

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS)
Research Institute - Mid-Term Review, 2015

Report of the mid-term assessment committee

Committee Report

Introduction

Based on a national mandate, the research output of universities in the Netherlands is subject to an external evaluation every six years. In addition, faculties are obliged to conduct a Mid-Term review. For that purpose, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) of Maastricht University carried out an assessment of its performance since the last Full-Term Review, in 2011, and convened a Mid-Term Committee of six scholars to evaluate its *Self-Evaluation Report* and overall research performance. The Committee's assessment is an important element in the Faculty's preparation for the next Full-Term Review, in 2017.

The Mid-Term Review Committee consists of the following scholars:

- Prof. dr. Desmond Dinan (George Mason University, School of Public Policy, Arlington VA, USA) – Chair.
- Prof. dr. Isa Baud (University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences – Department of Human Geography, Planning and International Development Studies, The Netherlands).
- Prof. dr. Willy Jansen (Radboud University Nijmegen, Institute for Gender Studies, The Netherlands).
- Prof. dr. Nelly Oudshoorn (University of Twente, Science, Technology, and Policy Studies, The Netherlands).
- Prof. dr. Eric Vanhaute (Ghent University, Department of History, Belgium).
- Prof. dr. Ginette Verstraete (VU University Amsterdam, Faculty of Arts, Department of Arts and Culture, The Netherlands).

In its *Self-Evaluation Report* of November 2014, the Faculty reported on its recent performance, current activities, and future prospects, in the context of developments within Maastricht University and beyond, both nationally and internationally. The report consists of four parts. Part I addresses developments at the Faculty level, specifically within the Research Institute for Arts and Social Sciences. Part II looks in detail at each of the Research Institute's four Research Programmes: Arts, Media and Culture (AMC); Politics and Culture in Europe (PCE); Maastricht University Science, Technology and Society Studies (MUSTS); and Globalisation, Transnationalism and Development (GTD). Part III examines the activities of five centres which are either part of or closely related to the Research Institute: the Centre for Gender and Diversity; the Social Historical Centre Limburg; the Maastricht Centre for European Governance; the Centre for Urban and Euregional Studies; and the Maastricht Centre for Citizenship, Migration and Development. Two of the centres—the Centre for Gender and Diversity (CGD); and the Social Historical Centre Limburg (SHCL)—have have been singled out for more detailed evaluation by the Mid-Term Committee: CGD because it is the only centre which receives direct funding from the Faculty, and is in the process of reviewing its strategy and position within the Faculty; SHCL because it is the only centre which is truly self-standing and also physically separate from the Faculty. Part IV of the Report discusses the Graduate School (GS), an entity

within the Faculty that is separate from but closely linked to the Research Institute and which is responsible for recruiting and training PhD candidates.

A daylong series of meetings took place on 13 January 2015 between the Faculty's senior staff and the Mid-Term Committee. Two months previously, the Faculty sent copies of the *Self-Evaluation Report* to the members of the Mid-Term Committee, and made supporting documentation available on a secure website. The Committee's Report, based on the Faculty's self-evaluation, the supporting documentation, and the site-visit, summarizes the Committee's findings and recommendations.

A. The Research Institute of Arts and Social Sciences

The Committee would like to acknowledge the quality and thoroughness of the Faculty's *Self-Evaluation* and the supporting documentation. The Committee appreciates also the availability, openness, and frankness of the Faculty's management and staff during the busy site visit. The Committee would like to thank the Dean, other officials, and research staff, and especially Ms. Lidwien Hollanders, who served as secretary and who facilitated the Committee's work.

The Committee's responsibility was twofold:

1. To evaluate the Faculty's response to the 2011 External Review, and
2. To evaluate the Faculty's plans for future actions and activities.

In carrying out this responsibility, the Committee looked at the functioning of the Research Institute overall; at the four Research Programmes within the Institute; and at the various Centres either within or closely associated with the Institute. In addition, the Committee evaluated the Graduate School.

Overall, the Committee formed an extremely positive impression. The Committee was struck by the large quantity and high quality of the Faculty's research output, which individual Committee members described as "exciting," "original," "innovative," and "truly interdisciplinary." The Committee would like to compliment the Faculty on maintaining such a high level of productivity in times of national budget cuts and on creating excellent professional support for maintaining these standards.

It was obvious to the Committee that the Faculty had responded to the 2011 Review, which was highly critical in a number of respects, in a constructive and wide-ranging way.

Key concerns raised in the 2011 Report, which the Faculty has since addressed or is continuing to address, include:

1. The recruitment, training, and graduation in a timely fashion of PhD candidates;
2. The position of junior, non-tenured staff;
3. Incentives, such as seed money, for staff to explore research funding opportunities and write grant proposals;
4. Possible tension between Faculty members' individual research interests and agendas and the Research Programmes' collective research interests and agendas;
5. The Faculty's outreach activities and external visibility;
6. The evaluation of research output, notably the tendency to privilege refereed journal articles over books, both sole-authored and edited;

7. The Faculty's library policy.

While appreciating the seriousness with which the Faculty has taken these concerns, the Committee notes that a number of them are perpetual and can never be satisfactorily resolved. For instance, non-tenured faculty members are inherently insecure. This is not to say that the Faculty should not—or is not—attempting to alleviate their anxieties and introduce as much transparency and predictability as possible, but it is to say that junior researchers lacking the security of tenure, let alone the prospect of a tenure-track, are bound to be fretful. Similarly, it is difficult to challenge the academic profession's preference for peer-reviewed journal articles, regardless of how that reflects on the output of an avowedly interdisciplinary entity such as the FASoS Research Institute.

