NUQUEST ROB App — User Manual

Web address: https://rob.nesda.net

> *Open it at the address above. It works in any modern web browser (Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari). You need an internet connection; the app does not work offline.*

Last updated: November 2026. For the NUQUEST ROB app (NESDA) — the public app where each project runs its own risk-of-bias review.

What this app is for

The app is shared by many **projects**. Each project is one review: it has its own studies, its own reviewers, and its own **project admin**. You only ever see the projects you belong to.

This app is where reviewers assess the **risk of bias** of the studies in their project's review, using the **NUQUEST checklist**.

The workflow for each study is:

1. The project admin assigns **two assessors** to the study.
2. Each assessor reads the paper and fills in their own assessment **independently** — they cannot see each other's answers.
3. When **both** have submitted, the **Compare & consolidate** view opens so the two assessors can see where they agreed and where they differed.
4. The assessors discuss the differences (in the app) and record one **consolidated** (agreed) rating for the study.

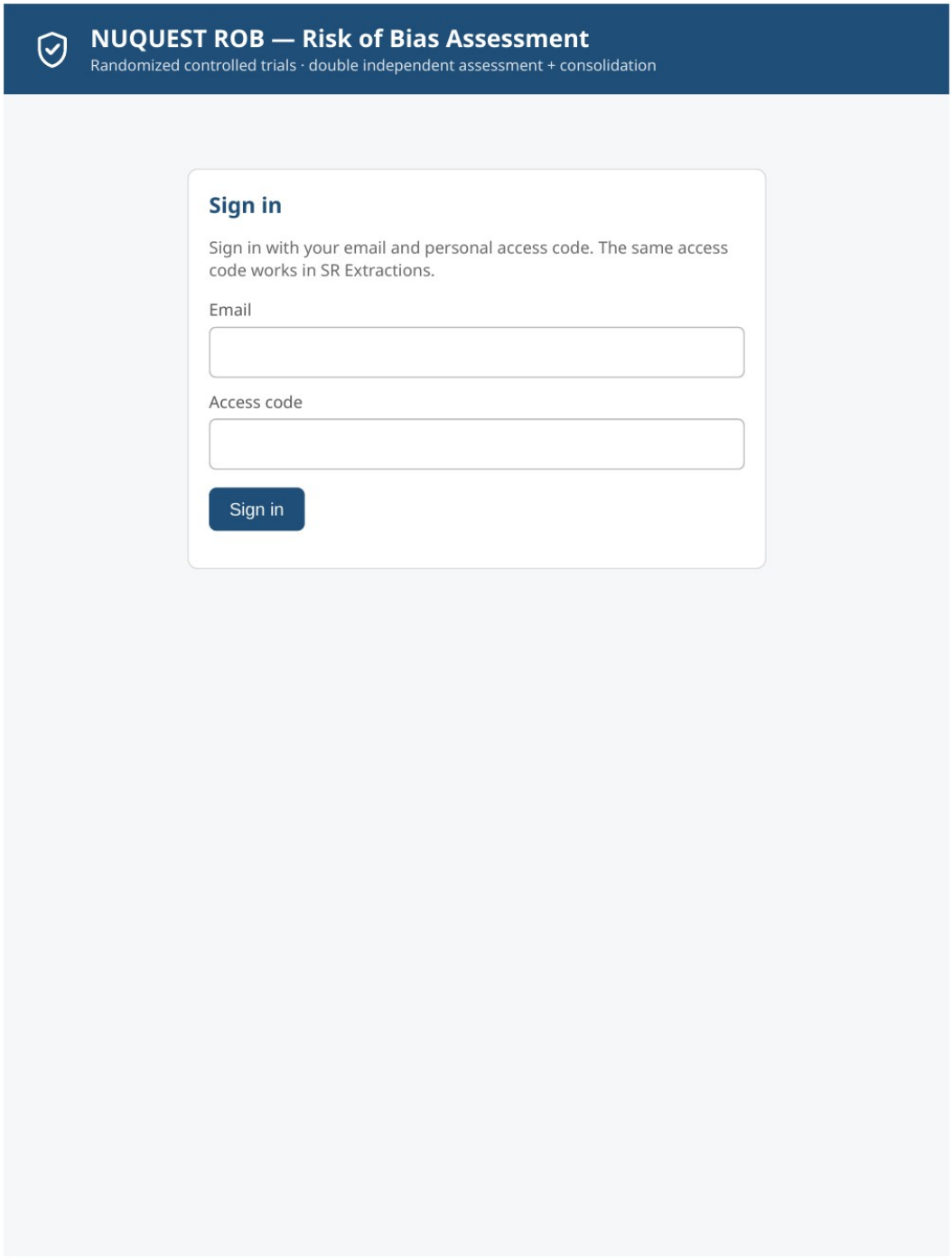
The app does not calculate scores. There are no point totals and no automatic ratings. Each reviewer rates the four domains and the overall study rating by their own judgment: **Good / Neutral / Poor**. The consolidated ratings are agreed the same way.

Who this manual is for

- **Reviewers (assessors)** — you assess studies, compare with your co-assessor, and record the consolidated ratings.
- **Project admins** — you create and run a project: add studies and members, make assignments, watch progress, and export the project's results.

- **App admin (Mei Chung)** — she creates accounts, can see and help in every project, and manages the app.

Signing in



1. Open **https://rob.nesda.net**.

2. Type your **email address**.

3. Type your **access code** — the 8-character code the app admin gave you.

4. Click **Sign in**.

Notes:

- There is **no self sign-up**. Your account was created by the app admin (Mei). If you need an account, contact her.
- Your access code works **only in this app**. It is not the same as a code for the SR Extractions app, and a code from that app will not sign you in here.
- You stay signed in for **7 days** on that browser. After that, sign in again with the same email and code.
- To sign out, click **Sign out** at the top right.
- Your code is personal. Do not share it with anyone else.

If signing in does not work

- The app shows: *"Email or access code is not correct."* Check that you typed your **email exactly** (including spelling) and the **code exactly as given**, including upper- and lower-case letters. The code is 8 characters, letters and digits.
- If you still cannot sign in, ask the app admin. She can **reset your code** and give you a new one. (A reset makes the old code stop working immediately, and signs you out of any open sessions.)

Create your first project

After signing in, if you belong to no project yet, the page says **"No project yet"** and prompts you to create one.

1. Click **New project** in the project picker at the top of the page, or **Create a project** on the empty page.

2. Fill in **Project name** (required), **Research question**, and **Description** (optional), then click **Create project**.

3. You automatically become the project's **ProjectAdmin** — you can add studies and members, assign assessors, and export the project's results.

