

EORTC protocol submission, selection and development procedures

POL016

Version 2.0

(Always refer to the Internet to check the validity of this document)

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Distribution

Everybody

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Table of contents

1.	OBJECTIVES	4
2.	RESPONSIBILITIES	4
3.	PROCEDURES	5
3.1.	Overview	5
3.2.	Submission of study proposals	5
3.3.	Scientific review	5
3.4.	Assesment of the practical feasibility	6
3.5.	Study processing	7
3.6.	Development of full protocols	7
3.7.	Full protocol approval	7
3.8.	Protocol amendments	8
3.9.	Summary	8
4.	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	9

1. Objectives

The present policy describes the procedure implemented by the EORTC Board to select studies that will be supported by EORTC.

Studies supported by the EORTC will be allowed to carry the EORTC label and will be allocated EORTC resources for protocol development and implementation, data management and analysis. In general, the EORTC will be the legal sponsor of those studies. However, when the study is carried out with external partners, EORTC may delegate sponsorship to one of those partners.

The present policy focuses on the role of the different EORTC Committees in the selection process, on the criteria used at its different levels, as well as on the appropriate ways for submitting study proposals to EORTC and for developing them into full protocols, with the goal to minimize the delay until trial activation.

2. Responsibilities

The EORTC Group will appoint a Study Coordinator for each proposed study.

The Study Coordinator will submit the study outline to EORTC and, if accepted, develop the full protocol in cooperation with a designated Data Center team.

The EORTC Data Center will assess the practical feasibility of all proposed studies at the time of outline submission and estimate the EORTC resources to be allocated to the study. *The Data Center team* will help the Study Coordinator to develop the outline and the full protocol if the outline is selected.

The Protocol Review Committee (PRC) will review all proposed studies (on the basis of the submitted outline), assess their scientific value and grade their originality, interest, methodology and feasibility.

The New Drug Advisory Committee (NDAC) will advise the EORTC Groups and the PRC for EORTC participation to new drug development programs in cooperation with industrial partners.

The Translational Research Advisory Committee (TRAC) will advise the EORTC Groups and the PRC for implementation of translational research projects in EORTC clinical trials.

The EORTC board is responsible for the final selection of studies to be supported by EORTC, on the basis of their PRC scientific evaluation, their practical feasibility, the EORTC resources necessary to the conduct the study, and the track record of the EORTC Group.

The Data Center Protocol Help Desk (PHD) Administrator will assist the Study Coordinator and the Data Center team to assemble the full protocol (after approval of the outline) according to a standard procedure.

3. Procedures

3.1. Overview

Studies are proposed by EORTC Groups, according to procedures described hereunder. The Group appoints a Study Coordinator, who will take in charge the submission, development and conduct of the study.

The scientific value of each study will be evaluated by an independent committee of experts appointed by EORTC: the Protocol Review Committee (PRC) (see 3.3).

The practical feasibility of the study will be evaluated by the EORTC Data Center, in parallel with the PRC review (see 3.4).

Studies approved by the PRC, adhering to the EORTC Scientific Strategy, for which no feasibility problems have been identified, and for which Data Centre costs are fully covered by external resources will be automatically selected as soon as the funding are secured. Studies approved by the PRC but with a feasibility or financial problem will be submitted to the EORTC board for discussion (see 3.5.2)

Once approved for full protocol development, study proposals will be jointly developed by the EORTC Group and the EORTC Data Center into a study protocol compliant with EORTC Policies and EORTC Data Center Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

3.2. Submission of study proposals

For each study proposed by an EORTC Group, an outline should be submitted to the EORTC, via the Internet outline submission procedure. The outline should specify the classification of the project according to the EORTC Scientific Strategy, as assessed by the Group. The outline should briefly describe and justify the principal parameters of the trial (objectives, principal eligibility criteria, therapeutic interventions, end-points, statistical design, companion studies...) in such a way that the PRC will be able to assess the scientific value of the proposed study. The outline should also identify a Study Coordinator appointed by the EORTC Group(s), and eventual non EORTC partners.

Groups are encouraged to submit the outline as soon as the essential parameters of the study have been discussed and agreed by potential investigators. Submission will be done jointly by the Study Coordinator and the Data Center team. All submitted outlines must be approved by the EORTC Group Chairman.

For studies that contribute to a new drug development project or a Translational Research project, NDAC and/or TRAC will be consulted. The Groups are advised to consult the NDAC or TRAC respectively before the outline submission. Eventual support of the NDAC or of the TRAC should be notified at the time of outline submission.

3.3. Scientific review

All submitted outlines will be reviewed by the PRC.

The PRC will eventually reclassify the study proposal according to the EORTC Scientific Strategy, if there is a disagreement with the classification provided by the Group.