Nevertheless the Committee has comments to make on the Faculty's policy toward non-tenured members, on the measurement and evaluation of scholarly output, and on most of the other issues raised in the 2011 Report. The only "legacy issue" that the Mid-Term Committee did not address was the Faculty's library policy, which no longer seems problematic in any way.

Although few new issues have arisen since the 2011 Report, changing circumstances and ongoing uncertainties are potentially significant for the work of the Research Institute. In particular:

1. Changes in senior management: The Dean of FASoS became interim director of the Research Institute in September 2013, and is due to step down from both positions later in 2015. The appointment at that time of a new FASoS Dean and of a new Research Institute Director will be highly consequential for both entities, but are not a cause of concern for the Committee. Indeed, the Committee notes the effectiveness of the Institute's coordinating body (OTO), which will provide stability and continuity during the management transition.
2. Financial retrenchment: Cutbacks in national government funding of higher education, notably large reductions in first-stream funding, are having a major impact on the Research Institute and the Graduate School. With less first-stream funding for PhD students, the Faculty has been scrambling to find alternative funding sources and to increase the number of external PhD students. This complements a related trend toward more sponsored research within universities, in the Netherlands and abroad. As a result, faculty members are spending more time than ever before seeking grant opportunities; writing and submitting grants; and (when successful) administering grants. The importance of external fund-raising is now reflected in academic job descriptions and performance evaluations. While understandable and perhaps inevitable, this can be demoralizing and can distract faculty members from the primary pursuits of teaching and researching.

Interdisciplinarity is a cherished feature of the Research Institute. The Committee notes that interdisciplinarity is easy to proclaim but difficult to attain. Yet the Research Institute has fostered a climate conducive to genuine interdisciplinarity, which is clear from the highly interesting interdisciplinary articles and books produced by its researchers, and has put structures in place to foster cooperation and collaboration across disciplinary borders. To the uninitiated—which included most Committee Members—the Faculty's organization seems confusing and unnecessarily complex. There are five departments; four Research Programmes under the umbrella of the Research Institute; a myriad of Centres; and an ancillary

Graduate School. How is this conducive to faculty members' productivity and collaboration across disciplines? Does this structure not encourage disintegration rather than unity and coherence? Could what has proven successful in the past lead to potential fragmentation in the near future?

Having spoken to Faculty management and members, the Committee was reassured. FASoS indeed provides a framework that facilitates flexibility, networking, and mobility for faculty members who might otherwise feel constrained by traditional disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, the proliferation of centres, in many cases a strategic response to funding opportunities, is not only advantageous internally but also provides visibility to the Institute for outside partners and an avenue for researchers to develop external networks. Nevertheless there is a risk that having too many centres could result in excessive institutionalization, thereby preventing rather than enhancing collaboration. Without a clear Faculty mission-statement as to why new centres are necessary, the "corporate image" of the Faculty could be adversely affected.

An internal threat to interdisciplinarity, which the Faculty noted in its *Self-Evaluation*, is "a growing tendency [for faculty members] to meet at disciplinary level" (p. 37). In the same report, the MUSTS Research Programme expressed concern about "the recent dynamics in the matrix organization of the FASoS of creating disciplinary fora" (p. 76). Following the site visit, the Committee does not think that there is a serious risk of "re-disciplinization," or a serious threat to interdisciplinarity as a result of internal developments within FASoS (see also the comments by Prof. Oudshoorn, below, on the MUSTS program).

External threats to interdisciplinarity include the need for FASoS researchers to find publishing outlets in journals that tend mostly to be discipline-based, and the disciplinary constraints sometimes posed by external funding sources. Such constraints are not always explicit but may be implicitly practiced by reviewers. The committee notes that FASoS researchers have for a long time successfully found outlets for journal articles without compromising the interdisciplinary nature of their work, and seem equally adept at navigating the shoals of external grant seeking.

Despite these observations, the Committee is far from sanguine about the nature of interdisciplinarity. The Committee notes that interdisciplinarity in both teaching and research succeeds in FASoS because the Faculty has put appropriate structures in place and provided adequate incentives. Interdisciplinarity does not appear spontaneously or happen in a vacuum. Rather, it must be nurtured and maintained. Perhaps there is a need for a faculty-wide "vision text" on nurturing and maintaining interdisciplinarity, both in content and in organization, stressing the importance of interdisciplinary research teams and of integrating the framing of issues and theory building. Interdisciplinarity also needs to be based on a firm disciplinary foundation, which the FASoS Departments provide. It is the synergy between the Departments, the Research Programmes, and the Centres, together with a positive, resourceful environment, that fosters interdisciplinarity within FASoS.

Like all academic entities, but perhaps more so because of its interdisciplinary nature, FASoS is grappling with the measurement of scholarly output. In 2012, FASoS adopted the SEP system. The key difference between this and the one previously used by FASoS is that journal articles are the only peer-reviewed publications captured by the SEP system. In other words, a distinction is

not made for books that are peer-reviewed. As a result, there is an apparent decline in the number of FASoS peer-reviewed publications since the new system was introduced. Concerned about the misleading impression that this may create, and about the presentation of its research output, FASoS specifically asked the Committee “to help us find a way to interpret the figures until 2011 and give us advice on how to deal with the change with regards to the upcoming 2017 [external evaluation] (*Self-Evaluation*, p. 22).”