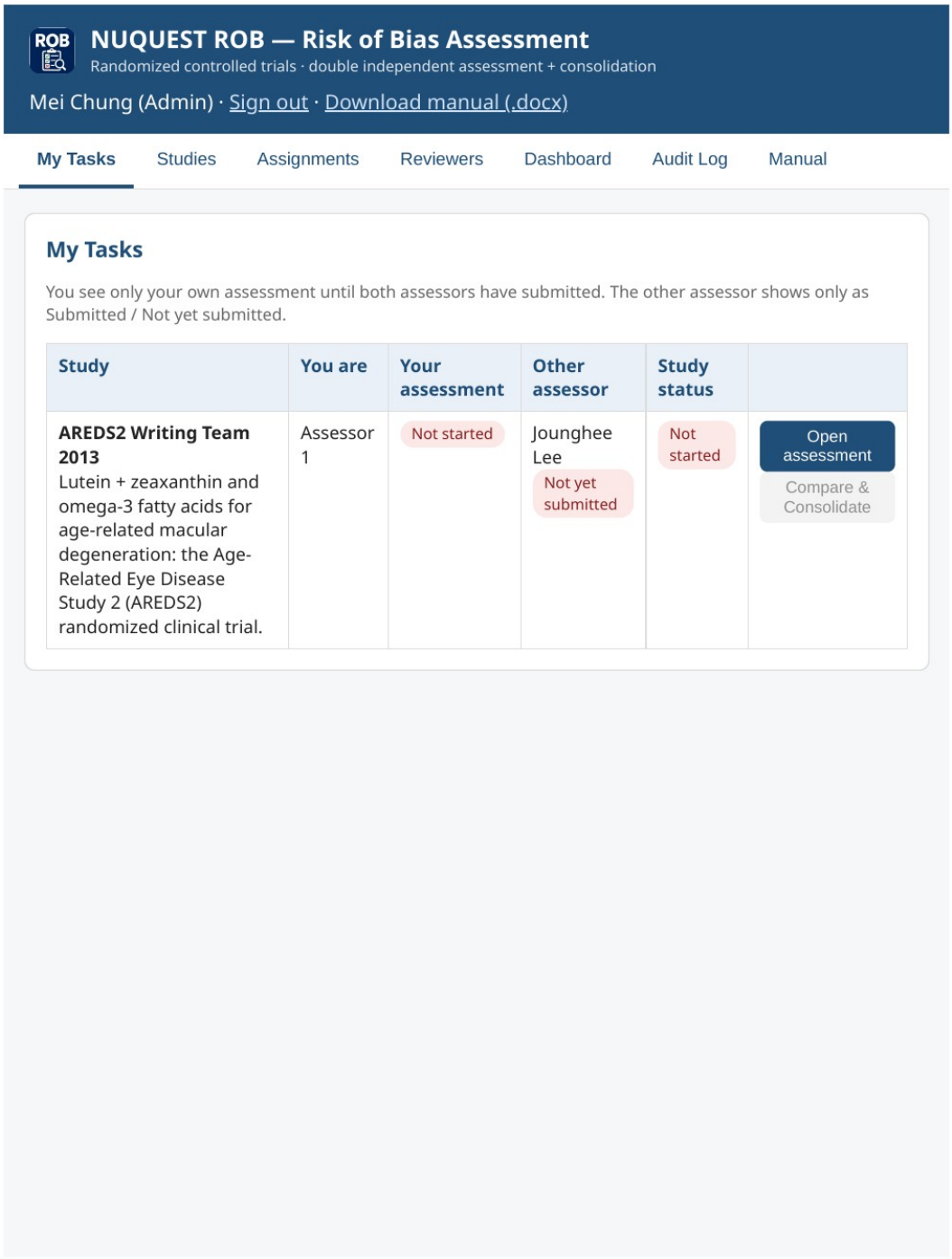
Switching projects: use the **project picker** at the top of the page. It lists every project you belong to. Every tab — My Tasks, Studies, Assignments, Dashboard, Audit Log — shows only the current project.

Notes:

- A project is one review, with its own studies, members, and research question. Other projects cannot see your project's studies.
- Creating a project does **not** create accounts. Only the app admin creates accounts — to add someone to your project, they must already have an account; add them from the **Project** tab (see below).

For reviewers: assessing a study

Step 1 — Open your task

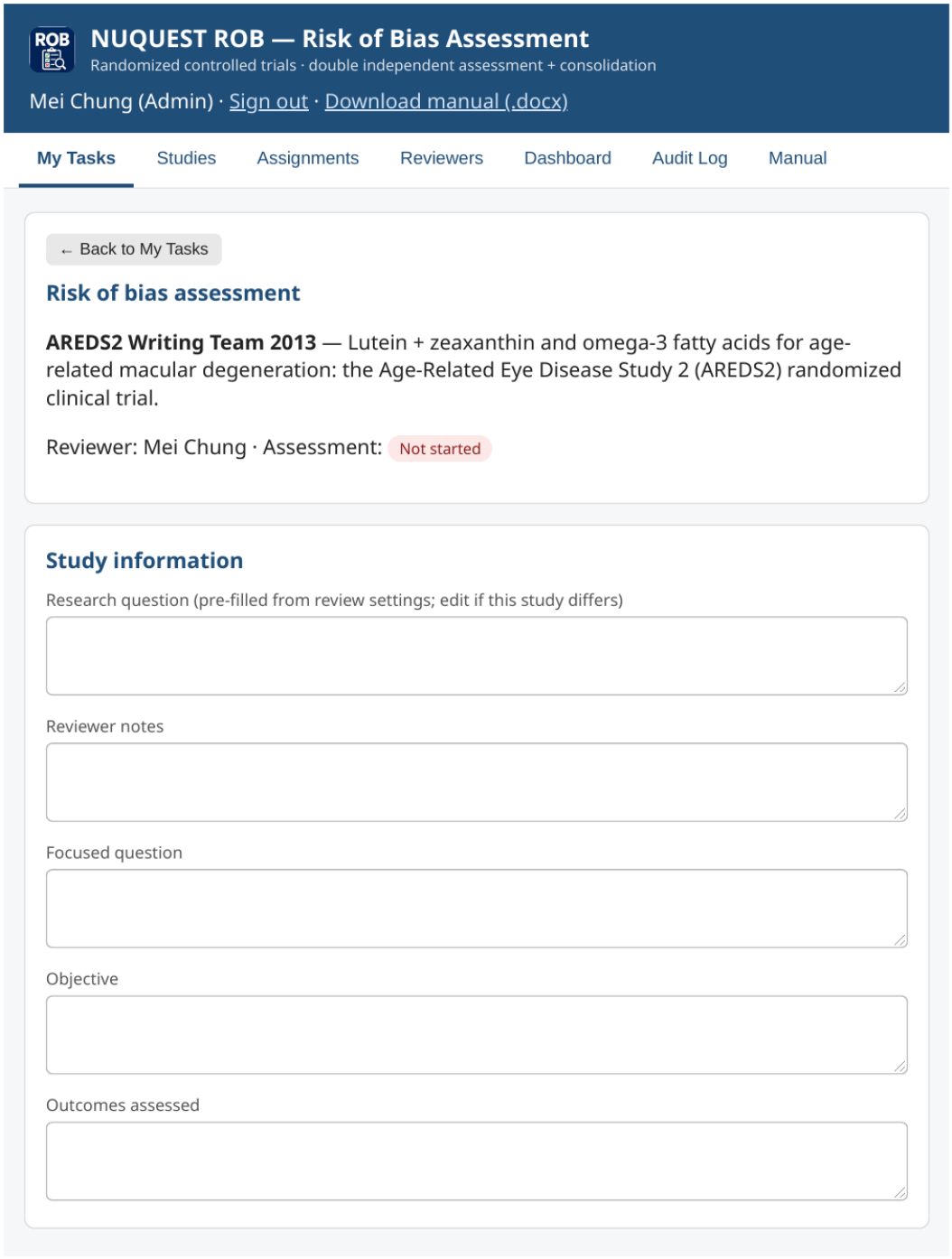


1. After signing in, you land on **My Tasks**. Each row is one study assigned to you. It shows:
    - the study (author, year, title),

- whether you are **Assessor 1** or **Assessor 2**,
- **your** assessment status (Not started / In progress / Submitted),
- the **other assessor** — only as *Submitted* or *Not yet submitted* (never their answers),
- the study's overall status.

