

Assessment of Research Quality

Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG)
1998-2003

Faculty of Arts *University* of Groningen

RuG

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General information

1 1 Introduction

111 National system for assessing the quality of research

In 2003, the Dutch system for assessing the quality of research underwent a major change. The system of national, external assessments of individual disciplines, co-ordinated by the office of the Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU), was discontinued. In its place, the Executive Boards of the universities now determine the design and organisation of the research quality evaluations. They are bound by the "Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009" (SEP), ¹ which is endorsed not only by VSNU but also by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

The three main aims of the Standard Evaluation Protocol are improving the quality of research, improving research management and direction and improving accountability, both internal (by the unit to be assessed to its immediate superiors within the RUG) and external (by the RUG to government and society). The SEP is based on two fundaments:

- an external assessment once every six years (by a peer review Committee conducting a site visit)
- > a self-evaluation once every three years (one in preparation for the external assessment and one intermediate evaluation three years later, the 'mid-term review').

The most important conclusions of the external assessment Committee, the reaction to these by the assessed unit and the final conclusions with regard to the future applied to them by the Executive Board will all be published.

An independent meta Committee, set up by the KNAW, NWO and VSNU, will check the design and implementation of the new system by the various institutions and publish its findings annually.

112 Outline of the RUG Protocol

The SEP provides a framework to guarantee -as far as possible- comparable procedures and criteria. Within this, it provides room for specific input by the own institution, which the RUG has set out in the "Protocol for Quality Assurance at the University of Groningen", known as the RUG Protocol².

http://www.rug.nl/Corporate/onderzoek/kwaliteitszorg/index; see Appendix A for an English summary.

¹ This can be downoaded from: http://www.ganu.nl/?contentid=144.

² The full text in Dutch can be downloaded from:

The following principles underlie the RUG protocol:

- a close connection with the RUG quality policy
- b clear division of tasks and responsibilities
- c external assessment is transparent, authoritative and can be applied to both internal policy and external accounting
- d the aim is professionalisation and minimum disruption for researchers.

Re a) RUG Quality policy with regard to research

The heart of this policy is that the RUG regards quality improvement as the dominant principle in its research policy as well as in that of the government.

A crucial part is played by the peer reviews, external assessments by independent, objective researchers with expertise in the disciplines of the unit to be assessed. The peer reviewers should preferably be recognised international authorities and base their assessment not only on the self-evaluation of the unit but also on actual knowledge of the most important output, where possible supplemented by quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Further, external research assessments should concentrate on:

- > providing direct, swift feedback from the peer reviewers about the position of the research, measured against national and international standards for quality, productivity, relevance and vitality;
- > assessing both past performance and future expectations, the ambitions and the scientific and social impact of the research;
- > evaluating the management and the academic leadership of the unit in relation to the mission and ambitions:
- > the context of the research unit, for example how the unit is embedded in the faculty, the university as a whole, the national and international context, as well as disciplinary and interdisciplinary contacts with regard to content.

Before formal acceptation of the findings of the peer review Committee as laid down in the assessment report, the Executive Board of the university will apply the principle of hearing both sides of the case.

Re c) Usability

The results of an assessment must be sufficiently informative to serve as the basis for policy decisions. This is why the possibility to add a lower aggregation level than that of the programme as referred to in the SEP is deliberately left open. In practice, the aggregation levels of research programmes may vary strongly. If the Executive Board of the university believes that a research programme is too large te be sufficiently usable for internal policy decisions, a supplementary evaluation at a lower aggregation level will be requested from the Faculty board. The external assessment at this lowest level can, if desired, remain confidential. The SEP provides for this eventuality in the management letter: 'Matters of personnel policy and sensitive decisions are generally treated in the confidential management letter to the board and do not form part of the public report.'



Re d) Minimum assessment disruption

All Institutes at the RUG are organised on a disciplinary and local level. Within the previous national system, an Institute was assessed simultaneously with comparable research groups at other Dutch universities. In the current system national, disciplinary visitation is no longer compulsory but still an option, provided that the relevant Executive Boards approve. The RUG is determined to keep the option for national co-operation open, particularly because of the increased comparability of the assessments and the more efficient use of peer reviewers. An alternative for national co-operation would be to allow a single PRC to assess several Groningen Institutes. This option is offered to faculties aiming to cluster their multidisciplinary research Institutes.





Review of the Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture

2 1 Assignment of the Peer Review Committee

The Peer Review Committee's (PRC) task was to assess the quality of research on the basis of of the information provided by the University and through interviews during a site visit that took place from June 1-3, 2004. The Committee operated according to the Protocol provided by the University of Groningen. That protocol is based on the Dutch Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The members of the Committee were appointed by letter of April 16 2004.

The findings of the Committee had to be laid down in a public report. For the assessment, the Executive Board of the University of Groningen submitted all the research that is carried out at the Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture ("Instituut voor Cultuur-wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Groningen", ICOG) and is divided over three Project Groups³:

- Politics, Media and Nation Building
- > Autonomy and 'New' Dependence in the Arts
- Science and Cultural Environment: Autonomy and Independence

2 2 Composition of the Committee

The profile of the Peer Review Committee was defined as follows:

- A Cultural History Antiquity Middle Ages
- в Cultural History Late Middle Ages Early Modern Period
- c Literary Studies and Cultural History Early Modern Period Present
- D Cultural History of the 19th and 20th Centuries where Cultural History was defined in the broadest sense.

Four independent experts from Europe and the USA were found, together complying with this profile:

- > Professor Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (Chair), Modern History, University of Gent, Belgium (b)
- Professor Marcia Colish, Religious Studies and History, Yale University, USA (a)
- > Professor Emiel Lambert, History of European Politics and Religion in 19th and 20th Centuries, University of Leuven, Belgium (d)
- > Professor Marion Wynne-Davies, English Literature, University of Dundee, UK (c)

³ These can be considered to represent the "research programmes" as defined in the SEP.

