Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research
Faculty of Humanities, University of Amsterdam
Mid-term research assessment, December 2016

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

This report is the result of an assessment of the Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR) undertaken by a committee with the following members:

- Geert Booij (chair), emeritus professor of Linguistics and former dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Leiden.
- Hanneke Grootenboer, professor in the History of Art, University of Oxford.
- Jo Tollebeek, professor of Cultural History and dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Leuven.
- Patrizia Violi, professor of Semiotics, University of Bologna.

The committee was tasked to assess the research conducted by researchers within AIHR by the director of AIHR, prof. Thomas Vaessens, and the Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities (FGw), prof. Fred Weerman, using the *Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021* (SEP)*.* In writing the report the committee relied on information supplied by AIHR in a self-assessment document and information gathered during a site visit conducted on 12-13 December 2016. During the site visit interviews were held with the following (groups of) staff: the dean of the FGw, the director of AIHR, the head of research and the director of the Graduate School; randomly selected research staff, grouped as full professors, associate professors, assistant professors and PhD researchers (three each); and lastly the directors and coordinators of the Research Schools, the directors of the Research Priority Areas (RPA), and again randomly selected researchers (two per School, one junior and one senior) belonging to one of the Research Schools. The programme of the site visit can be found in the appendix.

A number of criteria and focal points for the assessment were formulated as terms of reference provided by the AIHR. These were, firstly, the three main SEP assessment criteria: research quality, societal relevance and viability. Second, the three key ambitions of AIHR were to be assessed: flexibility (researchers should not encounter institutional barriers and be able to respond optimally to changes and developments); complementarity of competences (researchers should be allowed to distinguish themselves in different ways – fundamental research, fundraising, societal relevance – with no hierarchy between these areas), and interdisciplinarity (researchers are encouraged to ask questions and address themes that require interdisciplinary cooperation). Finally, the committee was asked to judge the added value of the AIHR, the profiles of its constituent Research Schools, the education offered to PhD researchers and the way the SEP was used to write the self-assessment.

This report is organised so as to reflect the assessment criteria and focal points, each section being related to the most important objects of analysis: general and organisational issues, research quality,

relevance to society, viability and PhD training. General conclusions and recommendations are presented at the end of this report, along with recommendations for the upcoming assessment of the research conducted at the Faculty in 2018.

Before the committee present its analysis, constructive criticism, and advice, it would like to make clear that it is favourably impressed by the overall atmosphere of commitment and enthusiasm of the members of the research staff of FGw met by the committee. This is a solid basis for further improvement of AIHR and its schools.

2. General and organisational issues

2.1 The added value of the AIHR

In 2014, the AIHR was founded in response to the previous assessment of the research conducted at the FGw. To the committee (as well as to the AIHR itself), investigating the added value of the AIHR as a faculty-wide organisation was one of the central goals of the assessment. In each of the interviews, research and support staff were asked how they felt about the AIHR and how the 'umbrella institute' worked for them.

The committee feels that the creation of an umbrella organisation was and is – given its stated goals and ambitions – a good choice. The AIHR does not aim to steer or give any top-down guidance regarding the content of the research done by individual staff members. This seems a sensible choice and indeed the AIHR does not have the powers to do so. The stated goals of 'emancipating research' and 'steering', especially when it comes to hiring and allocation of (financial) resources for research, can at least be partially achieved due to the new organisational structure: it is surely helpful that the AIHR (or, more accurately, the director of AIHR and the head of research of the Faculty, with the dean) can control the centrally allocated research funding of the whole faculty. Furthermore, the new Research Council seems instrumental in bringing together those that have a stake in all research conducted at the FGw, particularly the directors of the Research Schools. This allows for decision-making at a central level and keeps the Schools in regular contact with each other. Perhaps most importantly, the majority of the staff members that were interviewed, including those working for the Research Schools, are generally happy with the organisational structure that has been implemented.

