

Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences
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Executive Board

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Maastricht
15-07-2025

Subject: Approval research assessment report GROW 2018-2023

Dear Prof. Schols, dear Annemie,

The Executive Board (EB) has taken note of the Research assessment report of the Research Institute for Oncology and Reproduction (GROW) External Review Committee (ERC). GROW, as a research institute, conducts important translational research in close collaboration with clinical experts at hospitals in the region. The research focus of the institute stands out for its unique interconnected approach between oncology and reproduction, spanning from early developmental biology and fertility to the entire spectrum of cancer management from prevention to aftercare. Due to its translational focus, GROW maintains a strong partnership with Maastricht UMC+, thereby exemplifying how integrated academic and clinical research can lead to better healthcare outcomes and improved quality of life.

The ERC has provided an extensive evaluation of GROW and its divisions. All the required SEP aspects, such as Open Science, PhD policy, academic culture and Human Resource policy were adequately covered by the ERC in their assessment. The committee was quite positive in its general assessment of GROW's research. They emphasized the high quality research of the institute and the clear thematic approach and innovative technologies. In addition, the ERC found GROW's research to align well with societally relevant issues, and the measured impact of its research was determined to be significant. The ERC also recognized that many GROW researchers are active in international committees, ensuring that GROW has the capability to extend its influence in terms of research policy and funding in healthcare. The viability of the institute is also strong according to the ERC, with healthy academic staff build-up and a large number of collaborations with partners in affiliated hospitals in the region.

Although the assessment of GROW was generally positive and the accomplishments of GROW are shown to be numerous, there were some specific points of concern identified by the ERC that could warrant further attention by the institute, such as future investments in AI and the microbiome, and improving support for postdocs/external PhDs. These concerns ultimately resulted in several constructive recommendations by the ERC. These are mostly enhancements on activities that are already being undertaken, without structural changes to the organization or governance of the institute.

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The EB is pleased to see the in-depth assessment provided by the ERC and appreciates the constructive recommendations outlined for the institute. The EB therefore formally approves the report and requests that, as a follow up, the institute starts formulating a strategic action plan based on these recommendations. This action plan should be submitted to the EB before the end of January 2026.

We want to thank you and GROW for your dedication to continuously improve the high quality of research at the institute and look forward to the submission of your action plan. Additionally, we want to thank the committee for their comprehensive assessment and hereby formally discharge them from their assignment.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of the Executive Board
of Maastricht University,



Prof.dr. P. Habibović
Rector Magnificus