2. If you belong to more than one project, use the **project picker** at the top to switch projects — My Tasks shows only the current project's studies.
3. Click **Open assessment** to start or continue your assessment.
4. The **Compare & Consolidate** button stays greyed out until **both** assessors have submitted. It opens the **Compare & consolidate** page at the top; use the **Go to consolidated form ↓** button on that page to jump straight to the form at the bottom.

Step 2 — Fill in the assessment form



The form has three parts.

Study information (top of the form)

- **Research question** — pre-filled from the project's research question. Change it only if this study needs a different wording.
- **Reviewer notes** — free text, for anything you want to record about this assessment.
- **Focused question** — write your answer to "The study under evaluation addresses an appropriate and clearly focused question", using the same answer options as the questions below.
- **Objective** — the objective, aim, or research question of the study, copied from the paper.
- **Outcomes assessed** — the outcomes you are assessing in this study.

The 14 signaling questions

The questions are grouped into four domains:

Domain	Questions
Selection of participants	1.1, 1.2, 1.3
Comparability of study groups	1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8
Ascertainment of outcomes	1.9
Nutrition-specific	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5

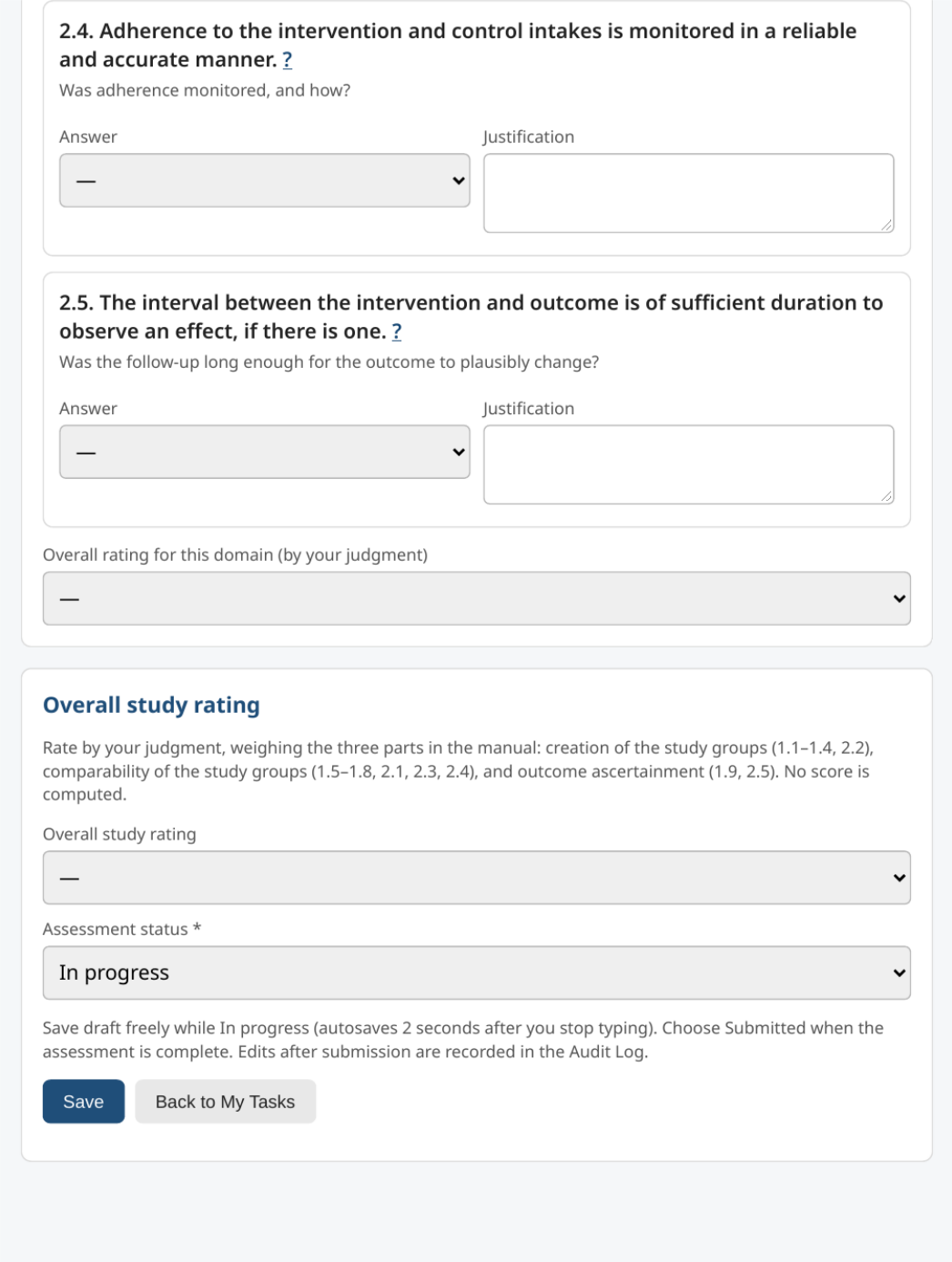
For **each** question:

1. Choose an **Answer** from the dropdown: **Yes / Probably Yes / Probably No / No / Not Applicable**.
    - *Not Applicable* is for questions that do not apply to this study — for example, 1.8 (multi-site results) does not apply to a single-centre trial.
2. Write a **Justification** — a short note, with the evidence from the paper, for why you chose that answer.
3. Click the **?** next to a question to open the matching guidance from the Manual.

Your summary ratings (bottom of the form)

Rate each of the four domains, and the study overall, by your judgment: **Good / Neutral / Poor**. The app does not compute these for you — see the Manual's overall-rating guidance for how to weigh the three parts of the assessment.

Step 3 — Save, and submit when done



1. At the bottom of the form, set **Assessment status**:
   - **In progress** — a draft. Save as often as you like.
   - **Submitted** — the assessment is complete.