Nevertheless, the committee suggests that the AIHR should at least think about having additional (financial) powers to fulfil its ambition of 'steering', even if the AIHR continues not to interfere with the content of the research carried out, and allows the Schools to make their own choices and more generally let them be self-governing entities. At this point, the AIHR and the directors of the research Schools have a limited influence on hiring decisions in comparison to the departments. The influence by the research-part of the faculty on hiring decisions has increased with the forming of AIHR, but this influence still varies and seems somewhat *ad hoc*: vacancies often emerge on the basis of teaching needs, and influence by the AIHR or a School is also dependent on the sort of vacancy. Moreover, the resources available to the AIHR amount to a fraction of what is available for teaching purposes, held by the College of the Humanities (for teaching at Bachelor level) and the Graduate School of the Humanities (for teaching at Master level). The limited resources available imply limited means of fulfilling some of the goals stated in the self-assessment, such as stimulating research in the field of Digital Humanities and stimulating research through the Research Priority Areas (as the RPA's have their own money allocated by the board of the University). Lastly, the stated goal of anticipating the challenges posed by the Nationale Wetenschapsagenda (NWA) seems at odds with not interfering with the content of the research done by FGw Schools, groups or individual researchers; the same goes for the challenges faced by the fact that much research money is distributed via the 'Topsectoren'.

Research staff seem to think that the support staff of the Faculty (faculteitsbureau Onderzoek) are working for AIHR. This is strictly speaking not the case (they are working for the faculty as a whole, fulfilling tasks for research schools and AIHR), but this is irrelevant to researchers, especially given the fact that they are unanimous in their praise for the support staff, especially the Grant Team. Since AIHR is not a distinct organisation but the aggregate of five research schools headed by one person (which is not obvious to

outsiders and not even to researchers working at the FGw), the committee feels that the name of the umbrella organisation is somewhat of a misnomer. It is not an 'academic institute' in the sense that it is not (yet) an organisation that comprises a specific academic community. Indeed, during the interviews it transpired that the research staff, especially those in lower-ranking positions, do not feel a strong attachment to the AIHR as such, but are more connected to their research Schools or groups and even more so to teaching departments.

Regarding the Research Council, the committee feels that it might well be beneficial to add one or two external members to the Council. At present it is at least theoretically possible that each director (of a school or RPA) takes a position that is beneficial to his/her school or RPA, leaving only the director of AIHR and the head of research of the FGw to argue in favour of decisions that would not benefit a particular School but the FGw as a whole. The committee did not get the impression that much 'infighting' occurs, but there are only limited ways to prevent this from happening.

The committee feels that it is difficult to give an assessment of the three key qualities of AIHR (flexibility, complementarity of competences, interdisciplinarity). Flexibility and complementarity of competences are both organisational goals. Flexibility is safeguarded by the fact that much of the research organisation has been created bottom up by allowing researchers to start their own research groups, without institutional barriers. However, the committee is doubtful whether the large number of research groups is actually desirable (see below). The goal of having a complementarity of competences seems like a good idea, but the way(s) in which this ideal can be achieved is/are not clear. HR decisions could make this possible in the long run, but the influence by the AIHR on hiring new staff members is limited. Moreover, it is unclear at which level this complementarity should be achieved (AIHR, Schools or groups) and who is responsible for this. Lastly, teaching departments might well seek different competences or different kinds of complementarity than AIHR, Schools or groups.

The third key value of AIHR, interdisciplinarity, seems somewhat strange given that all research within the FGw is covered by AIHR, making interdisciplinarity almost a given. However, since the interdisciplinarity of the Institute is almost a given, it risks to be at the same time confusing and not clearly profiled, since there is a large overlapping of similar topics in different research groups. A better definition of different research groups within the schools, together with their reduction in number, could make interdiciplinarity a real added value helping at the same time to clarify the interconnections between schools and research groups. Stronger profiles for each of the Schools are essential for interdisciplinarity to become really productive. The committee's view that the research schools should have more specific profiles (see below) should not be detrimental in this respect: the Schools will remain interdisciplinary and some top-down 'sharpening' of research profiles still allows for interdisciplinary bottom-up initiatives.

2.2 The Research Schools and Research Priority Areas

The forming of five Research Schools (besides the interfaculty research institute ILLC) in 2014 was in the eyes of the committee a step in the right direction, given the size and amorphous profiles of the preceding three schools or institutes, especially ICG. However, the committee feels that it is absolutely necessary for the schools to create more specific and distinct profiles. Additionally, the committee perceives a need for the Schools to be more open and cooperative towards each other (e.g. via the Research Council, as noted above) lest they become too entrenched in their respective positions or engage in a struggle for power.

The committee feels that all of the School's profiles needs to be more distinctive. The mission statements of most of the schools are (deliberately?) vague. Some schools, when it comes to the content of the research conducted within that school, are not more than the sum of its parts. This is, at least in part, the inevitable result of the bottom-up approach that was taken when forming the schools: the Schools were, and in most cases still are, simply the aggregation of a number of research groups. Some Schools are happy to have a structure which is and will remain fully built bottom up, and allow its researchers to form or disband research groups as they please. The committee doubts whether such a *laissez-faire* approach is beneficial in the long run and calls for more top-down 'steering' and a strong(er) leadership role for the School's directors and boards (the committee is aware that the directors of the smaller schools have less time to do so). It would

befit each of the Schools to reflect on their leadership role: what is it they want to be good at? In other words, the committee recommends that each School thinks about and subsequently formulates its goal and visions for the future, thus creating a (much more) distinct profile.