Robbert Jan Bron, MA, from the Department of Academic Affairs of the University of Groningen was appointed secretary to the Peer Review Committee.

All members signed a declaration of independence (Appendix B).

2 3 Procedures used

The Committee members received the Self Evaluation Report provided by the Institute. Each member was asked to complete a preliminary assessment form.

The Committee read the Self Evaluation Report as provided by the Institute. From the Report it became clear that ICOG's research is carried out in three Project Groups. These groups are divided along chronological lines. These subdivisions seem highly arbitrary to the Committee. Individual researchers are sometimes "members" of all subdivisions. The Committee therefore decided not to assess all the subgroups, but rather stick to the three main Project Groups.

The site visit took place on June 1-3, 2004. The Committee had meetings with the Rector Magnificus, with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and with the director of ICOG, Professor M. Gosman. Furthermore, the Committee had discussions with several representatives of the different Project Groups, as well as with the Director of Graduate Studies, Professor H.E. Wilcox, and a delegation of the PhD Students.

The Committee was impressed by the open manner in which conversations were conducted and by the frankness with which all questions were answered. In the afternoon of 3 June, the Committee agreed upon the final scores allotted to the three programmes.

Mid June 2004 the draft report was sent to ICOG for factual corrections and comments on the reviews. ICOG's director informed the Committee that no corrections were needed.







Assessment Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture

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3 1 The Institute and the Schools

The Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture ('Instituut voor Cultuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek Groningen' = ICOG) is one of the three Research Institutes within the Groningen Faculty of Arts. It was established recently, from the merger between two Institutes, the Rudolph Agricola Institute and Comers. It hosts all those researchers who focus on Culture, History and Literature. Members of ICOG participate in four Research Schools: three national school and one local school. The latter, GRSSH (Groningen Research School for the Study of the Humanities), also involves researchers of the Groningen faculties of Theology, Philosophy and the Social Sciences. Within the Institute there are three separate research groups: Politics, Media and Nation Building, Autonomy and 'new' dependence in the arts, Science and Cultural Environment. These have subdivisions that roughly coincide with the periods, Antiquity - Middle Ages, Middle Ages - Early Modern Times, Long Nineteenth Century, Cold War to Globalisation. As such, ICOG has responded to the strengths within the Faculty and has also interacted with the key area of thematic focus, Cultural Changes. The structure as a whole seems to be needlessly complicated. The Committee would advise the Board of the University to consider creating an Institute that is congruent with the local school, and which would be both more efficient and provide a simpler infrastructure. Nevertheless, the Committee was impressed by the fact that none of the persons interviewed felt that this complicated structure was a disadvantage. Most people involved in ICOG adopt a pragmatic approach in dealing with organisational matters.

The Committee learned that there is a tendency in Dutch higher education policies to create local Graduate Schools. The Committee applauds this development. At the same time however, it wishes to emphasize that most PhD students also derive considerable benefit from the existing national schools. These national schools, such as OIKOS (Classical Studies), NRSMS (Medieval Studies) and Posthumus (Economic and Social History), are discipline-based. They function as meeting points for students who participate in the same fields of research. The Committee considers it important that, once these local Graduate Schools have been founded, national research networks remain in place.

3 2 Academic Leadership

Based on the interviews, the Committee concludes that those who work in the Institute commend the strong leadership provided by the director of Research, Professor Gosman and the director of Graduate Studies, Professor Wilcox. Their ability to deal with staff and students on a flexible and individual basis was especially praised, and their management skills were noted to complement each other.



3 3 Strengths and Weaknesses

The mission and the goals of the Institute were judged to be valid by the Committee. There are two real strengths: first, the research programmes have arisen from the current scholarly interests of existing staff, and second, mechanisms for the closure of programmes, when projects are completed or research interests and staff change, are in place. This flexibility and openness to change should be persevered.

In general, the Committee is impressed by the achievements of the Institute. It includes a great number of excellent researchers, as well as encouraging the high potential of younger researchers. The productivity – in terms of scientific publications – of the Institute as a whole is high, albeit that the distribution of published output is not always balanced across the individual research groups. Whereas in some areas staff are extremely productive, it must be noted that in other areas some people hardly seem to publish anything.

The Institute has developed, with the explicit input of both staff and students, an innovative and comprehensive Graduate Studies Programme, which is available to all ICOG PhD students. The Committee is enthusiastic about the content and structure of this programme. The programme is particularly responsive to the needs of the students. The role of the Director of Graduate Studies, Professor Wilcox, is highly appreciated by the PhD students.

The Committee is also impressed by the systematic way in which the Institute pursues interdisciplinary research and judges ICOG to be at the forefront of such academic activity in the Low Countries.

As mentioned above the main weakness seems to be the complicated infrastructure, in particular, the relationships between the four different schools. The maintenance of all these different structures seems inefficient. The Committee also notes that there is a difference between the local school and the three national schools. The latter mainly offer subject based courses, whereas the local school focuses on academic skills and interdisciplinary courses. This implies that for some students, e.g. in the field of Political or Religious History, no disciplinary education is available.

The Committee was informed that the Faculty of Arts offers no facilities for sabbatical or research leave. Taking into account the very high teaching loads, the Committee advises the faculty to develop a system in which sabbatical leaves are facilitated.



3 4 The Internal Evaluation System

The Committee also studied the internal Evaluation System that ICOG uses. ICOG quite rightly considers monographs the most important means of publication. ICOG should, however, make more distinctions between chapters in books (local or international) and articles published in journals (peer reviewed or not). It would also be helpful if ICOG clarified its position on IT-publications. The Committee thinks that ICOG should also value reprints of monographs or translations, since reprint and translation represent the importance of the publication at hand. Moreover, it is the Committee's impression that "productivity" is measured exclusively by output of scientific publications. Scientific management (membership of Academies, editorial boards, peer reviews etc.) should also be taken in account.