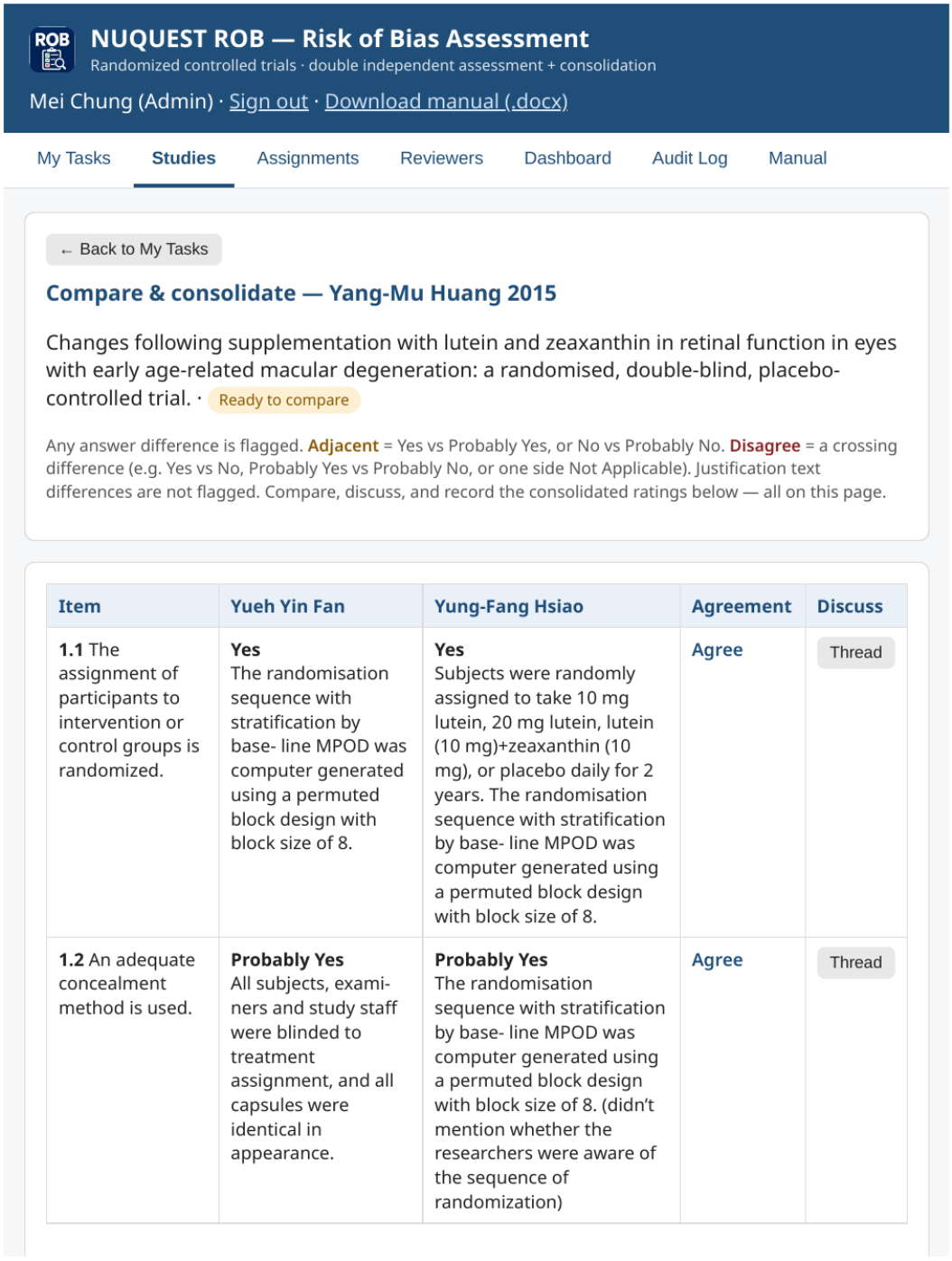
2. Click **Save**.

   - While the status is **In progress**, the form **autosaves 2 seconds after you stop typing**, and a line under the buttons says "Draft saved" with the time. Once you submit, autosave stops.
   - If you try to leave the page with unsaved changes, the browser asks first — choose to stay if you want to keep editing.

3. After you submit, you can still open the form and change it, but every change is recorded in the **Audit Log** (see below), so fix mistakes promptly and deliberately.

   ***Tip:** if the app admin tells you the app was just updated, **reload the page once** before you start editing. A tab opened before an update can still run the old version of the form.*

Step 4 — Compare, discuss, and consolidate, all on one page



The page is called **Compare & consolidate**. It opens only after **both** assessors have submitted. Before that, you cannot see any of your co-assessor's work — that is deliberate (see "What you can and cannot see" below).

From **My Tasks**, click **Compare & Consolidate** on the study. It opens the combined page at the top; use the **Go to consolidated form ↓** button on that page to jump straight to the form at the bottom.

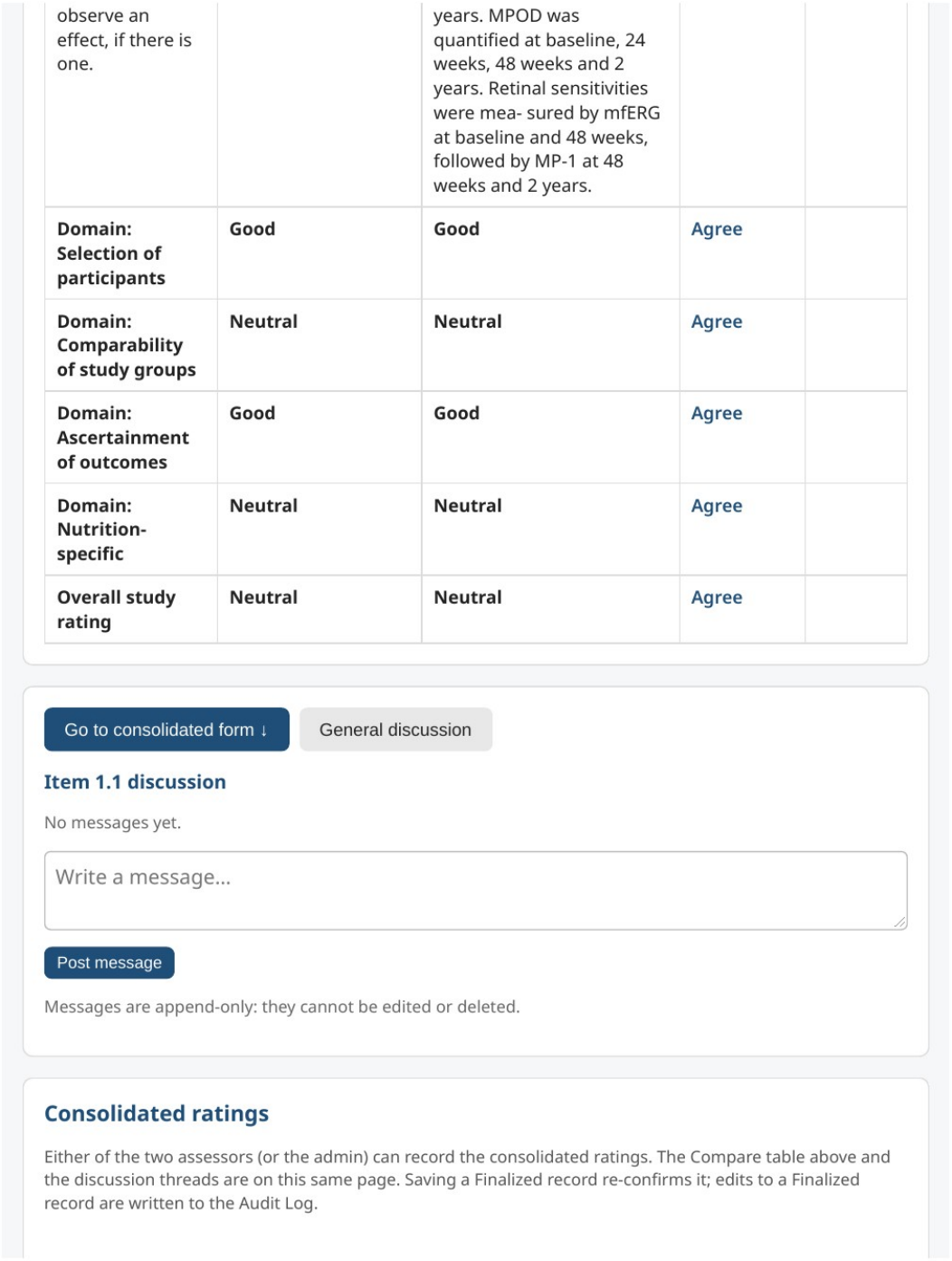
The Compare table (top of the page)