There are a number of reasons why creating a stronger profile would be beneficial. First, this will add to the cohesion of the School and its 'community spirit'. The fact that individual researchers can now be part of multiple schools is both a cause and a result of the existing situation, and prevents many researchers to truly identify with their Research School. In interviews with staff members, the committee found that some did not feel strongly attached to their research School (even if they had only one) and identified themselves mostly with their departments (with the exception of PhD researchers) and their research groups. Although this will probably never lead to 'loyalty issues', a lack of identification or commitment was evidently signalled by the committee. Second, a sharper research profile would increase the visibility of the School to outsiders. At present, few Schools are known internationally and perhaps even nationally. ASCA and ACLC evidently benefit from their longevity in this regard, but the number of 'constellations', centres and/or research groups in some schools (e.g. 17 groups in ACLC, 23 in ASH and 47 in ASCA) arguably does not help. Third, a stronger profile would help when competing or collaborating with other institutes or schools at other universities. Collaborations might spring from a well-articulated profile, for example with regards to NWO Zwaartekracht-grants. More generally, the committee suggests that Schools can use external pressures (agendas set by NWO, the NWA, the Topsectoren-policy) to create a stronger profile. At the same time, a strong profile can also be a safeguard against too much external pressure: the present policy of having as many people as possible on committees (at NWO, the NWA, in 'Brussels', et cetera) would be all the more effective if researchers would be representatives for a particular 'school' or way of doing things. A final point ties in with some points made below on PhD training: it perhaps makes sense to have (more) particular methodological courses offered by the individual research schools to bolster their research profile.

The committee has the following remarks or recommendations regarding individual research schools. Few Schools will exclude a particular object of study or research method adopted by its researchers or research groups, especially those that some or a large overlap with teaching departments, like ASH has with (Art) History, ARTES with European Studies and ACLC with Linguistics. Conversely, all research conducted within ASCA has or should have a particular 'angle', although the committee is not entirely convinced that the method of cultural analysis is as distinctive or discriminatory as suggested by ASCA itself. ACLC and especially ASCA seems to have a well-developed community spirit, with regular lecture series and (at ASCA) 'in-house' PhD training. The transfer of some research groups and all archaeologists from ASH to AHM helped sharpening the profile of ASH, though there is a sense (shared by the committee and the school itself) that more 'profiling' will be necessary. The same goes for ARTES, not least because of the recent addition of CEDLA. Both ASH and ARTES still benefit from having strong ties to particular teaching departments. AHM has perhaps the most specific profile of all the research schools and the added benefit of a strongly overlapping RPA. However, having the archaeologists on board means that its profile broadened, and it will be necessary to keep thinking about how to merge material culture (objects) with heritage and memory (representations).

2.3 The research groups

All research groups within AIHR have been built bottom-up. Most researchers and representatives of the research schools are happy about the way the groups were formed. The committee shares their view that it was probably the best and probably only approach that could be adopted when structuring the new research organisation in 2014. However, the committee has a number of concerns about the present number, size and shape of the research groups.

The number of research groups within AIHR is enormous – about 150. Despite recent 'clean-up operations' by the Schools, there still seem to be a number of dormant groups. Regardless, further efforts to bring this number down seem necessary. The large number of groups is detrimental to their visibility: the – in some cases – long lists of groups per school will put off any visitor on the School's websites to investigate any further. Some groups are small (with no more than one or two senior researchers participating) to the extent

that the added value of having a group at all seems very limited. To the committee, it makes more sense to have research groups large enough to reach a 'critical mass' in order to organise or sustain regular get-togethers, e.g. in the form of reading groups, workshops, or conferences. This is especially beneficial to junior researchers, who thus regularly meet senior researchers other than their supervisor(s). From the interviews with PhD researchers, the committee got the impression that they are happy to participate in various groups, but in practice some are not fully incorporated in a particular group and somewhat isolated. All in all, the committee suggests that it makes sense to generally create well defined larger research groups and attach individual projects to these larger groups.