The Committee understands the need to conform to a national SEP standard. At the same time, the Committee appreciates the concern of many faculty members that the failure to list all peer-reviewed publications implicitly underrates books, which are a staple of the kind of interdisciplinary work espoused by FASoS. While continuing to use the SEP system, FASoS could separately list peer-reviewed books, based on information given by the authors, thereby including books in the general output norm. The Faculty could include the list of peer-reviewed books as an annex to its next *Self-Evaluation Report* (in preparation for the 2017 External Review). Regardless, the Committee is keen to point out that FASoS has an excellent record of publishing both peer-reviewed journal articles and books of the highest quality.

The Committee would also like to emphasize the importance of edited (sole or co-edited) books as vehicles for disseminating interdisciplinary work. Just as refereed journal articles are generally privileged over books, sole (or co-authored) books are generally privileged over edited books. This should not deter FASoS from highlighting edited books, especially those that emerge directly from the interdisciplinary research agendas of its Research Programmes. *The Politics of Information*, co-edited by T. Blom and S. Vanhooker (Palgrave 2014), a product of the Politics and Culture in Europe programme, is a case in point, as is *Gothic Kinship*, co-edited by A. Andreweg and S. Zlosnik (Manchester University Press, 2013), which came out of the Centre for Gender and Diversity. Nor should FASoS neglect the potential of publishing its Research Programmes' work in special editions of journals, often as a prelude to publication in book form.

On a related note, the Committee advises the Faculty to be wary of efforts to evaluate the impact of refereed journal articles. Though interesting and comprehensive, the report by Ad Prins (*Visibility of FASoS Research Programmes: A Bibliometric Analysis of Scientific and Societal Visibility*), appended to the *Self-Evaluation*, shows the limits and the pitfalls of this approach. The judgment of expert external assessors may ultimately be more valuable than citation numbers or novel indices of the academic impact of a specific publication, a point that is especially applicable to the GTD research group.

Measuring societal impact is as difficult as measuring academic impact. Societal impact is nevertheless important for the work of FASoS, not least because it is now an SEP criterion of evaluation. Even without credible scientific metrics, it is clear to the Committee that FASoS is making a strong outreach effort. Many Faculty members are public intellectuals and have a media presence. They participate in social debates, such as on migration, aging, adoption, and art conservation, and provide research results directly relevant for social institutions, such as care for the demented elderly. Many researchers are eager to disseminate their work to a wider, non-academic audience. Some of this valorisation is a result of individual initiative; some receives active FASoS support. By hosting a webcast debate between the candidates for European Commission President in the run-up to the 2014 European Parliament elections, FASoS once again seized an excellent opportunity to exploit its association with institutional

innovation in the European Union—a legacy of the Maastricht Treaty—and raise its profile throughout Europe and abroad. (The Committee Chair noted that a large conference took place in Washington, DC, built around the webcast Maastricht debate).

The importance of valorisation raises questions about its relative significance within FASoS. Clearly, it should not be on par with teaching and researching. At the same time, valorisation is not entirely divorced from teaching and research, as working with external partners and societal groups may sharpen a faculty member's teaching skills and research agenda (see also the comments by Prof. dr. Oudshoorn, below, on the MUSTS program). For that reason, and because of its intrinsic importance for FASoS, the Committee encourages the Faculty to think about ways in which valorisation may be fully acknowledged and rewarded.

Regardless of the significance of outreach or valorisation, teaching and researching are by far the most important activities of the academic staff. As already noted, the reduction of first-stream funding is having a major impact on the recruitment of PhD candidates. These cutbacks, and an increasingly competitive academic environment, are making it increasingly necessary for staff to seek outside funding in order to make possible the recruitment of external PhD candidates and to facilitate their own research. Clearly, some staff members feel overwhelmed, or at least discomfited, by the increasing emphasis on finding outside funding sources. Pressure to bring in external funds exists at all levels, but may affect junior staff disproportionately.

The committee notes that the Faculty has an extremely good record of external fund-raising, both from competitive second-stream (Dutch government) sources and from equally-competitive third-stream (non-Dutch government) sources. The Faculty is already exceeding its goal, set in 2011, of generating 20% of its yearly income through indirect government funding and contract research. The Faculty owes its success in large part to the excellent administrative support that it provides for fund-raising efforts, notably through the services of the financial administrator and the research funding advisor, and through the advice of the research panel. The direct involvement of the finance department, the heads of the academic departments, and the Dean ensures the highest quality control of grant applications.

While urging the academic staff to seek external funding, the Faculty needs to appreciate that some researchers are better-equipped and more inclined than others to identify and pursue grant opportunities. Scholarly productivity and teaching excellence should trump fund-raising ability in the evaluation of Faculty members. Faculty members themselves need to prioritize their commitments and manage their time so that grant-seeking does not interfere with other key activities. A strategic approach—targeting realistic grant opportunities—is called for.

Although efforts to balance the demands of fund-raising and researching (less so teaching) transcend the Faculty level, they should be addressed as a real problem in the Faculty's policies. The call for rising productivity in fund-raising accentuates the growing pressure on "free" research time. Some initiatives can be taken to ameliorate this, such as an additional investment in sabbatical leaves and in the provision of research assistants. Moreover, there needs to be a continuous reflection about the relationship between quantity and quality of research (output). The Faculty should make clear that it takes this challenge seriously.