The table shows, for each of the 14 questions, your answer and justification side by side with your co-assessor's, plus the domain and overall ratings.

Each row is flagged:

- **Agree** — you gave the same answer.
- **Disagree (adjacent)** — a small difference, e.g. Yes vs Probably Yes, or No vs Probably No.
- **Disagree** — a larger difference, e.g. Yes vs No, Probably Yes vs Probably No, or one side Not Applicable and the other not.
- Differences in the *wording* of justifications are **not** flagged — only the answers, the domain ratings, and the overall rating are compared.

Discuss (same page)

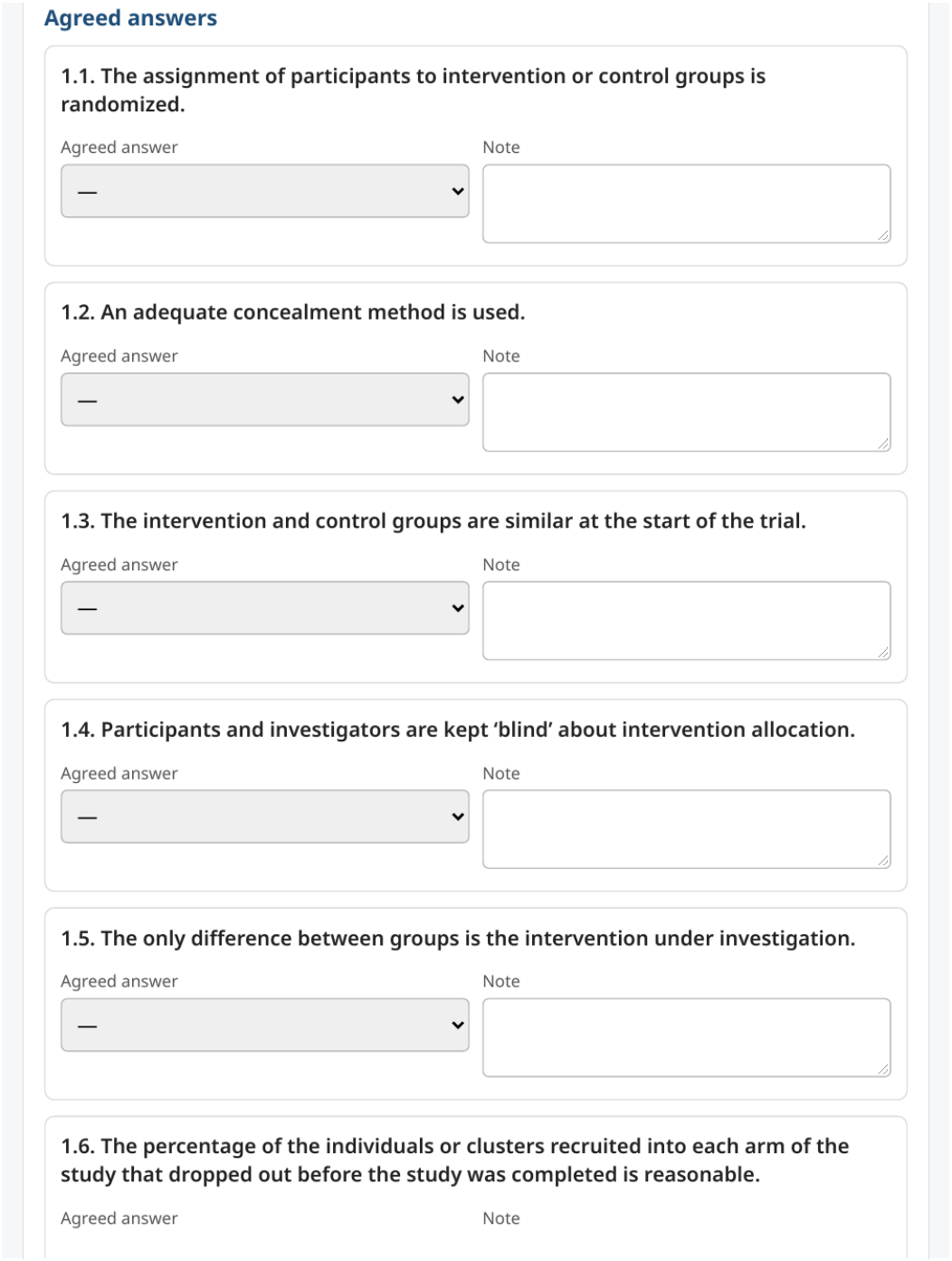


Click **Thread** on any row to open the discussion for that question, or **General discussion** for the study as a whole. The thread opens right on this page, under the table — you never leave the page.

- In a thread, write a message and click **Post message**.

- Messages are **append-only**: they cannot be edited or deleted. The discussion is part of the study's record.
- Discussion threads are visible only after both assessments are submitted, so discussion cannot break the blinding.

The Consolidated ratings form (bottom of the same page)



Scroll down — or click **Go to consolidated form ↓** under the table — to the **Consolidated ratings** form.

1. For each of the 14 questions, enter the **agreed answer** and a **note** — the note matters most where you disagreed, so the reason for the agreed answer is on record.

2. Enter the four **domain ratings** and the **overall study rating** you agreed on (Good / Neutral / Poor, by judgment).

3. Add **consensus notes** if useful (for example, how a disagreement was resolved).

4. Set **Status**:

   - **In discussion** — the consolidated record is still being worked on.
   - **Finalized** — the agreed ratings are final.