The PRC will grade the following aspects of each proposed study

- ◇ Originality
- ◇ Interest / relevance
- ◇ Methodology
- ◇ Feasibility

Each aspect will be graded as:

- ◇ A: Outstanding
- ◇ B: Good
- ◇ C: Fair
- ◇ D: Poor

The PRC will take one of the following decisions:

- ◇ The study proposal is acceptable (minor comments and suggestions may be issued to improve it)
- ◇ There are major problems, and the outline should be modified and resubmitted
- ◇ The study proposal is rejected

PRC decisions are based on the independent review of the outline by several experts (members of the PRC and external reviewers who have no conflict of interest).

When appropriate, comments of the NDAC and/or the TRAC may be issued and forwarded to the Group as suggestions.

When major comments are issued by the PRC, the Study Coordinator is asked to resubmit an outline incorporating PRC suggestions. If he/she considers them as inappropriate, he/she will be invited to discuss them with all PRC members, either by teleconference, or during a physical meeting: the PRC will subsequently issue its final decision and gradings.

When a study proposal is rejected, the reasons for rejection will be clearly notified to the Study Coordinator, and all members of the PRC will be informed. If the originality or the interested have been graded as “fair” or “poor”, the proposal will automatically be rejected.

The PRC Chairman will inform the Study Coordinator of those decisions in a decision letter. This letter will be forwarded to the EORTC Data Center. Relevant information will also be provided by the PRC secretariat to the EORTC Board for study proposals submitted to the selection process (see 3.5.2).

3.4. Assessment of the practical feasibility

The Data Center team with the director and assistant directors of the Data Center will assess the feasibility of all proposed studies, in terms of:

- ◇ Methodological issues that may compromise the good conduct of the trial
- ◇ Compliance with EORTC Policies and Data Center SOPs
- ◇ Availability of internal resources to develop and manage the study
- ◇ Ressources of the EORTC Group(s) to develop and conduct the trial (countries, centers, expected study accrual based on interest and potential accrual of individual investigators as well as previous experience, issues that may compromise the conduct of the study of other studies conducted by the Group) .
- ◇ Specific practical aspects that may affect the feasibility (regulatory issues, drug supply, intergroup setting, monitoring...)

The Data Center team will simultaneously provide a preliminary estimate of the resources that will be needed to conduct the trial, and of the expected resources that may be available outside of the central EORTC support.

Results of this feasibility assessment will be incorporated to the PRC decision letter.

3.5. Study processing

After PRC approval, the study proposal will be automatically accepted if

- ◇ it adheres to the EORTC Scientific Strategy
- ◇ no potential feasibility problem has been identified
- ◇ all resources needed to develop, implement, conduct and analyse the trial are covered by external funding.

In such case, the protocol development will start immediately (see 3.6). The availability of external funding must be secured on the basis of “letter(s) of intent” from the eventual funder(s). Such trials will not be open to recruitment before the contract securing adequate resources has been signed.

All study proposals approved by the PRC that do not fulfill the conditions set under above will be submitted to the selection process. This process will take place twice a year. The selection committee consists of the members of the EORTC Board. The following information will be provided to the EORTC Board. The final selection of studies will be based on those elements.

- ◇ The classification of the study according to the EORTC Scientific Strategy (according to the Group and according to the PRC)
- ◇ A copy of the final outline as approved by the PRC
- ◇ The final four grades allocated by the PRC
- ◇ The final estimation of the required amount of EORTC resources and information about any financial support being allocated to the study
- ◇ A short report from the Data Center team summarizing the track record of the group in terms of trials portfolio, scientific output, on-going studies supported by EORTC, eventual problems encountered with previous studies....
- ◇ Eventual feasibility problems identified by the EORTC Data Center that are not yet solved

3.6. Development of full protocols

Selected study proposals (as well as fully funded PRC approved proposals) will be developed as full protocols using the EORTC Protocol Help Desk (PHD) procedures. The final document is assembled at the Data Center by the PHD administrator, on the basis of “modules” developed either by the Study Coordinator (and other eventual members of the writing committee) or members of the Data Center. All modules should be developed according to predefined templates and guidelines provide by the PHD.

As soon as the outline is accepted, the Data Center team will select one of its members as “contact person” with the PHD. This person will initiate the protocol development process, harmonize the work of the different contributors, circulate all relevant information, and inform the Group Chairman in case of problems.

3.7. Full protocol approval

Full protocols must be the faithful development of outlines. Significant modifications of the study outline after its approval will need to be approved again by the PRC. If the modifications have an impact on the resources to be allocated by the EORTC, the decision of the EORTC Board to have the study supported by EORTC may be reconsidered.

The first version of the full protocol will be submitted to PRC secretariat to initiate the approval process.