Junior faculty members may feel under particular pressure because of the growing need to bring in external funds. Already, the 2011 Review Committee drew the Faculty's attention to certain

practices and policies that accentuated the uncertainty and apprehension surrounding junior faculty positions. The Faculty has responded positively to the 2011 Review Committee's recommendations, in particular by changing the teaching/research ratio from 80/20 to 70/30. The Faculty is also providing greater clarity and better opportunities for younger staff to apply for tenure-track positions. Nevertheless, the Mid-Term Review Committee notes that the length of time that junior faculty members spend at FASoS before being eligible for a tenure-track position, and, if they hold such a position, before coming up for tenure, may be excessive.¹ This is likely to accentuate the anxiety of junior faculty members and ultimately cause some of them to leave—the GTD Research Programme noted the loss of three such faculty members between 2011 and 2013 (*Self-Evaluation*, p. 80).²

There is a danger, especially for the smaller Research Programmes, that the pressure to being in external funding may have unintended consequences, as the tenured staff hardly have time to implement the various projects and non-tenured members may leave with their projects. Accordingly, the Faculty should explore possible incentives to retain non-tenured staff with proven acquisition skills and give them better tenure-track and tenuring possibilities. In general, the Committee urges FASoS to take additional steps to retain valued junior faculty members and encourages Programme Directors to press the Dean on that point.

The Committee positively evaluated some other policies implemented in staff employment. One was the proactive stance taken to fill the expected vacancy due to the departure of a highly-productive professor before it could cause a drop in production. However, the Committee wondered why this successful approach was not taken in two other cases (AMC and CGD).³ The Committee also noted the success of the ambitious gender policy adopted in 2005. Such positive results merit maintenance in the future.

¹ In response to the Committee's interim report, the Dean noted that "The time before being eligible for a tenure-track position at FASoS is 2 years. Academic staff on tenure-track can go up for tenure within a period of 2 to 3 years. The total period of 5 years before academic staff can go up for a tenured position is not seen as an excessive period in the (inter)national context." The difference of opinion between the committee and FASoS management over whether the time before becoming eligible for tenure is sometimes excessive may be due to uncertainty on the committee's part about what exactly is meant by tenure-track in Maastricht, as opposed to institutions elsewhere. It should be noted that tenure in the Netherlands means something else than in the United States, being associated less with fulfilling specific and objective academic criteria of tenure then with labour rights to be appointed for an indefinite period of time, subject to removal with due cause. Maastricht seems to take the middle way, by introducing some of the U.S. practices in this respect, while still having to conform to Dutch labour laws. This issue may become moot, as new labour laws may soon be in place requiring universities to give 'tenure' to scientific staff after two years, so that a person can be appointed on a temporary basis for no more than two years.

² Although the Faculty noted in its *Self-Evaluation* (p. 80) that 'There are diverse reasons for their quitting,' representatives of the GTD group stressed in the on-site meeting that the long tenure-track procedure posed a particular difficulty in keeping people who could get a tenured position elsewhere.

³ In response to the Committee's interim report, the Dean explained that FASoS tried to fill the AMC chair but could not find a suitable candidate (see also p. 9 of this report). Regarding the CGD the dean explained that FASoS already subsidizes CGD in the amount of more than €100,000 annually.

B. Research Programmes and Centres

B1 Arts, Media and Culture (AMC)

The aim of AMC is to analyze the dynamics of cultural transformation by studying how developments in the arts and the media respond to socio-cultural and political changes and how vice versa cultural artefacts and practices can shape social and political culture. The research group can be complimented for their effective interdisciplinary research. This has led to an increased and solid publication rate — peer-reviewed articles more than doubled in comparison to the 2010 report — and innovative perspectives on for instance curatorial practices, fan cultures, family, care, or cultural identity. The books and articles consulted for this report were published by established presses and considered important contributions by the Committee. The collective endeavour to apply for project funds and for Internationalization Networks has also been successful, which is exceptional given that 2 full professors retired in the last years and only 1 full professor remains. The number of PhD's is promising, especially since another 10 can be expected to finish in 2014 and 2015 (a ratio of 10 PhD's for 7.59 research staff is high) Moreover, the group should be credited for their strong valorisation efforts. For the humanities, effective and also financially supported cooperation with social partners tends to be more difficult than say for technology, policy, or medicine, so in this light the results are even more special. In the past three years this Programme has managed to put itself on a par with the other ones in the Faculty.

The following issues were discussed by the committee as potential points of concern:

1. It was already said in general that the demand for valorisation should not overshadow the demand for scholarly research and teaching. Here, a somewhat better balance could be obtained by shifting some of the energy now devoted to professional and popular publications (contributions to newspapers etc) into refereed publications. We recommend moreover that the value of monographs, interdisciplinary topical volumes, and publications in Dutch be more explicitly legitimated in the Faculty's self-evaluation.
2. This group gathers a wide variety of scholars from various fields. Finding a balance between the demand for coherence on the one hand and sufficient freedom for disciplinary interests and innovative, new joint projects on the other is not always easy. The Committee welcomes the chosen focus on creating coherence by following a conceptual and methodological approach rather than 1 overarching theme and agrees that the Centres can function as networks for new or continued research collaboration and can be seen as important research lines in the wider programme. Heritage and Memory; Writing and Communication; and Gender and Diversity are respected fields of research with a social and academic outreach, on a local as well as global level. The Committee appreciates the necessity for the research group to emphasize coherence in the *Self-Evaluation* and generally in its external representation, while noting that the pursuit of original, creative, and more individualistic research should not be sacrificed by forcing everyone into a strict programme. Linking up with the NWO programmatic themes of e-humanities and Creative Industry might be of help here too (they are left implicit in the text).