5. Click **Save consolidated record**.

Who can do this: **either of the two assessors** can record the consolidated ratings, and the **project admin** (or the app admin) can also record or edit them. The name of the person who saved it is recorded.

If an assessment changes after finalization: the consolidated record is marked **out of date** and the study goes back to "Ready to compare". Review the changes and re-save the consolidated record to re-confirm it. Edits to a Finalized consolidated record are written to the Audit Log.

The Manual

- Click the **Manual** tab at any time to read the full NUQUEST RCT Manual inside the app (19 sections: before you start, the answer definitions, guidance for each question 1.1–2.5, overall-rating guidance, and resources). The manual currently covers the RCT checklist; guidance for cohort and case-control studies will be added if those checklists differ.
- The **?** links in the assessment form jump to the matching section.
- **Download manual (.docx)** at the top of every page downloads the original Word document.

What you can and cannot see (blinding)

	You (assessor)	**Project admin**	**App admin**
Your own assessment	Yes, full	Only if you are also an assessor on the study	Yes, full
Your co-assessor's answers, justifications,	**No** — until both have submitted	**No** — until both have submitted (then on the	Yes

ratings		Compare & consolidate page)	
Your co-assessor's status	Only *Submitted* / *Not yet submitted*	Full status (Assignments tab and study page)	Full status
Compare & consolidate page	Only after both submit	After both submit	After both submit
Discussion threads	Only after both submit	After both submit	After both submit
Consolidated record	Once recorded (read it in the Consolidated ratings section of the Compare & consolidate page)	Yes	Yes
Other studies	Only studies assigned to you	All studies in your projects	All studies in all projects
Reviewers, Dashboard, exports	No — except My exports (your own rows only)	Your projects' Dashboard and exports	Yes, everything

The blinding is enforced by the app itself, not by trust: trying to open another assessor's assessment is refused. One exception: if the **app admin is assigned as an assessor** on a study, she can still see the other assessor's ratings (app admins always can) — her co-assessor's blinding is not affected. A project admin assigned as an assessor **cannot** see the other assessor's ratings before both submit.

For project admins

Projects — create and manage your project

1. Open the **Project** tab for the current project. It shows the project's details, settings, members, and delete.

2. **Settings:** change the **Project name**, **Research question**, and **Description**. The research question pre-fills every new assessment in the project. (The same settings are on the Dashboard, in the **Project settings** card.)

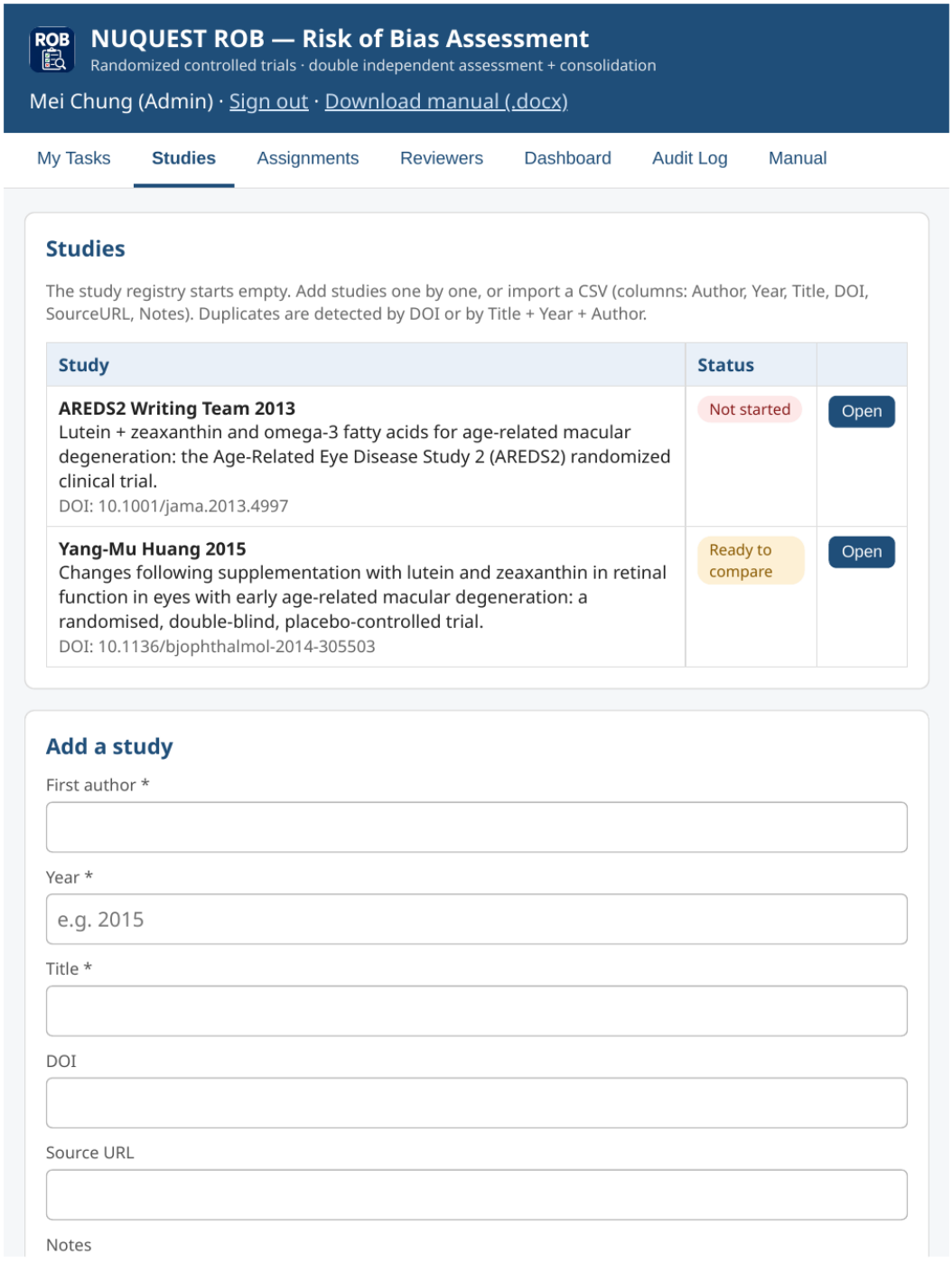
3. **Members:** add people from existing accounts — pick their email from the list and choose their role (**ProjectAdmin** or **Reviewer**).

   - If the person has **no account yet**, ask the app admin to create one first. You cannot create accounts from here.

- **Remove a member:** blocked if they have assignments or assessments in the project, and blocked if they are the last ProjectAdmin.
- **Change a member's role:** same last-ProjectAdmin guard — a project always keeps at least one ProjectAdmin.

4. **Delete the project:** only when it has **zero assessments**. Deleting removes the project's studies, assignments, assessments, consolidated records, discussions, and members. It does **not** delete anyone's account.

Studies — add studies and assign assessors



1. Open the **Studies** tab (current project). Each row shows the study and its status: **Not started → Partially assessed → Ready to compare → In discussion → Consolidated**.