4

Reviews per Project Group

4 1 Project Group 1: Politics, Media and Nation Building

Assessment:	
Quality	4
Productivity	4
Relevance	4
Vitality & Feasibility	5

This Project Group concentrates at research in two subgroups:

- 1.a. Structures and Traditions (national and international)
- 1.b Cultures and Identity (national and international)

The research carried out by this group is very good. Although the title of the group is not very original, this group's research often draws on original hypotheses and much of it is internationally recognized. The Committee was especially impressed by the work done by the Mediaevalists and the Long Nineteenth Century group, led by Professor Te Velde. The Committee also values the fact that in the Antiquity section of this program, researchers undertake fundamental enterprises, such as the publication and annotation of ancient texts. The Committee is also impressed by the international orientation of this group. The Committee is less satisfied with regard to the number of PhD theses that have been defended in the assessed period. As to the productivity of this group, it should be noted that a lot of researchers are extremely productive, whereas some others hardly seem to publish anything at all. The demographic profile of this group seems to suggest that this can be a productive research group for the years to come.



² Programme leadership is on a provisional basis.

4 2 Project Group 2: Autonomy and 'New' Dependence in the Arts

Assessment:	
Quality	4
Productivity	5
Relevance	4
Vitality & Feasibility	5

This group concentrates at research in four subgroups:

- 2.a Texts (Narrative) and Criticism
- 2.b Cultures and Contexts (Texts)
- 2.c. Cultures and Contexts (Images)
- 2.d. Gender

The Committee concludes that this is a highly productive area in the field of literature and that there are many signs of up-to-date ideas and theoretical perceptions, as well as international presence. The Committee is especially impressed by the work carried out in the field of Medieval and Early Modern literature. These areas show many examples of excellent and original material. In this group the Committee also notes significant discrepancies in the distribution of published output. The Committee praises the feasibility of the research carried out by this group but is critical about the labels of the subgroups. These labels seem highly artificial. Moreover the Committee does not understand why the management of the Institute decided to make an arbitrary distinction between "texts" and "images". The Committee is of the opinion that the subgroup "Gender" is too small, since it lacks a full professor and ICOG is advised either to accommodate this group in one of the other groups, or to appoint a professor in Gender Studies and optimise the staffing.



4 3 Project Group 3: Science and Cultural Environment: Autonomy and Independence

Assessment:	
Quality	5
Productivity	4
Relevance	5
Vitality & Feasibility	4

This group is part of a larger group which also includes staff from the Faculties of Philosophy, Theology and the Social Sciences. The main focus of this group is: Cultures and Knowledge. The Committee is impressed by the very high quality of the work carried out by this group. Some of its members (notably Ankersmit) are in the forefront of international studies. The productivity, in terms of scientific publications, is very high. The distribution of published output within the group is excellent. It should be noted though, that the focus on publication, seems almost preclusive of other forms of professional academic activity. The Committee is critical about the vitality of this group. The group is small and as can be concluded from the small number of PhD students doesn't really seem to have a long-term plan for development.





Reaction Management ICOG

The Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture ('Instituut voor Cultuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek' = ICOG) was evaluated on 1-3 June 2004. The assessment period was 1998-2003. This section summarizes ICOG's reaction to the assessment report and the recommendations it contains.

General reaction

The ICOG management (Director and Board) are grateful for the positive elements the assessment committee mentions in the report regarding both the quality of the research and the management by the Director of the Institute and the Director of Graduate Studies. The management fully understands and accepts the critical remarks made with regard to the organization of the research programmes of the Institute. Written by scholars with an excellent international reputation, whose disciplines cover practically all the scientific activities of the ICOG, the report is a valuable instrument for adjustments and improvements.

In a letter sent on 3 August 2004 to the secretary of the committee, R.J. Bron, the Director, after having consulted the members of the Board, declared that the management was most pleased with the positive markings of both the research and the PhD training programme, and that they fully endorsed the critical notes concerning the too complicated organizational structure of the Institute.

Specific elements

Most of the suggestions for improvement made by the committee were implemented in the period between June 2004 and January 2006. Adjustments have been made to the very complicated structure (over 20 subgroups) of ICOG. The whole organization has been subjected to a thorough revision. There are now two main groups: Politics, Media and the Birth of Nation-building and Society and the Arts.

The first, Politics, Media and the Birth of Nation-building, has two sections:

- > Structures and Traditions, national and international
- > Cultures and Identity, national and international

The second, Society and the Arts, has four sections:

- Cultures and Contexts (texts)
- > Cultures and Contexts (images)
- Gender and the Arts
- Culture and Knowledge



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The coherence of some of the research programmes has been strengthened. Some scholars have organized themselves into very lightly structured semi-official groups, functioning within the framework of ICOG. The historians have constituted the following groups 1) Hanze culture, 14th-17th centuries, 2) Metahistory and 3) Political history. There is also a group which centres its activities around the evolution of Biographies. All of these groups are steered by two or three senior staff members. ICOG supports these spontaneous initiatives financially. Other initiatives are being developed. The coherence and viability of other groups, for example gender, has improved since international research programmes on this topic were initiated. ICOG is trying to enhance the cohesion of other groups by asking senior staff members to take the initiative. Financial support is offered for the organization of focused research activities.

Structure of Research

As far as ICOG's complex relationship with four research schools (one local and three national ones) is concerned, the ICOG management agrees that it is absolutely vital that the counterproductive complexity be reduced. However, given the political and administrative conditions, it is impossible for a local institute to introduce changes: the policy is made by the government and implemented by the Universities. Fortunately, the system is going to change: the responsibility for research and PhD training will come under the aegis of the faculties. This will enable a simplification of the organizational structures of the research institutes. The ICOG management fully supports this restructuring, which is now being discussed. The changes, already recommended by the assessment committee, will be implemented shortly; the local Graduate Schools will start next September. The reshuffling of the research structure (highly recommended by the committee) will follow afterwards. In order to be able to train PhD students in an academically adequate way, ICOG will continue the collaboration with the institutes from other faculties and research schools working in the field of the Humanities.