A preliminary review will be performed at the Data Center by internal independent reviewers. The following aspects will be carefully reviewed:

- ◇ Adherence with the approved outline
- ◇ Compliance with EORTC policies and Data Center SOPs
- ◇ Unclarities / inconsistencies that may affect the conduct and/or the management of the study

The outcome of the internal review will be as follows:

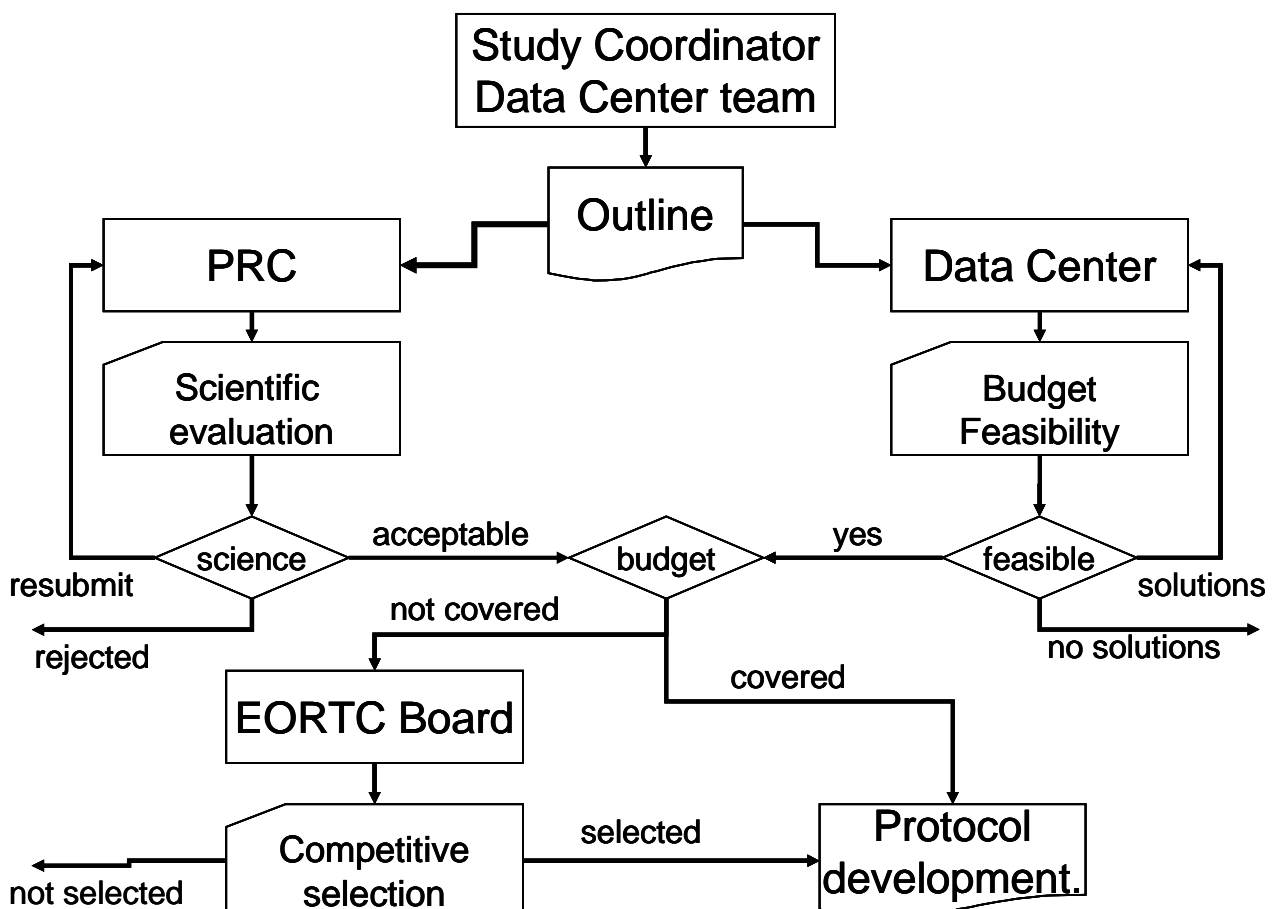
- ◇ there is no problem identified and the protocol is approved;
- ◇ minor problems are identified by the Data Centre reviewers and the protocol will be accepted pending modifications;
- ◇ major discrepancies with the original outline and/or unresolvable problems are identified and the protocol must be resubmitted to the PRC experts.

The data center communicates the result of the internal review to the PRC secretariat. If the protocol is accepted, the Director of the Data Center informs the Study Coordinator. Protocols that need to be resubmitted to PRC experts are sent to the PRC chairman

3.8. Protocol amendments

After the final protocol approval, any modification should be reported to the PRC secretariat, and will be handled as protocol amendments. Substantial amendments will require the approval of the PRC. If the Data Center resources are significantly affected by the amendment, the protocol will need to be reapproved by the EORTC Board.

3.9. Summary



4. List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name
NDAC	New Drug Advisory Committee
PHD	Protocol Help Desk
PRC	Protocol Review Committee
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TRAC	Translational Research Advisory Committee