

On the role of *second readers* in the Joint Master

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Master thesis projects in the Joint Master in Sustainable Development are being supervised by a main supervisor from the student's entrance university. In addition to the main supervisor, there is also a *second reader*. The *second reader* needs to be affiliated with one of the partner universities (including non-degree-awarding universities) and hold a relevant doctoral degree. The common practice is that students nominate a second reader from their mobility university, i.e. the university at which he/she completed the specialization track. When no second reader is available at the mobility university, staff at other universities may be approached after consulting the academic coordinator at the entrance university. The additional assessment provided by this second reader serves as a quality assurance measure within the consortium.

Depending on the entrance university, the role of the second reader is defined in different ways. This document describes what is expected from the second reader by each of the degree awarding universities.

University of Graz

At University of Graz, students are asked to nominate a *second reader* when submitting their thesis proposal. For various reasons (e.g. direction of the thesis changes, intended reviewer becomes unavailable), students may also nominate a second reader later in the process, but not later than at the time of submitting the thesis. The timeline for master thesis projects is individual, and there are no institutional deadlines.

The second reader may comment on the research proposal, but technically is only required to provide an assessment of the thesis. (Co-)supervision of the thesis is not expected, but an option, if agreed so with the main supervisor and the student.

A PDF version of the thesis is sent to the second reader by the study office together with a request to grade the thesis according to the Austrian grading system (1 – excellent, 2 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 4 – weak but sufficient, 5 – fail) and to explain the grading in written form. There is no special format required, but templates can be provided upon request. The final grade of the thesis is the average of both assessments (without digits).

The assessment should be sent back to the study office via mail within a maximum of eight weeks; faster submissions are appreciated as the students only can plan their final examination after the assessments of main supervisor and second reader are in.

As all communication is done via email, second readers are requested to use their institutional mail address for sending their assessment.

Leipzig University

In Leipzig, the *second reader* serves as independent reviewer and is not expected to supervise the thesis actively.

For students with home university Leipzig

The choice of the *second reader* should be guided by the thematic and/or methodological competences. The second reader may comment on the research proposal, but technically is only required to provide an assessment of the thesis. (Co-)supervision of the thesis is not expected, but an option.

Students have to provide the name of a confirmed second reader in order to register their thesis. Once the registration is completed, students have 23 weeks to hand in their thesis. The second reader receives a print version of the thesis with explanations about the required grading process. He has 6 to 8 weeks to grade the thesis according to his own university's assessment criteria, template and grading systems. The assessment should be sent directly to the examination office, ideally in original.

The grade will then be converted according to the grade conversion tables of the cooperation contract. The final grade of the thesis is the average of both assessments. There is no presentation.

For students with home university others than Leipzig

Students from the program can look for a second reader in Leipzig, whether or not they have spent their mobility in Leipzig, as long as expertise for the chosen topic is available. In particular for students, who have never been in Leipzig, we recommend to send the research proposal to the student's advisor of the program under sustainable@uni-leipzig.de for guidance and support. Accredited readers include any professors, most lecturers of the JIMSD Program, and most post-docs researchers.

Utrecht University

At Utrecht University the *second reader* serves as an independent reviewer and does not offer any form of formal supervision. They are selected by the supervisor in consultation with the student based on their expertise on the topic. The main tasks of the second reader are to comment and approve of the thesis proposal, and to assess the thesis after submission (in consultation with the supervisor).

A pdf version of the proposal and the thesis is sent to the second reader by the study office. The *second reader* is given two weeks-time to evaluate the proposal with one of the three options: approved, revisions, or rejected. The *second reader* is given three weeks-time to evaluate the final thesis and give a grade from 1 to 10. The thesis grade is submitted after the oral presentation takes place which is also evaluated with a grade from 1 to 10. For all these steps all supervisors and second readers use specific rubrics which can be accessed by the students for their information.

As all communication is done via email, second readers are requested to use their institutional mail address for sending their assessment.

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

At Ca' Foscari students work to the final thesis under the supervision of a first reader (supervisor or relatore) and eventually of a co-supervisor (correlatore). The thesis defense takes place with a committee which includes the relatore, the correlatore (if present) and at least two further professors of the Department of Environmental Sciences, Informatics and Statistics (controrelatori).

For Double Degree candidates the committee will be enlarged by one further professor (*second reader*), selected from the University of the mandatory mobility. The *second reader* will either take part to the final examination via ICT, or in presence, or with a short written evaluation of the thesis.

The committee will jointly assess the quality of the thesis and propose a final grade which is based on the candidate's grades, plus zero to eight points for the dissertation. Further details may be found at the following website: <https://www.unive.it/pag/11105/>.

Academic Coordinators

For queries, please get in contact with the responsible academic coordinator:

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<https://www.jointdegree.eu/de/sustainable-development/contacts/>