2. **Add a study** (card below the list): **First author**, **Year**, and **Title** are required; **DOI**, **Source URL**, and **Notes** are optional. Click **Add study**. The study belongs to the current project.

3. **Bulk import from CSV** (card below that): click **download template (CSV)**, fill in one study per row (columns: Author, Year, Title, DOI, SourceURL, Notes), choose the file, and click **Import**. The app reports how many rows were imported and skips duplicates (same DOI, or same Title + Year + Author) with a per-row report.

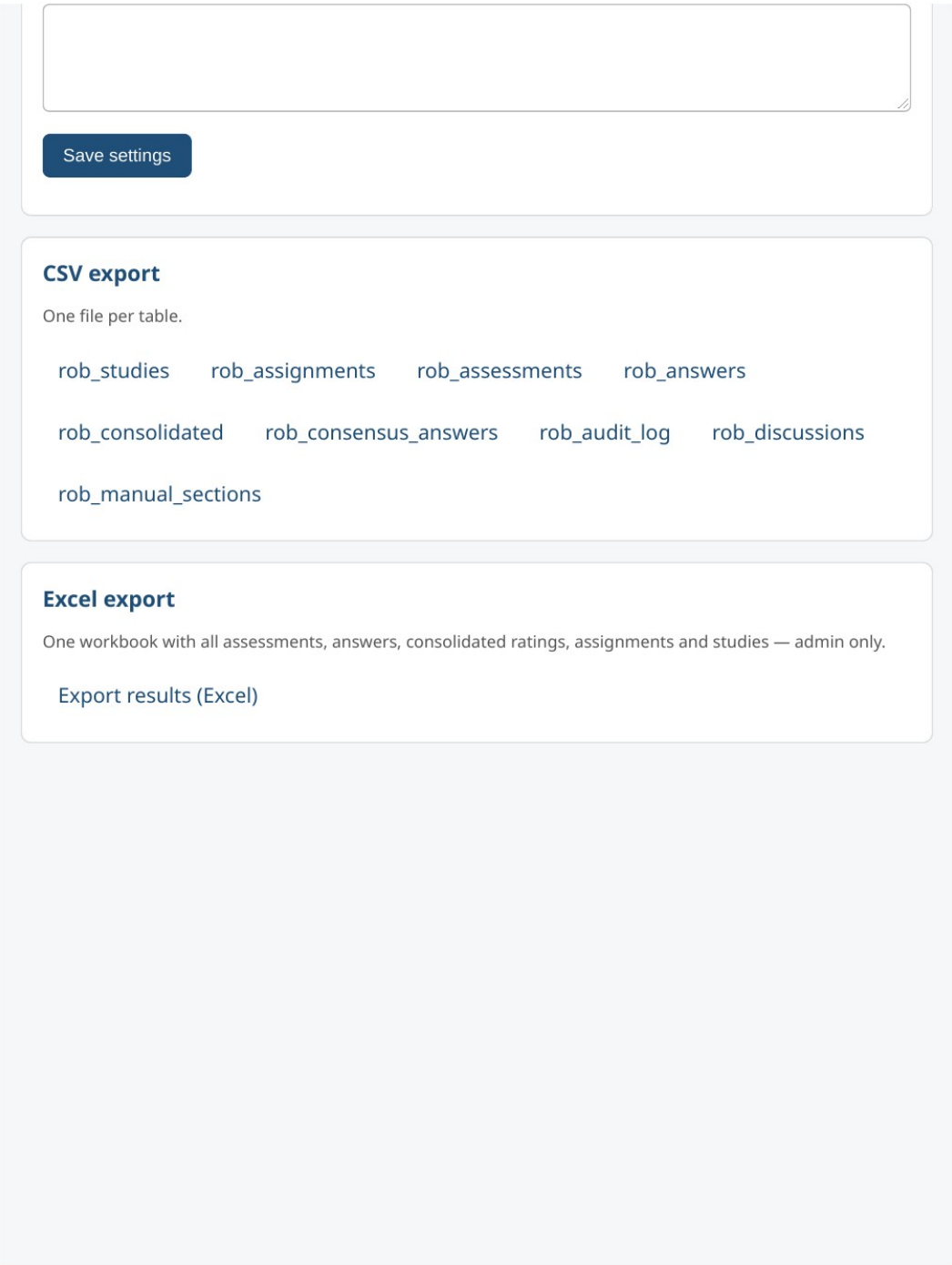
4. To assign assessors, click **Open** on a study. The study page shows the **Assessors** table (Assessor | Assessment) and, while a slot is free, an **Assign an assessor** form:

    - pick the **reviewer** (from the project's members),
    - pick **Assessor 1** or **Assessor 2**,
    - click **Assign**.
    - Exactly two assessors per study. The app admin can also be assigned as an assessor — if she is, she can still see the other assessor's ratings (app admins always can).

Assignments — see and remove assignments

- The **Assignments** tab lists every assignment in the current project: Study | Assessor | Status | Delete.
- An assignment can be **deleted only while its status is Assigned** (before the reviewer has started). Once the reviewer has saved work, the Delete button disappears — deleting would remove their access, so the app does not allow it after work has begun. Deleting removes only the assignment, not any assessment data.

Dashboard — progress, settings, exports



- **Counts** at the top (current project): studies by status, assignments, assessments, and consolidated records.

- **Project settings:** the **Project name** and **Research question** (same as the Project tab). The research question pre-fills every new assessment (reviewers can still edit it per study). Click **Save settings**.
- **CSV export:** one file per table (studies, assignments, assessments, answers, consolidated, consensus answers, audit log, discussions, manual sections), scoped to the current project. Click a table name to download it.
- **Excel export:** click **Export results (Excel)** to download one workbook with 7 sheets — Assessments, Answers (long), Consolidated, Consensus answers (long), Assignments, Studies, README. The workbook names the project and says whether it is a full export or a blinded own-rows export.
  - Project admins (and the app admin) get the **whole project**. Reviewers get **only their own rows** — see My exports below.
  - The full-project export contains every assessor's individual ratings. **Do not share it with reviewers while assessments are blinded.**
- **My exports (CSV)** — on **My Tasks**, for reviewers: your own assessments and answers only. Other assessors' individual ratings are never included while assessments are blinded.