Publication policy

ICOG is happy with the committee's statement that monographs are still the 'most important means of publication'. In the Humanities, monographs do indeed tend to determine the status of individual scholars, although publication in peer-reviewed journals is also very important.

A balance should be found between peer-reviewed articles and chapters in collective volumes which, in the Humanities, reflect a much-needed exchange of ideas between scholars from the same discipline or from other disciplines. ICOG will continue to promote the two activities. The suggestion made by the committee that ICOG should clarify its position on IT publications is still under discussion.

PhD students

ICOG agrees with the remark that the number of PhD students should be increased. However, this is a problem ICOG cannot solve: budgetary problems in the Faculty, which subsidizes the Institutes, are a very serious obstacle. In order to cope with this problem, ICOG stimulates programme-based applications to the governmental organization for research as much as possible: funding has to come from national, and even European sources. Several programmes for international collaboration have been started, some of which have received external funding.

Groningen, 2 February, 2006



Appendix A

Quality assurance at the University of Groningen

National system for assessing the quality of research

In 2003, the Dutch system for assessing the quality of research was changed radically. The system of national, external assessments of individual disciplines, co-ordinated by the office of the Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU), was discontinued. In its place, the Executive Boards of the universities now determine the design and organization of the research quality evaluations. They are bound by the "Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009" (SEP), ⁴ which is endorsed not only by VSNU but also by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal the Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

The most important elements of the new system, set out in the SEP, are:

> Three main aims:

- improving the quality of research;
- improving research management and direction;
- improving accountability;
- internally -by the unit to be assessed to its immediate superiors within the RUG, and externally- by the RUG to government and society.

Based on two fundaments:

- an external assessment once every six years (by a peer review Committee which conducts a site visit);
- self-evaluation once every three years (one in preparation for the external assessment and one intermediate evaluation three years later, the 'mid-term review').
- An independent meta Committee, set up by the KNAW, NWO and VSNU, will check the design and implementation of the new system by the various institutions and publish its findings annually.

To this end, the Executive Board of the University of Groningen (CvB) will draw up a schedule for all the units to be assessed and ensure that all the research is evaluated.



⁴ This can be downoaded from: http://www.ganu.nl/?contentid=144.

The most important conclusions of the external assessment Committee, the reaction to these by the assessed unit and the final conclusions with regard to the future applied to them by the Executive Board will all be published.

The SEP provides a framework to guarantee as far as possible comparable procedures and criteria. Within this, it provides room for specific input by the own institution, which the RUG has set out in the "Protocol for Quality Assurance at the University of Groningen", known as the RUG Protocol. With regard to the instructions for peer reviewers before they are appointed by the CvB, the text below explains the most important points in the SEP and the RUG Protocol.

SEP - outline of the main points

1 General

The evaluation applies to:

- > the quality of research according to the standards of the relevant academic disciplines
- the way that the research results are reported to the academic world.

Depending on the mission of the unit to be assessed, the evaluation also examines:

- socioeconomic aims
- > technological or infrastructural aims
- > cross-disciplinary aims.

The evaluation will be both retrospective and prospective. The results are intended to assist the research organization, the management of the research units and the individual researchers in decision-making about future research, research policy and research management.

The three central concepts in the SEP are:

Board: the Executive Boards (CvB's) of the universities and the boards of KNAW and NWO are responsible for the organization and procedural processing of the evaluation of the 'Institutes' which fall under their responsibility.

Institute: the unit to be assessed is referred to in the SEP as '(research) Institute' and defined as follows: 'An Institute may be defined as "a group of researchers with an articulated shared mission operating under the same management". Each "Institute" will have a director, board and/or research leader(s) with a final responsibility. Throughout this document they will be referred to as "the management".'

Research programme: this is the unit to be assessed, for which there is no specific definition in the SEP. Each programme should submit a title, programme leaders, research field and mission, as well as the research capacity of the academic staff, the share of the research resources within the unit to be assessed and the research output.



The peer review Committee (PRC) reports to the Board (CvB). The CvB will make policy decisions concerning the Institute based on this report and the discussions about it with the Institute. The decisions of the CvB and the evaluation report together form the results of the evaluation. These results will be reported to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OC&W) via the normal channels (annual reports).

2 Assessment criteria

The evaluations will differ per Institute and per programme:

- > per Institute: the emphasis is on strategic and organizational aspects
- > per programme: the emphasis is on results, quality and the future of the research.

The main criteria are:

QUALITY: international recognition and innovative power

PRODUCTIVITY: scientific output

RELEVANCE: scientific and socioeconomic impact flexibility; flexibility, management, leadership.

These criteria will always be related to the mission of the Institute or group, which may, for example, limit itself to national scientific tasks.

The feasibility criterion includes the ability to close dead-end lines of research and start new projects. With regard to management, the criterion includes the ability to implement projects in a professional manner. This covers policy decisions and project management, including an analysis of the costs and benefits.

The questions to be answered include:

Retrospectively:

- What is the quality and relevance of the Institute?
- What is the quality of the leadership, the management, the strategy and the research programmes of the Institute, the personnel and material resources, the organization and the infrastructure, and how may this be improved?
- c To what extent has the Institute or programme realised the mission and goals of the period to be assessed?

Prospectively:

- A Has the mission of the Institute been chosen and expressed well, given the current developments in the relevant field of research?
- B How can the research plans of the Institute be assessed and is there sufficient coherence in the Institute's research portfolio?
- c What is the quality of the leadership, the management, and the strategy of the Institute, the personnel and material resources, the organization and the infrastructure, and how may this be improved?
- D Which of these aspects has room for improvement and how may this be realised?



The CvB may ask the PRC to investigate additional questions. These may refer to specific tasks of the Institute that are not directly related to research, or to specific circumstances such as major changes to the organization or mission of the Institute, or to specific demands from stakeholders who significantly contribute to the financing of the Institute. If desired, confidential parts of the assessment can be included in a management letter to the CvB.

