student-Chapter' had already been written.

Finally, it was explained to the education committee that during the organization of the TOE and subsequent visitation, not all necessary parties of the master program were fully involved. Therefore, arranging both has been a difficult process from start to finish, i.e. the institutional documents were written too late and the visitation was rescheduled two times.