For people who are not familiar with the somehow complicated structure of the Institute, the schools and the departments, it is not easy to understand the structure of the whole institution. It might be a good idea to provide a hierarchical structure with different levels on the website, in order to be able to receive a general overview of the main research lines. In addition, more detailed links to research on the personal pages of individual researchers, groups might improve accessibility of information.

3 Research quality

The committee found it very difficult to assess the research quality of the research conducted within AIHR. There are two reasons for this. First of all, the provided documentation does not allow for a broad judgement on this. In the self-assessments some results of leading scholars are mentioned, but other information should have been offered. In particular, a full list of all research projects (per School) and tables presenting the input (in fte) and actual output (in publications) per School would have been welcome; the latter allows an analysis of the output per fte (compared to the expected output per fte). Moreover, the committee found little information on the monitoring of individual or groups achievements. During interviews it became clear that individual output and performance are indeed measured; the committee suggests that such instruments are put in place for groups as well and both are to be explained in future self-assessments. Second, the level of aggregation for this research assessment seems too high. There are hardly research institutes with a similar wide scope that can function as proper benchmarks for AIHR. It makes more sense to conduct the assessment and thus judge the research quality at the level of the Research Schools. This will also make it easier to judge the performance of researchers and research groups. Last, while the assessment lists a number of quality indicators (and offers an explanation as to why these were chosen), it is difficult to get a grasp of the quality of all published research. Numbers are presented, but only in tables; evidently, the requirements by the SEP do not help in this regard. Hopefully the report on Quality Indicators for Humanities Research will prove to be of help in judging research performance in future assessments in a more adequate way. Recommendations for future assessments are provided in the last section.

One of the chosen quality indicators is 'recognition from peers', partly measured via the number of grants awarded. While AIHR researchers are having success in absolute terms (number of grants and money) when it comes to acquiring research grants ('tweede en derde geldstroom'), in relative terms the success rate of applications has not risen over the last years. It makes sense to be more selective in who is stimulated and allowed to send in grant applications in order to save less promising applicants and the Grant Team from spending too much valuable time.

Recognition of peers will also be increased by systematically pursuing an Open Access policy. Whereas some individual researchers are well aware of the importance of Open Access, the overall accessibility of research output can certainly be improved through the website of AIHR and those of individual researchers.

In order to at least preserve if not improve the quality and quantity of research output is important to safeguard the contractual 40% research time for research staff (with permanent contracts). While it is stated in the assessment that this 40% is a given, the committee found this to be untrue for what seems to be a majority of the research staff. Especially the assistant professors found that in reality they can dedicate not more than about 20% of their weekly hours to research. Even if one takes into account that younger and less experienced

or foreign staff members will need more time for teaching and administrative tasks than more senior or experienced colleagues, the 40% research time is a reality for only some researchers. It is important to think about creative solutions for this problem, such as a concentration of teaching in a restricted number of teaching periods, thus providing short sabbatical leaves.

There are two ways which might be beneficial to having more and perhaps better research output by staff members. One suggestion has already been made, which is to have junior researchers publish with more senior researchers (their supervisors or perhaps the head of a research group). During the interviews with representatives of the research Schools it became clear that there is no contact whatsoever between the research organisation and teaching departments regarding teaching at this level. To the committee it seems to makes sense to have a link between at least the REMA-programmes and some themes, methodologies or fields strongly favoured by a research School or group. In this way, lecturers will be able to teach on a subject they are interested in, or want to explore further (saving them extra time to prepare for teaching) and students will become acquainted with the school's 'DNA' early, making them all the more suited as potential PhD researchers.

4 Relevance to society

Again, the committee found it very difficult to assess this aspect of all research carried out within FGw. Any overall judgement of AIHR's performance in this regard is difficult to reach due to a lack of benchmarks and 'hard' ways of measuring. The SEP evidently leaves much room to 'manoeuvre' in this regard and only offers some examples; in addition, it calls for two exemplary valorisation narratives. How exemplary these narratives and projects are is difficult to assess.

The committee also felt relatively uninformed about any policies adopted by AIHR to promote or boost the societal relevance of all research (for example by means of open access, partnerships with societal organisations, et cetera). If these are in place, and are these strategies communicated to individual researchers and potential stakeholders in society? At the same time, if such strategies are in place, how does AIHR safeguard fundamental research against the ever-increasing pressure of 'valorising' research?