3 Documentation for the PRC

In preparation for the site visit, the peer reviewers will be sent a self-study report, the Specific Visitation Protocol and any supplementary questions from the CvB. Further, the chair of the PRC may request supplementary documentation.

Self-study report

Appendix 3 of the SEP states the format of the documentation to be supplied for a self-evaluation. This must serve as the basis for a strength-weakness (SWOT⁵) analysis, as set out in Chapter 4 of the SEP. Together they form the self-study report, which is in principle identical for both the mid-term review and the self-evaluation in preparation for a visitation.

The Specific Visitation Protocol

The SEP must be supplemented by the profile of the PRC, a list of supplementary questions and any supplementary information for the PRC. This enables the protocol to be adapted to the specific wishes of the CvB. Together with the SEP, this comprises the Specific Visitation Protocol for the external assessment in question.

Outline of the RUG Protocol⁶

Starting points of RUG policy concerning assessing the quality of research

The following principles inform the RUG protocol:

- A close connection with the RUG quality policy;
- B clear division of tasks and responsibilities;
- c external assessment must be transparent, authoritative and able to be applied to both internal policy and external accounting;
- D the aim is professionalisation and minimum disruption for researchers.

Re a) Quality policy with regard to research

The heart of this policy is that the RUG regards quality improvement as the dominant principle

⁵ Analysis of 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats'.

⁶ The RUG-protocol can be downloaded from: http://www.rug.nl/Corporate/onderzoek/kwaliteitszorg/index

in its research policy. Quality not only plays an important role in its own policy but also in that of the government.

A crucial part is played by the peer reviews, external assessments by independent, objective researchers with expertise in the disciplines of the unit to be assessed. The peer reviewers should preferably be recognized international authorities and base their assessment not only on the self-evaluation of the unit but also on actual knowledge of the most important output, where possible supplemented by quantitative and qualitative indicators.

The principle of listening to both sides of the case will be applied before an external assessment will be accepted.

Further, external research assessments should concentrate on:

- > providing direct, swift feedback from the peer reviewers about the position of the research, measured against national and international standards for quality, productivity, relevance and vitality
- > assessing both past performance and future expectations, the ambitions and the scientific and social impact of the research
- > evaluating the management and the academic leadership of the unit in relation to the mission and ambitions
- > the context of the research unit, for example how the unit is embedded in the faculty, the university as a whole, the national and international context, as well as disciplinary and interdisciplinary contacts with regard to content.

Re c) Usability

The results of an assessment must be sufficiently informative to serve as the basis for policy decisions. This is why the possibility to add a lower aggregation level than that of the programme as referred to in the SEP is deliberately left open. In practice, the aggregation levels of research programmes vary strongly. There may be good reasons for working with larger programmes, something which thus cannot be ruled out in advance. However, if programmes are chosen that are so large that in the opinion of the Executive Board the assessment is not sufficiently usable for internal policy decisions, a supplementary evaluation at a lower aggregation level will be requested. The Faculty Board will itself submit a motivated proposal that must then be approved by the Executive Board.

The external assessment at this lowest level can, if desired, remain confidential. The SEP provides for this eventuality in the management letter: 'Matters of personnel policy and sensitive decisions are generally treated in the confidential management letter to the board and do not form part of the public report.'

Re d) Minimum assessment disruption

All Institutes at the RUG are organized locally and according to discipline. In the old national system, an Institute was assessed at the same time as comparable research groups at other universities by one PRC. In the new system, although the national, disciplinary visitation is no longer compulsory it is certainly still an option. Voluntary co-operation is still possible, on condition that it is approved by the relevant Executive Boards. The RUG is determined to keep the option for national co-operation open, particularly because of the greater comparability of the assessments and the more efficient use of peer reviewers.



An alternative for national co-operation would be to allow a single PRC to assess several Groningen Institutes. This option is offered to faculties aiming to cluster their multidisciplinary research Institutes.

2 Composition of a Peer Review Committee (PRC)

The responsibility for appointing PRCs is borne by the Executive Board. The RUG abides by the following guidelines:

- > The PRC must comprise nationally or internationally renowned scientists who are experts in the disciplines or subdisciplines of the unit to be assessed.
- > The expertise in the PRC as a whole must sufficiently cover all the subfields within the unit to be assessed.
- The peer reviewers must be authoritative but may not be interested parties. In order to guarantee the independence of the peer reviewers, they are obliged to sign a standard declaration of independence before accepting membership of a PRC.
- The Executive Board reserves the right to submit the list of prospective candidates to external experts before they are appointed. The aim is to create a national code of behaviour with regard to this. The KNAW, NWO and VSNU are expected to submit a proposal.

Secretary

The CvB will appoint the secretary of the Committee and ensure, after consultation with the Faculty Board, that he/she is properly instructed. The secretary must on the one hand be independent of the research unit; on the other, he/she must be sufficiently familiar with the local situation. In principle, the secretary will be someone from the RUG Office. The secretary will be appointed at the same time as the Committee.

3 PRC procedure and reporting method

Instructions for the Committee

In consultation with the Faculty Board, the CvB will commission the Committee and ensure that it is instructed. Within the framework of the Specific Visitation Protocol, the RUG protocol and the commission, the Committee will determine its own procedure.

Programme site visit

Under the responsibility of the Faculty Board, and in consultation with the chair of the PRC, the management of the research unit will design the programme for the site visit, bearing in mind the provisions of the SEP. The Faculty Board will inform the CvB of the programme. The CvB will receive the PRC at the start of the site visit.

Format of the report

With regard to content, the Committee will be guided by the SEP and by any supplementary questions posed by the university.

To achieve uniformity in the visitation reports, the secretary of the PRC will use a basic format for the preparation of the final assessment.

Verification of facts

The PRC will present the draft report to the management of the research unit for verification of the *facts* (correction phase).

Report to the CvB and the Faculty Board

After the facts have been verified, the PRC will report its findings simultaneously to the CvB and the Faculty Board in a draft report. If the faculty is the research unit being assessed, the Committee will report only to the CvB.