3. Unfortunately, AMC profited less than other units from the laudable policy of filling important chairs before they become vacant. An investment in another full professorship will be necessary for this team to maintain its success. The Committee notes that, faced with a lack of good candidates for the Chair in Literature (AMC), FASoS recently appointed a young scholar with great potential, who may in due course fill the Chair.

Other recommendations are to explicate the existing links between the programme and the national research schools, and to use not only the staff's own publications in the media, but also the media's attention for research results, as an indication of the social impact of the research.

B2 Politics and Culture in Europe (PCE)

With its strong focus on the European Union (EU), the Politics and Culture in Europe Research Programme neatly encapsulates the distinctive Maastricht brand. After all, it was in Maastricht in 1991 that leaders of the then European Community decided on an ambitious treaty change that soon launched the EU, including a host of institutional reforms and new or radically-revised policy areas. But Maastricht is associated not only with the resurgence of European integration but also with the onset of large-scale public disaffection with the EU. It is the totality of the Maastricht experience—good and bad—that gives such relevance and vibrancy to the PCE Programme.

In its 2011 Review, the Research Assessment Committee expressed concern that the Programme's central focus on EU administrative governance was too narrow. There was also some concern about the integration of historians into the Programme, especially in view of the preponderance of political scientists (all members of the Politics Department are in PCE). Nevertheless, the 2011 Committee was reassured by the recent appointment of Prof. Kiran Patel to head the History Department.

PCE has successfully addressed the concerns of the 2011 Review Committee and has surpassed all expectations with regard to its research agenda, fund-raising capacity, and scholarly output. Despite the obvious disparity between members of the Politics Department (47) and the History Department (15), the Programme seems balanced, coherent, and cohesive. As Programme Director Tannelie Blom pointed out during the site visit, the Politics Department includes various sub-disciplines (comparative politics, international relations, etc.) and hardly constitutes a monolithic block within the Programme. Moreover, Prof. Patel reassured the Committee that, from the point of view of the History Department, PCE indeed works well.

"Challenges for Europe in a Globalizing World" is a fitting label for PCE's over-arching research agenda. Under that umbrella, PCE has identified three related but distinctive research themes: "Historicizing European Union"; "Politics and Administration Beyond the Nation State"; and "Foreign Policy Beyond the Nation State." Administrative government remains an active, indeed indispensable research topic, in the "Politics and Administration" pillar, though it now has a comparative, extra-EU dimension.

As noted in the general report, the key to a successful Research Programme depends on the ability to strike the right balance between the interests and abilities of the group as a whole and of its individual members, as well as between interdisciplinary endeavours and solidly-grounded

disciplinary work. Individual initiative has to be encouraged while collective effort is nurtured; disciplinary boundaries must be respected while interdisciplinary frontiers are expanded. Evidence of the success of this approach, which is abundant in the case of PCE, includes publications ranging from co-edited books inspired by the Programme's research agenda to sole-authored books and journal articles reflecting individual researchers' interests.

In the *Self-Evaluation*, PCE notes proudly that it has produced "97 refereed scientific articles and 11 scientific monographs in 3 years!" (p. 55). The quality of these publications, which is reflected in the stature of the publishers (top-tier academic journals and presses), is remarkable. There is no doubt about PCE's prodigious scholarly output.

Nor is there any doubt about PCE's fund-raising ability. The Programme is successful in securing external funding from Dutch and wider European sources. Thomas Conzelmann's large VIDI/NWO grant stands out.

The one area of weakness, which is by no means peculiar to PCE but is common to the Faculty, is the relatively small number of PhD researchers not so much at this time but possibly within the next few years. A related development, which is more specific to PCE, is the recent accreditation problems with the Research Master in European Studies (RMES). With the accreditation problem resolved, RMES could become a pipeline for promising PhD students in the PCE Programme. In addition, the Committee encourages PCE to exploit the opportunity provided by the UM Brussels Campus to incubate external PhD's.

PCE's striking success raises an obvious question: can it be sustained? In its SWOT analysis, the Programme identifies head-hunting by other universities as a threat, as well as excessive bureaucratic demands and reduced funding from the Dutch government (*Self-Evaluation*, p. 63). Although annoying, the head-hunting of productive staff is validation of the Programme's success. University and FASoS management should do everything possible (within reason) to keep good people, but the departure of such people is a fact of life in a highly-successful organization. The flip side is that high-achievers outside Maastricht are surely taking notice of PCE's success and may themselves be head-hunted by FASoS.

The Committee sympathizes with PCE's concern about growing demands on researchers' time, especially due to bureaucratic demands. On a related note, PCE pointed out in the *Self-Evaluation* that "the amount of energy and time invested in funding applications does not seem to match the net results" (p. 63). The problem here is not lack of administrative support—senior PCE staff noted during the site visit that FASoS has an excellent infrastructure to help researchers write grant proposals and administer grants—but the unrelenting pressure to seek external funding. The Committee therefore supports PCE's decision to be more strategic in targeting external funding sources and concentrating for the coming years on *Horizon 2020*.