Audit Log — what changed after submission

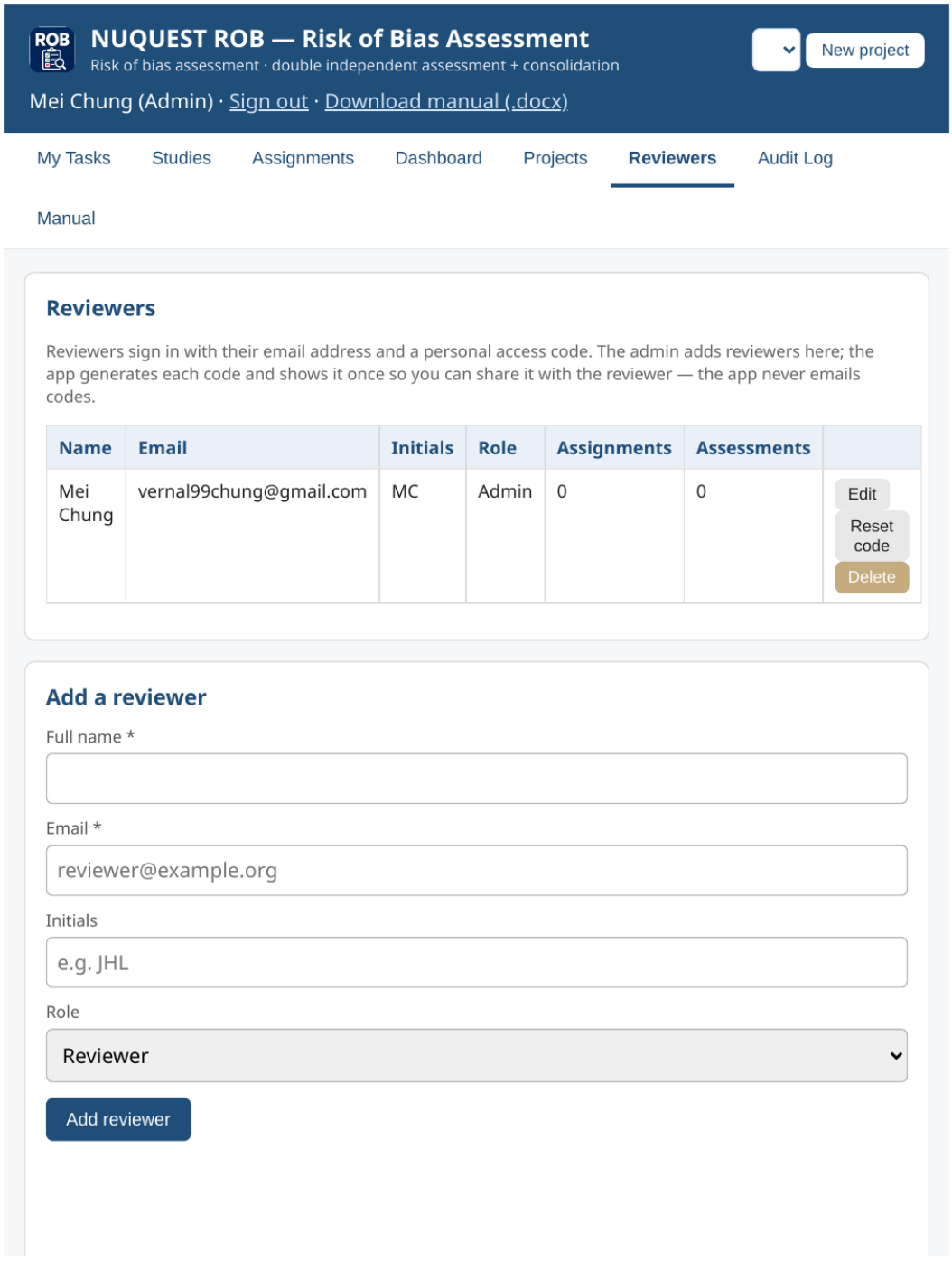
- The **Audit Log** tab lists every change made **after a submission** — in the current project only — on an assessment or on a Finalized consolidated record — one row per changed field: when, study, form, field, what it was, what it became, and who changed it.
- Draft saves before submission are **not** logged.
- Use the **Filter by form** dropdown to show only Assessment or only Consolidated changes.

For the app admin

Projects — see every project

- The **Projects** tab (app admin only) lists **every** project in the app: name, who created it, how many members and studies it has, and when it was created — with open and guarded delete (same rule as above: only when the project has zero assessments).

Reviewers — manage accounts and access codes



Only the app admin sees this tab. It manages **accounts for the whole app**. To add someone to your project, use the **Project** tab (members) — do not create a second account for them here.

1. Open the **Reviewers** tab. The table lists every reviewer: name, email, initials, role (Reviewer / Admin), and how many assignments and assessments they have.

2. **Add a reviewer:** fill in **Full name** and **Email** (required), **Initials** (optional), and **Role** (Reviewer, or Admin). Click **Add reviewer**.

    - **Role (Admin)** here means admin of the **whole app** — only the app admin should have this role. A project admin's role is set on the Project tab, not here.

    - The app generates an **8-character access code** and shows it **once**, in a green box: *"Share this code with [name] — it will not be shown again."* Copy it and send it to the reviewer yourself (email or message). **The app never emails codes**, and the code is never stored or shown again — if you close the page without copying it, reset the code (below) to get a new one.

3. **Reset code:** click **Reset code** on a reviewer's row, confirm, and a new code is shown once. The old code **stops working immediately**, and any open sessions for that reviewer are signed out.

4. **Edit:** click **Edit** to change a reviewer's name, initials, or role. The **email cannot be changed** — it is part of the sign-in. To change an email, delete the reviewer and add them again.

5. **Delete:** only allowed when the reviewer has **no assignments and no assessments**. You cannot delete the last remaining Admin, and you cannot delete your own account.

Manual — edit the instructions

- Open the **Manual** tab. As app admin, every section has an **Edit this section** button. Edit the text (Markdown) and click **Save section** — the change takes effect immediately, with no redeploy.

- Replacing the downloadable **.docx** file itself still needs a technical step — ask the person who built the app.

FAQ / Troubleshooting

I signed in but see "No assessments assigned yet." You have no assignments yet. The project admin assigns two assessors per study — ask them to assign you. If you also see no projects at all, you have not created or joined a project yet — create one from the project picker, or ask the app admin to add you to a project.

How do I switch projects? Use the **project picker** at the top of the page. Every tab shows only the current project.

A colleague needs an account. Only the app admin (Mei) creates accounts. Ask her; once the account exists, add the person to your project from the **Project** tab.

The Compare & Consolidate button is greyed out. Both assessors must submit first. Your co-assessor's status on My Tasks shows whether they have submitted yet.

I submitted, but I need to fix a mistake. Open the assessment and fix it, then save. The change is recorded in the Audit Log. If the consolidated record was already Finalized, it will be marked out of date until it is re-confirmed.

I can't see my co-assessor's answers. That is by design. They become visible on the Compare & consolidate page only after both of you have submitted.

My draft didn't save / my typing disappeared. The form autosaves only while the status is **In progress**, 2 seconds after you stop typing. Click **Save** yourself after finishing a section, and do not close the tab before the "Draft saved" line appears. If the app admin has just updated the app, reload the page once before editing.

The page is stuck on "Loading..." Reload the page. If it keeps happening, try another browser, then tell the app admin.

I lost my access code. Ask the app admin to reset it. She will give you a new code; the old one stops working immediately.

Can I work on the app on my phone? Yes — it is a web page and works in a phone browser, but the assessment form (with its justification boxes) is easier on a computer.

Who do I contact for help? Your project admin for project questions (studies, assignments, members). The app admin (Mei Chung) for accounts and access codes. For technical problems with the app itself, tell her what you were doing and what the page showed, and she will pass it to the person who built the app.