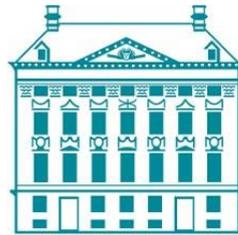


Excerpt
from
Standard Evaluation Protocol
2015 – 2021

Terms of Reference
(January 2015)



Koninklijke
Nederlandse
Akademie van
Wetenschappen

Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Main characteristics of the SEP 4
3. Interpretation of criteria 6
4. Reporting of the results 8

1. Introduction

All publicly funded university research in the Netherlands is evaluated once every six years by way of the Standard Evaluation Protocol. The aims of the evaluation system are to reveal and confirm the quality of the research, its relevance to society and the viability of the research unit, and to be accountable to government and society for the output. Besides giving its impression on the past performance, the assessment focuses on the strategic choices and future prospects of research units and it is important for the assessment committee to tailor its recommendations accordingly.

Wageningen University (WU) organises the research evaluation through its graduate schools. The chair groups will be the research units assessed in this evaluation. The PhD programme and chair groups are evaluated in the context of the graduate school. The Executive Board specifies the Terms of Reference in compliance with the national protocol and appoints an impartial international Assessment Committee.

The chair groups are assessed on three criteria: the quality of the research, its relevance to society, and the viability of the research unit. Furthermore, the evaluation takes two additional aspects into account: the PhD programme and research integrity.

2. Main characteristics of the Standard Evaluation Protocol

The Standard Evaluation Protocol entails two main characteristics:

- **Two levels of assessment:** The assessment takes place at two levels of the research organisation, i.e. the level of the graduate school and the level of chair groups;
- **Three main criteria:** The chair groups are assessed on the three assessment criteria, i.e. research quality, relevance to society, and viability.

Levels of assessment

The chair groups are supposed to give sufficient information in their self-assessment reports for a thorough preliminary judgment of their performance. The chair group is supposed to describe its efforts and results over the past six years and its plans for the coming six years as accurately as possible. It discusses its strategy and specific targets, its research results, and societal relevance of the past period, and its strategy (or changes it has made to its strategy) going forward. Furthermore the chair group conducts a SWOT analysis and provides a benchmark (preferably an international one). Each chair group pays attention to research integrity, while the graduate school provides information about the PhD programme and overarching structures and regulations such as those on research integrity.

The Assessment Committee reports its assessment of the chair groups in clearly worded arguments based on the three criteria and the aspect of research integrity. The Assessment Committee takes into account the chair group's strategy and makes specific recommendations for improvement. The Committee's impression on the three criteria is expressed in a discrete score (1 to 4) and motivated in descriptive terms (with arguments). The scores and motivation must be in agreement. In the text, the most important considerations of the Assessment Committee should be clarified, while the conclusion should be summarized in a single score according to a four point scale, ranging from "excellent" to "unsatisfactory". Please note that intermediate scores are not allowed, the text could express if a group is at the lower or upper end of a scale.

The aspect of research integrity is reported in descriptive terms and - when applicable - the Assessment Committee makes recommendations for improvement. The Assessment Committee considers the chair group's internal research culture, its policy on research integrity, and the way in which violations of such integrity are prevented. In this case it is relevant how the chair group deals with research data, data management and integrity, and in the extent to which an independent and critical pursuit of science is made possible.

In assessing the graduate school the Assessment Committee is requested to consider whether:

1. The graduate school provides a well-organised, coherent, and productive research environment for the PhD programme
2. The graduate school offers a sound and institutionalised programme in which PhD candidates are trained to become independent researchers

3. The graduate school functions as an independent organisational unit with its own budgetary and managerial responsibility, with the university or universities involved providing a level of financing for a period of at least six years that can be described as sufficient in view of the graduate school's planned capacity

The Assessment Committee reports its findings on these characteristics in well-argued descriptive terms, including recommendations for improvement.