PCE identified its relative lack of formal agreements with universities outside of Europe and North America as both a weakness and an opportunity (*Self-Evaluation*, p. 63). Given the Programme's growing emphasis on the global and globalizing contexts of European studies, developing external links certainly makes sense. At the same time, given the already high demands on researchers' time, PCE needs to be selective about the pursuit of *formal* connections, which can be burdensome without being entirely beneficial. The Committee therefore advises PCE to be cautious and selective in this regard.

PCE's success cannot be taken for granted. Certainly, PCE itself does not take it for granted. Perhaps the Faculty and the University's central administration need to pay more attention to PCE not just by making counter-offers to talented researchers being offered contracts elsewhere, but by providing additional (matching) funds to help PCE with PhD recruitment and other, research-related activities. At a time of financial stringency this may seem counter-intuitive, but PCE has shown that targeted investment in its activities is likely to yield a high rate of return for the Faculty and the University as a whole.

B3 Maastricht University Science, Technology and Society Studies (MUSTS)

A Quality

A1 Quality and scientific relevance of research

During the period of review (2011-2013) the MUSTS researchers have succeeded in keeping up the high quality and quantity of publications established in the previous years. The research output has remained fairly stable and there is a small increase in refereed publications. This is quite an achievement given the increased external and internal constraints in terms of decreased available research funds and the high work pressure of its staff. The focus on *Cultures of Innovation* remains an important and original focus. The strategy to integrate the different disciplinary approaches (sociology, history and philosophy) can be considered as highly relevant to address societal issues, ('grand challenges') and to contribute to building and extending the interdisciplinary field of STS. However, the growing dependency on externally funded research projects and the creation of disciplinary fora for discussing research within the MUSTS Programme constitute a serious threat to MUSTS' ambition of conducting interdisciplinary research to address important societal problems.

During the site visit meeting MUSTS researchers emphasized that the shift towards disciplinary meetings was only a temporary practice (disciplinary meetings of the Philosophy and History departments were needed respectively to strengthen the department by the new chair and to discuss education and workload). However, the ambition of interdisciplinary collaboration, working in the matrix structure, and the dynamics of new people coming in all the time will require attention and planning in the future as well. Interdisciplinary collaboration in writing research grant proposals, joint publications and working together in the interdisciplinary CAST Master Programme are very good strategies used in the MUSTS group to prevent that the research diversifies too much along disciplinary lines. It is important to include an overview of these interdisciplinary efforts in the next self-evaluation report (2017).

A2 Leadership

An assessment of the leadership of the full professors responsible for the research lines to create a coherent Research Programme is not possible because the *Self-Evaluation* is not organized around the different research lines. During the site visit MUSTS professors explained that most researchers contribute to more than one research line which may prevent that the different research lines diverge too much. The proposed strategy to reconsider the number and focus of the research lines may be a good start to create more coherence between the research lines. In this respect, the annual research day (Summer Harvest) organized by the MUSTS group

could also be used for strategic discussions of the contribution of the different research lines to the overall theme. We strongly advise MUSTS to include a description of the overall research theme of Cultures of Innovation and how the different research lines contribute to this MUSTS profile in the next self-assessment report.

Leadership of MUSTS researchers on the national and international level is quite strong. The report illustrates that they have continued to play important leading roles in the STS community and beyond. Nationally the FASoS Research Institute has remained active as the managing institution of the Netherlands graduate research school WTMC (Science, Technology and Modern Culture). Moreover, the MUSTS group provided two excellent scientific Directors (K. Bijsterveld and S. Wyatt) to WTMC. In addition, MUSTS researchers have played and continue to play important academic roles in Dutch advisory committees (Health Council, Rathenau Institute) and national and international research organizations (NWO, NLECS NSF, and SHOT).

A3 Academic reputation

Most MUSTS researchers have a good or excellent academic reputation as illustrated by a number of significant prizes. Moreover, many researchers have been invited and play an active role in relevant editorial and advisory boards of national and international journals and act as co-founding editors of book series at prestigious presses (MIT Press, Oxford and Cambridge University Press).

A4. Resources

The staff of the MUSTS Programme has slightly decreased over the past three years which is caused by a decrease in the number of PhD students related to a change in funding of FASoS. Despite these constraints MUSTS researchers have been successful in the acquisition of external research funding, including grants for PhD and postdoc research. The proposed strategy of an adaptation in budgeting, aimed at supporting researchers to acquire new grants while the old projects are still running, is an important strategy to maintain the good track record of acquiring external research funding.

A5 PhD training

PhD training is provided by WTMC and the local Graduate School. Because the *Self-Evaluation* does not include an overview of completed PhD theses (or PhD research in progress) it is not possible to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of PhD training. For future evaluations it is important to include such an overview and assessment in the *Self-Evaluation*. The average duration of PhD projects (*Self-Evaluation*, p. 237) suggests that this remains an issue of concern.

B Productivity

As described above, MUSTS researchers have a very good track record in publishing and other output (see next section). However, as noted in the SWOT analysis, the publications are quite dispersed and there are relatively few publications in core STS journals. During the site visit, MUSTS researchers suggested that the situation is not as bad as described in the report. Nevertheless, it remains important to develop an explicit strategy to improve the visibility of the important work of MUSTS scholars in STS journals.

C Societal relevance

During the period under review, MUSTS' strategy to improve the dissemination of the Programme's accomplishments by organizing outreach activities has worked very well, as exemplified by an increase in publications in newspapers and the participation in public events which received quite some media attention. Equally important, some staff members have played an active role in relevant policy organizations at the national, regional and local level (Advisory Committee on Health Research; Provincial Working Party on Industrial Heritage; Board of the Limburg Museum etc.).