Right of response

The draft report will be presented by the Faculty Board to the management of the assessed research unit who will be asked to *comment regarding content* and to react to the findings of the external assessment.

Check of formal requirements

In consultation with the Faculty Board, the CvB will check whether the draft report is complete and consistent with the SEP and the supplementary questions posed by the RUG. If either the CvB or the Faculty Board wish expansion or explanation of the report, the CvB will request the chair of the Committee, via the secretary of the Committee, to provide these additions or explanations.

Acceptance or rejection of the visitation report

In consultation with the Faculty Board, the CvB will decide whether to accept the visitation report if, in its view, the visitation report conforms with all the requirements in the SEP as well as those set by the RUG.

On occasion, and after consultation with the Faculty Board, the CvB may decide to reject the visitation report. The CvB will make such a decision known to the chair and members of the PRC.

Adoption of the evaluation report

The report by the Committee and the reaction of the research unit together form the final evaluation report that will be adopted by the CvB, in consultation with the Faculty Board. With this, the CvB concludes the external evaluation.

Responsibility of the CvB

The CvB, on the basis of its own conclusions, is responsible for reporting to the Supervisory Board.

The CvB will determine *in general terms* the way in which evaluation reports will be presented and published externally. This includes reports to the Minister of OC&W, VSNU, KNAW, NWO and sister institutions as well as publication on the university's website. External reporting of the managerial implementation of the research assessments will be included in the annual report. The starting point is the conditions set by the SEP for the public evaluation report.



Management letter

In addition to the public evaluation report, the PRC will be asked, if necessary, to submit a confidential management letter to the Faculty Board, with a copy to the CvB. This management letter shall be based on meetings with the management of the research unit and include any sensitive information concerning personnel or company-sensitive information about the current or future position of the research unit. If necessary, the Faculty Board, after discussions with the CvB, will discuss the management letter with the chair of the PRC.

If the faculty is the research unit being assessed, the Committee will address the management letter only to the CvB.

During the correction phase and in consultation with the Faculty Board, the management of the unit may ask the PRC to move parts of the report to a management letter in certain circumstances, such as contractual obligations to third parties, restrictions on making things public, etc.

4 Managerial implementation of the visitation report

Managerial assessment and measures

The CvB will ask the Faculty Board for a managerial assessment of the visitation report. In the event of shortcomings revealed by the report, the CvB will ask the Faculty Board, as the responsible and authorized body, which measures the Faculty Board has in mind to effect improvements. The Faculty Board may submit the evaluation report to the advisory board or supervisory board of the research unit and/or to the faculty academic Committee(s) and ask for advice. The Faculty Board will inform the CvB of the measures to be taken. The CvB will discuss the measures with the Faculty Board, and testable agreements and how they are to be monitored will be formulated. In line with the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), the Faculty Board is responsible for the design and the quality of the research.

Conclusions arising from the management letter

If a confidential management letter is submitted, it will be discussed by the CvB with the Dean of the Faculty. The Dean will be asked to give those in charge of the research unit an opportunity to respond. In mutual consultation, the CvB and the Dean of the Faculty will discuss the conclusions and any measures to be taken.

Appendix B

Selection Criteria and Guarantee of Independence for Peer Review Committees

Peer review and quality assurance Committees are expected to produce authoritative, critical and independent assessments of the quality of the research schools, Institutes or programmes they have been asked to examine. This means that the members must meet high standards with regard to quality.

The authority of the assessment in terms of quality, objectivity and influence stands or falls with the independence of the assessing peers. It is in everyone's interests that such peer review Committees be carefully selected in order to guarantee their independence. This appendix lists selection criteria for members of peer review Committees as well as instruments to guarantee the independence of these Committees.

Contents

- selection criteria for peer review Committees
- reporting obligation for the research schools and Institutes to be assessed if they foresee potential conflicts of interest, prejudice or influence by potential/proposed peer review Committee members
- 3 code of behaviour, including a declaration of independence for peer review Committee members

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1 Guidelines for selecting a Peer Review Committee

When choosing an external peer review Committee (PRC) which conforms with the criteria of independence, expertise and academic quality, the following points must be taken into consideration when selecting potential candidates:

- > Authoritative scientific expertise in at least one discipline or subdiscipline of the department to be assessed
- National or international authority in the field
- Independence with regard to the department to be assessed and to the researchers within the department
- Insight into, and if possible some expertise in, related disciplines and subdisciplines
- > Insight into and an overview of national developments in the field
- > Insight into and an overview of international developments in the field
- Insight into relevant interdisciplinary developments
- > Some familiarity with how research is organized in the Netherlands.

Excluded from a PRC are:

- (former) employees or PhD students of the Institute to be assessed,
- (former) members of an advisory body for the Institute to be assessed (or the associated Research School),
- co-authors of scientific publications from employees or PhD students of the Institute to be assessed
- Has the potential candidate ever worked intensively with members of the department to be assessed, for example, long-term participation in alliances, regular participation in PhD assessments?
- Has the potential candidate close links with one or more members of the department to be assessed, for example as the PhD supervisor of a member, or as a member of the same research group, joint editorships?
 - If one or more of these questions must be answered with yes, then this must be clearly stated by the Institute when proposing the candidate in question. It should also be made clear why the board is of the opinion that the independence of the proposed candidate can be sufficiently guaranteed.

When potential candidates are approached with the request to participate in a PRC, they will be asked to sign a standard declaration of independence, including a brief *code of behaviour* (see below), before accepting. During the final meeting, the members of the Committee will be asked to confirm or expand the declaration they signed earlier, and to state that they have actually fulfilled their commitments.

2 Reporting obligation

The list with potential peer review Committee members must be presented to the heads of the programmes, research schools and Institutes to be assessed before it is sent to the Executive Board. The former are obliged to report any potential conflicts of interest, prejudice or influence on the part of the proposed peer review Committee members and must be able to report and substantiate their objections in writing to the Faculty Board.