The meaning of the scores for the three main assessment criteria:

Score	Meaning	Research quality	Relevance to society	Viability
1	Excellent / world leading	One of the few most influential research groups in the world in its particular field	An outstanding contribution to society	Excellent equipped for the future
2	Very good	Very good, internationally recognized research	A very good contribution to society	Very well equipped for the future
3	Good	Good research	Makes a good contribution to society	Makes responsible strategic decisions and is therefore well equipped for the future
4	Unsatisfactory	Does not achieve satisfactory results in its field	Does not make a satisfactory contribution to society	Not adequately equipped for the future

3. Interpretation of criteria

Criterion 1: Research quality

The committee assesses the quality of the chair group's research and the contribution that research makes to the body of scientific knowledge. The committee also assesses the scale of the chair group's research results (scientific publications, instruments and infrastructure developed by the group, and other contributions to science). The following elements are to be considered in assessing this criterion:

- scientific quality
- productivity to the scientific community (in relation to the volume of the tenured scientific staff)
- the academic reputation of the group
- the strategy to provide the output at the highest relevant level possible

Criterion 2: Relevance to society

The committee assesses the quality, scale and relevance of contributions targeting specific economic, social, or cultural target groups, of advisory reports for policy, of contributions to public debates, and so on. The point is to assess contributions in areas that the chair group has itself designated as target areas. The following elements are to be considered in assessing this criterion:

- a narrative in which the group demonstrates its relevance for society
- research products for societal target groups such as
 - professional publications and outreach to the general public
 - other research output to society
- use of research products by societal groups such as
 - patents, licences, training courses
 - projects in cooperation with societal partners (European Union, Topsectoren, international funds)
 - contract research (including consultancies), also co-publications and use of facilities
 - present jobs of alumni
- demonstrable marks of recognition by societal groups such as demonstrated by
 - advisory reports for the government
 - media exposure as presentations on radio / TV, invited opinion articles etc.
 - membership societal advisory boards

Criterion 3: Viability

The committee assesses the strategy that the chair group intends to pursue in the years ahead and the extent to which it is capable of meeting its targets in research and society during this period. It also considers the governance and leadership skills of the chair group's management. The following elements are to be considered in assessing this criterion:

- leadership of the chair
- (scientific) visibility and recognition
- research vision and strength of the research lines
- innovative strength
- strategic choices and decisions
- composition of the group (expertise, people)
- acquisition capacity

4. Reporting the results

Preliminary findings

The Committee members are requested to go through the self-assessment reports and report their preliminary impressions prior to the site visit. The secretary will collect the individual reports, discuss these briefly with the Committee's chairman in order to facilitate a smooth start of the site visit. There will be ample opportunity to adjust these preliminary impressions while getting better insights during the site visit interviews.

From draft report to final report

At the end of the site visit (or rather shortly thereafter) the final conclusions are collected by the secretary and discussed with the chairman. In addition to the conclusions, the Committee is requested to also provide recommendations for improvement. A format for the reporting will be provided. The final editing of the report is the chairman's responsibility, while the first draft of the report is provided by the secretary. The secretary has an editorial role. The texts for the assessments will be provided by the relevant Committee members. Some iterations with Committee members may follow until the final draft is endorsed unanimously by the complete committee.

The final draft is forwarded to the management board of the Graduate School and is distributed to the chair groups to apply the adversarial principle. Auditees will be requested to only give comments on factual errors and clear misinterpretations.

The management board of the Graduate School collects the comments and communicates back to the Committee. After this, the committee responds with the final report to the management board of Wageningen University.

Publication of the results

It is mandatory to report the conclusions of the Assessment Committee and the follow up by the institute. Consequently, after being finalised and accepted by the university board,

1. the report including the board's consequent position to the committee's conclusions will be announced publicly on the website within six months;
2. the most important conclusions and recommendations, including the follow up, will be announced in the university's annual report.