During the site visit, MUSTS researchers suggested that the organization of outreach activities is not only important for dissemination of research findings to other audiences but also for getting very relevant feedback and inspiration for future research, including access to new collaborations and networks. It is important to include an explanation of this two-way traffic of outreach activities in the next self-assessment report because the MUSTS group can use its positive experiences to play an important role in articulating what societal relevance may entail and how it can be practiced. Including an overview of professional publications and outreach activities as indications of valorisation seems to be important as well to give shape to the new SEP category of societal relevance.

D Vitality and feasibility

Like other research groups in the STS community, the MUSTS group is in a period of transition because of the upcoming retirement of its research leader Prof. Wiebe Bijker. To address this potential threat to continuity, leaders of the MUSTS Programme and the Dean of the Faculty have developed an excellent and very effective strategy by funding an extra two-year overlap of the leaving research leader and his successor. The decision of the Board of the University to create a new, additional chair to strengthen the MUSTS Programme and to improve the age composition must be applauded as well. Due to this policy, the continuity and viability of MUSTS research is guaranteed for the coming years.

B4 Globalisation, Transnationalism and Development (GTD)

The *Globalisation, Transnationalism and Development (GTD)* Research Programme was established in 2012 to bring together existing research within MUSTS and stimulate new research initiatives with the global South as focal point. The research approach focuses on transnationalism, as produced through the activities of individuals, families and civic organizations. The focus is primarily on transnational migration and new actors and cultures of development. The small group has maintained its excellent reputation of acquiring large research grants from NWO and other sources, solid publication rates (up again in 2014) and a large group of PhD's per staff fte (5). It has also established itself strongly within the cross-Programme and inter-Faculty research initiative MACIMIDE, and the Marie Curie International Training Network with other faculties and other Maastricht institutes, which they co-manage. The Master programme has 43 students, as a source of next-generation PhD students.

Points from the previous evaluation have been addressed; GTD has more clearly expressed its focus on transnationalism in cross-programme meetings on research, on their website, and in

the new inter-Faculty and inter-university initiatives undertaken. The costs of multi-sited research are an integral part of global South research and have been addressed by the successful acquisition of external funding. The further synergies with other Research Programmes have been successfully carried out at several scale levels.

The interdisciplinarity which characterizes Research Programmes in FASoS, has been embedded in the GTD Programme successfully in its staffing and research processes. Each project has an interdisciplinary team, analytical frameworks are built through iterative and interactive research processes within each study, multi-sited fieldwork and mixed methods are utilized, and theory building is integrated from the various disciplines involved. The results are that conclusions based on comparative research and the GTD methodology are more robust than otherwise, they tend to reframe issues and influence existing disciplinary approaches (definition of families), as well as raising new issues for research (influence of E. Asian development models in African countries).

The GTD group faces several issues. The size of the group is small, and they have lost talented researchers due in part to what seems to be a slow tenuring process in Maastricht (3-5 years before becoming tenure track, and longer for actual tenure) in comparison to other universities.⁴ Coupled with the perceived outlying geographic position of MU, these are powerful disincentives for retaining mid-level staff, which undermine the position of the group. A pro-active stance is recommended in which staff with a proven record of acquisition and publication be given access to tenuring within several years. Given the current burden on the head of the group, it is advisable to draw in at least an associate professor, and preferably a second full professor.

The dip in publications signalled in 2013 has been reversed in 2014, and productivity is close to the levels in other Programmes. The SCIAMPI methodology of publication impact is heavily influenced by the benchmarks chosen; therefore, the conclusions drawn from such analysis need to be treated with caution, given the wide range of publication outlets of the various Research Programmes, which are not easily comparable.

The GTD group's small size necessitates strategic research partnering across Europe, which can be done through the European Association of Development Institutes (150 member institutions from various disciplines); the focus of partnerships should be cross-border rather than within The Netherlands given the requirements of new research funding opportunities (*Horizon 2020*; collaborative efforts NWO-CNRS-ESRC). The valorisation of research, part of NWO's new policy, is already strongly endorsed by the work of GTD, which puts it in a strategic position towards the future.

B5 Centre for Gender and Diversity (CGD)

The *Centre for Gender and Diversity* (founded in 1998 as an interfaculty institute) was integrated into FASoS in 2008 as a research centre in the field of gender and diversity studies. The recommendations of the external review committee in 2005 and the mid-term evaluation in 2008 have all been implemented, including integration in AMC and into FASoS by taking on key roles in the Faculty, concentration on its core business of teaching and research, national

⁴ See footnote number 1 (on page 8) of this report.

cooperation in NOG, scoring a NWO programme to acquire PhD's, and keeping strong CGD points alive. Tenured staff has been expanded. However, the ordinary chair of Prof. M. Meijer has not been filled after her retirement in 2014. Prof. L. Wesseling has taken over Meijer's work as Programme leader of CGD. She presently occupies the Opzij-leerstoel, but this is a temporary special chair which brings with it special obligations. It cannot be seen as a replacement of Meijer, as Wesseling has to do her work as associate professor. A structural ordinary chair, however, is essential for any group to guarantee for the long term acquisition and supervision of PhD's.