3 Code of behaviour + declaration of independence for peer review Committees

The following will be sent together with the invitation to participate to the individual members of the peer review Committee and must be signed and returned before the site visit takes place.



Competence and independence of peer review Committee members

- 1 A member of the peer review Committee bases his/her assessment primarily on:
- > the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009 for Public Research Organisations
- > the 'specific peer review protocol' ascertained by the Board of the University
- > if applicable: additional instructions of the Board of the University
- In giving a judgement on the quality of research, a member of the peer review Committee grounds his/her assessment on the following information:
- > the self evaluation report and accompanying documentation
- > if applicable: additional information provided on request of the peer review Committee
- > interviews, lectures and talks carried out within the framework of the assessment
- 3 A member of the peer review Committee meets the generally known quality demands within scientific research, including:
- competence and professionality
- > independence and objectivity
- care and consistency
- transparancy and impartiality
- 4 A member of the peer review Committee experiences no personal, scientific, financial or any other potential conflicts of interest in participating in the research assessment of the Groningen research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG) and is therefore both qualified and competent to carry out his/her task as an independent assessor.
- 5 A member of the peer review Committee reports any potential conflicts of interest in advance to the chairman of the review Committee.

I declare that I have read the above-mentioned and that I will follow these to the best of my ability.

Place and date:	 	 	
Signature:	 	 	
N.T.			

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Appendix C

Brief Curricula Vitae PRC members (d.d. March 2004)

Professor Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, University of Gent, Belgium

Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (1943) has been full Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Gent since 2001 (where she obtained her PhD in 1969). From 1986 - 2001 she was part-time Professor of History of the Middle Ages at the Free University of Amsterdam. She has chaired the scientific council for historical prizes "Hertog van Arenberg" since 1990, is member of the FWO (Flemish Fund for Scientific Research) committee 'History, Archeology and Arts' and was member of the Dutch selection committee for the prestigious NWO Spinoza awards (2002-2004) and of several (inter)national scientific advisory boards (e.g. expert group of the European Council "Standards for the Governance of the University Heritage", chair of the "International Commission for the History of Universities"), evaluation committees (Fryske Akademy Leeuwarden, History department of the University of Quebec at Montreal) and editorial boards (e.g. Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte, History of Universities, Paedagogica Historica). She has been awarded several scientific awards, edited 15 international volumes and is (co-)author of 5 books, 59 book chapters and 36 academic journal articles (in English, French, German and Dutch). In addition, she published many webpublications, lemmata, bibliographies and reviews (92 in total). Her main interests (all covering the 15th – 18th century) are in the fields of History of European Universities; History of Pedagogics and Education; Professionalisation of Society; Intellectual, Scientific & Cultural Life in the Renaissance.

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Professor Marcia L. Colish, Yale University, USA

Marcia Colish (1937) was Frederick B. Artz Professor of History at Oberlin College from 1985-2001 and has been visiting Professor of Religious Studies and History at Yale since 2003 (where she obtained her PhD in 1965). In 1999 she obtained her D.H.L. at Grinnell College. She received many scientific awards, grants and fellowships, including the Marianist Award of the University of Dayton (2000), Gilson Lecturer at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies at Toronto (2000) and the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America (1998). Marcia Colish was member of many (inter)national scientific advisory boards (e.g. Franciscan Institute of the St. Bonaventura University), evaluation and selection committees (including an accreditation review of the Catholic University of America and evaluation panels for the Universities of Cambridge, Harvard, Princeton and Yale) and editorial boards (e.g. *Journal of the History of Ideas, Assays, American Historical Review, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History*). She published 5 books, 2 separately published essays, 59 articles and chapters in composite publications and some 60 reviews in scholarly journals. Her expertise is in the field of Cultural History from Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

Professor Emiel Lambert, University of Leuven, Belgium

Emiel Lamberts (1941) obtained his PhD in History at the Catholic University of (KU) Leuven in 1970, where he has occupied the chair in 'History of European Politics and Religion in the 19th and 20th Centuries' since 1980. He was visiting professor at the 'Université Catholique de Louvain' and the Universities of Warsaw, Georgetown (Washington DC) and Leiden. He was/is president of the 'Academia Belgica' in Rome (1999-2003), the Belgian committee of the 'Instituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano' (2003-), the Socrates committee of the 'Vlaamse Gemeenschap' (1997-) and of the FWO (Flemish Fund for Scientific Research) committee 'History, Archeology and Arts'. He was dean of the Faculty of Arts (1991-1997), member of several other boards at the KU Leuven, director of the 'European Studies Program' (1988-1991 and 1999-2003) and scientific director of the 'Leuvens Universiteitsfonds - Partnership & Academic Development' (2003-). Emiel Lambert published (in Dutch, French, English and German) 12 books, 54 articles and he edited a synthesis of the History of The Netherlands (together with J.C.H. Blom). His main research interests are Historical Development of Politics and Social Catholicism; History of the University of Leuven.

Professor Marion Wynne-Davies, University of Dundee, UK

Since1999 Marion Wynne-Davies (1958) has been reader in English at the University of Dundee, where she started as senior lecturer in 1995. Before that, she was lecturer at the Universities of Keele (1991-1995) and Lancaster (1990-1991). After her PhD at the Royal Holloway College of the University of London in 1985, she obtained a Lumsden Nicoll Fellowship at Sorbonne (Paris) and a William Noble fellowship at the University of Liverpool (1987-1990). She won many prizes, awards and grants (such as a British Academy Research Award, Canadian High Commission Faculty Enrichment Award, Megumi (grace) Visiting Professor at Kobe College, Josephine A. Roberts Award for Editing). Her administrative experience includes memberships of the Faculty Board and of many appointing panels for university lectureships and she was Subject Reviewer, Review Chair, Institutional Profiler and Institutional Reviewer for the QAA. Her scientific output includes 11 books, general editorship of 6 volumes of *The Bloomsbury Guides to English Literature* and 4 volumes of *The Northern Renaissance Seminar Books*, 19 essays in books, 14 articles in academic journals and 29 conference papers. Her expertise is in the fields of Literary Studies and Cultural History, covering the Early Modern Period until the Present.