Despite its relatively limited research time, the Centre for Gender and Diversity has thus far an impressive scholarly output, proves its interdisciplinary worth through original and effective cooperative projects, and shows leadership in international networks. This network-leadership, as well as appointments as journal editor, funding by international agencies or recognition as conference organizer, proves the excellent scholarly reputation of its staff in an international context. CGD obtained a number of high profile grants. It was in particular successful in disseminating its research results to regional audiences.

The integration of CGD in AMC has been successful. Yet, successful integration and interdisciplinarity could easily lead to a lesser visibility of both gender and the critical gender perspective. We recommend that the CGD develops a more explicit strategy to improve the visibility of this gender input in its interdisciplinary cooperation. Good interdisciplinary work builds on excellent disciplinary input, in this case the existing expertise on gender, gender inequalities and their intersection with other inequalities. CGD has an excellent track record of being in the forefront of innovative and socially relevant research, and the social demand for gender expertise is unabatedly high. This is reflected, for instance, in the attention for gender in large European programs such as *Horizon 2020*. We recommend that CGD continues to respond to this demand without sacrificing its aim of focusing more on scholarly output rather than short term emancipatory projects. Plans for the future therefore need to assure that the gender specialization remains visible not only in the research programming but also in structural staff appointment, including a structural ordinary chair. It is further recommended that connections with the NOG and its partners are more explicitly mentioned, further developed and more fully used.

B6 Social Historical Centre Limburg (SHCL)

The *Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg* (SHCL) is an independent research unit, connected to FASoS. It provides a research infrastructure for comparative regional history by giving access to historical sources, maintenance of a library collection, developing research and publication of a yearbook and two book series. Total staff is 11 fte, most of them (9 fte) employed in archival or library work, facilities and management. The tenured staff in the research department is 2 fte (3 persons). The SHCL takes a unique position in the academic landscape by combining local services (archives, library) with the task of social valorisation and innovative scientific research. The small research staff, headed by its dynamic Director Ad Knotter, manages to continue the remarkable societal and academic outreach of the Centre. This has resulted both in a respectable number of high-quality publications, in new PhD research, and in a very visible social and cultural outreach. In spite of its small size, SHCL staff has been able to balance its regional mission (a hub for regional history) and its international academic ambitions. This supports the national and international reputation of the Centre and the resonance of its more popular

initiatives, such as the publication of the successful miners' book *Mijnwerkers in Limburg: een sociale geschiedenis*.

SHCL has the ambition and the potential to develop into a knowledge centre on comparative regional and interregional history in a global context. Its major threat is the small structural funding by Maastricht University and the Province of Limburg and the 'very tenuous staffing of the Centre' (cfr. the former evaluation report; additional support of a 20% professorship in historical demography is foreseen in 2015). Inflow of young pre- and postdoctoral researchers is very limited. This is an obvious and structural drawback on the laudable ambitions of the Centre. At the same time, the integration of the Centre in the FASoS research infrastructure could be more pronounced, e.g. by giving SHCL and its research a more prominent place on its website. Greater integration of the Centre with other parts of the Faculty, e.g. by means of collaborative projects, would be mutually beneficial.

Since the 2011 evaluation report SHCL has rephrased and increased its ambition to stimulate and develop research in the field of historical border studies and the comparative social history of border regions in a transnational and global perspective. SHCL research is increasingly connected to regional and cross-border international networks. This is a justifiable and extremely promising vision for future research. The existing research lines, mining and mining regions, labour migration, and health and population, open up to new transnational, global and interdisciplinary approaches. They also call for more integrated and more structural collaboration with research and researchers at FASoS. The SHCL Programme can add to the historical dimension and the European and global profile of the Faculty. Especially a closer collaboration with the Research Programme Globalization, Transnationalism and Development can energize cross-border historical and comparative perspectives, and historical transnational and global approaches. This synergy will have an added value for the Centre (increasing the critical research mass) and the FASoS Research Programmes and the department's educational programmes.

C. The Graduate School (GS)

The Committee is highly impressed by the work of the Graduate School in recruiting and training PhD students, in providing student services, and in assisting PhD supervisors. Clearly, the Graduate School is a very professional organization. Largely because of major cuts in first-stream PhD funding, the Graduate School reduced its over-ambitious goal of recruiting 15 PhD students a year to more manageable 8 students a year (*Self-Evaluation*, p. 30). The Graduate School is successfully balancing the training provided by the national research schools with its own, in-house training.

The Faculty has a good record of getting students through the PhD cycle in a relatively timely way—its average of 4 years and 7 months is well below the national average, though still above the national standard of 4 years. Given that only 10% of national (first-stream) PhD students finish within 4 years, the national standard may be unrealistic and the FASoS average may be difficult to improve upon except in one respect: reducing the time between the approval of a student's dissertation and the actual defence. However, the reason for this delay appears to be entirely procedural and beyond the Faculty's control.

The Committee encourages the Faculty to exploit the potential of the university's Brussels Campus to attract external PhD candidates, especially those working in the EU institutions and in the wider Brussels-based EU nexus. This point was discussed as well during the meeting with the PCE Research Programme.

The Graduate School may be unduly ambitious—or unnecessarily harsh on itself—in calling for an improvement in the quality of PhD theses, as it is not clear how this can be measured. As the Graduate School leadership noted in its meeting with the Committee, the Faculty's positive evaluation of a thesis is a stamp of high quality. By contrast, there may be a need to evaluate the career trajectory of PhD graduates, not only immediately after they leave the Faculty but also after a period of five years.