Appendix D

Research in- and output ICOG Project Groups

Input research staff ICOG (in fte)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	TOTAL				
Project Group 1: Politics, Media and Nation Building											
Tenured staff	10,9	11,3	11,7	11,7	11,6	11,3	68,4				
Non-tenured staff	1,0	1,0	2,0	3,0	4,0	7,0	18,0				
PhD students	6,6	8,2	10,0	14,1	17,3	18,3	74,5				
Project Group 2: Aut	onomy an	d 'New' Dep	endence in	the Arts							
Tenured staff	22,4	22,7	21,7	21,9	22,7	22,6	133,8				
Non-tenured staff	4,0	9,0	11,0	10,0	5,0	5,0	44,0				
PhD students	11,4	16,2	21,3	21,3	18,4	20,4	109,0				
Project Group 3: Scie	nce and C	ultural Envi	ronment: A	utonomy ar	nd Indepen	dence					
Tenured staff	1,7	2,0	1,8	1,8	1,8	1,8	10,9				
Non-tenured staff	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,8	1,8				
PhD students	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,6	1,6	3,0	6,2				
Total ICOG											
Tenured staff	35,0	36,0	35,2	35,3	36,0	35,7	213,1				
Non-tenured staff	5,0	10,0	13,0	13,0	9,0	13,8	63,8				
PhD students	18,0	24,4	31,3	37,0	37,3	41,7	189,7				
Total research staff	58,0	70,4	79,5	85,3	82,3	91,2	466,6				
Supporting staff	0,8	1,4	1,4	1,7	1,7	1,9	8,9				
Total staff	58,8	71,8	80,9	87,0	84,0	93,1	475,5				

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Full Professors in the 3 Project Groups of ICOG

Politics, Media and Nation Building			TONOMY AND 'NEW' PENDENCE IN THE ARTS	Science and Cultural Environment: Autonomy and Independence			
1	D.F.J. Bosscher	1	H.G.C. Hillenaar	1	F.R. Ankersmit		
2	H.W. Hoen	2	E.J. Korthals Altes	2	K. van Berkel		
3	P.M.E. Volten	3	J.J. van Maanen				
4	P. Kooij	4	W. Schönau				
5	H. te Velde	5	W. Wende				
6	W.J. van Bekkum	6	J.J. van Baak				
7	W.E. Krul	7	W.M. Verhoeven				
8	D.E.H. de Boer	8	H. van Dijk				
9	M. Gosman	9	C.H.J.M. Kneepkens				
10	A.H. Huussen	10	A.A. MacDonald				
11	O.M. van Nijf	11	B.A.M. Ramakers				
12	M.A. Wes	12	B.F.H. Scholz				
		13	H.E. Wilcox-Boulton				
		14	J.W. Drijvers				
		15	M.A. Harder				
		16	R.R. Nauta				
		17	G.J. Dorleijn				
		18	C.T. Hasselblatt				
		19	H.L.M. Hermans				
		20	A.M. Swanson				
		21	P.G. Bossier				
		22	E.R.M. Taverne				
		23	A. van der Woud				
		24	M.A. Faries				
		25	H.T. van Veen				

Output ICOG

		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	TOTAL	AVERAGE OUTPUT / FTE TENURED STAFF	
Project Group 1: Politics, Media and Nation Building 1 Academic publications										
	a. in journals	9	16	22	16	21	11	95	1,39	
	b. book chapters	46	47	55	53	44	31	276	4,04	
To	otal Academic publications	55	63	77	69	65	42	371	5,43	
2	Monographs	8	2	5	3	4	12	34	0,50	
3	Ph.D. theses	2	1	0	0	0	1	4	0,06	
4	Professional publications	and pro	ducts							
	Professional publications	73	46	44	79	49	40	331	4,84	
	Reviews	50	69	52	64	30	42	307	4,49	
	Editorial activities	12	13	9	17	10	8	69	1,01	
Pı 1	roject Group 2: Autonomy a Academic publications	nd 'Nev	v' Deper	ndence i	in the A	rts				
	a. in journals	30	40	37	32	30	28	197	1,47	
	b. book chapters	80	82	71	64	81	78	456	3,41	
To	otal Academic publications	110	122	108	96	111	106	653	4,88	
2	Monographs	4	2	7	4	3	4	24	0,18	
3	Ph.D. theses	3	3	2	4	1	2	15	0,11	
4 Professional publications and products										
	Professional publications	62	88	82	85	64	45	426	3,18	
	Reviews	43	59	64	71	32	24	293	2,19	
	Editorial activities	29	29	24	34	31	24	171	1,28	

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Output ICOG - continued -

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	TOTAL	AVERAGE OUTPUT / FTE TENURED STAFF
Project Group 3: Science and Cultural Environment: Autonomy and Independence 1 Academic publications								
a. in journals	3	6	6	5	5	7	32	2,94
b. book chapters	10	4	6	5	11	4	40	3,67
Total Academic publications	13	10	12	10	16	11	72	6,61
2 Monographs	1	1	1	2	0	0	5	0,46
3 Ph.D. theses	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0,18
4 Professional publications ar	nd prod	ucts						
Professional publications	4	9	2	13	4	5	37	3,39
Reviews	0	7	0	2	4	0	13	1,19
Editorial activities	0	3	2	0	1	1	7	0,64
Total ICOG 1 Academic publications								
a. in journals	42	62	65	53	56	46	324	1,52
b. book chapters	136	133	132	122	136	113	772	3,62
Total Academic publications	178	195	197	175	192	159	1096	5,14
2 Monographs	13	5	13	9	7	16	63	0,30
3 Ph.D. theses	5	4	3	5	1	3	21	0,10
4 Professional publications and products								
Professional publications	139	143	128	177	117	90	794	3,73
Reviews	93	135	116	137	66	66	613	2,88
Editorial activities	41	45	35	51	42	33	247	1,16



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