What is evident on the basis of the self-assessment is that some individual researchers and research groups have strong links with public institutions. The FGw/AIHR strongly benefits from being in Amsterdam and being close to major museums, cultural and governmental institutions, and other research institutes (particularly KNAW and some its subsidiaries). The list of recently established endowed chairs or special professorial appointments is impressive and AIHR thus does well in developing strong ties with these societal institutions. However, it is again unclear whether this is an active strategy pursued by the institute or the result of more personal ties between researchers and institutions.

5 Viability

The committee believes that many of the recommendations given above would be beneficial to the viability of the AIHR and all its constituent parts. Above all, a stronger profile for the Schools and their research groups would ensure a better visibility of the research carried out, both inside and outside academia, add to a communal spirit felt among researchers, strengthen its position in competing for research funding and provide a counterweight to (unwanted) external pressures.

The visibility of AIHR as a comprehensive institute will probably remain limited, but this does not seem to be problematic. More problematic is that individual researchers are split between their school(s) and research group(s) on the one hand and teaching departments (and/or administrative tasks) on the other – the self-assessment rightly regards this as a weakness. While the committee does not think that this leads or will lead to immediate 'loyalty issues', it is difficult for the outside world (and occasionally even for other faculty

members) to grasp what it is individual researchers work for and what they do. On the website of the UvA, each staff member has two 'identities', one as a member of a particular teaching department and one as a member of a research school or schools and research groups. The latter ´identity´ is much more difficult to find due to the interdisciplinary profile of all schools and the lack of visibility for individual research groups. This puts the AIHR/FGw and its researchers at a disadvantage compared to other universities or faculties internationally, where departments and schools are more often than not coupled and any 'organisational split' for faculty members is thus avoided. There is no easy way to solve this issue, given that the research and teaching organisations will continue to exist parallel to each other. Perhaps researchers should be encouraged to refer or link to their school(s) and research group(s) on their personal pages.

The viability of AIHR and its Schools can be ameliorated in a number of ways, prime among which is to attract the best or most suitable researchers available. Apart from the fact that new positions are and in the foreseeable future will be in short supply due to budgetary considerations, it has been noted above that the present options available to AIHR to achieve this goal are still limited. From the interviews with the director of AIHR, the head of research, the dean as well as the directors and representatives of the research schools, the committee got the impression that everyone was positive about the influence they could now have on HR decisions compared to situation before the foundation of AIHR (when there was no influence at all). Hence, there seems to be little reason not to give the AIHR and/or its Schools more official power in this regard. This will hopefully ease any tensions between the research organisation and teaching departments and add to the viability and quality of research carried out within AIHR.

One of the stated goals for AIHR is to achieve 'complementarity' among its researchers. Apart from HR decisions and discouraging some researchers and stimulating others to try and acquire external funding, it is not immediately clear how this goal could be eventually achieved. Also, any measure or measuring body seems to be lacking, especially when it comes to the societal impact of a researcher's work (see above). At present, complementarity needs to be better fleshed out given that in the self-assessment it is noted that there is a widening gap between researchers that are successful in getting research grants and those that are not. This seems to some extent inevitable given the ever-increasing importance of the 'tweede en derde geldstroom' to fund research; moreover, receiving a grant may well trigger a virtuous circle and result in getting more grants while not getting a grant (early in a researcher's career) is very detrimental to receiving a grant in the future. To counter these growing divisions it is imperative to put ways of measuring in place that take into account other factors than grant success publications, particularly valorisation.

Lastly, it is not immediately clear how AIHR and its researchers aim to prepare for the Nationale Wetenschapsagenda. AIHR or its schools will probably not want to interfere with the research interests of its researchers or their research groups.

6 PhD selection, supervision and training programmes

AIHR and its Schools are directly involved in the selection of all PhD researchers. Only non-funded PhD's are selected directly by the Schools, but some schools would prefer to have their own budget to select and fund their own PhD researchers, partially because they feel a faculty-wide selection procedure is detrimental to creating a distinctive profile for its school. On the other hand, selection at the level of AIHR might boost interdisciplinary research. Hence, the Research Council should think about the best procedure. In any case, the committee feels that the profiles of the schools should certainly be taken into account when selecting new PhD researchers. This is to some extent already the case, since the Schools can pre-select a number of candidates at the level of their school before a central selection is made.

The committee was informed during interviews that it is not a goal of the faculty/AIHR to attract more PhD students: ideally, the yearly intake and number of finished dissertations is to be consolidated. This is somewhat surprising, given that the number of (non-funded) PhD researchers has been steadily increasing

over the last few years (see table 1, appendix 2) and that one of the goals formulated in the self-assessment is to attract more none-funded PhD-students (p. 7).

The committee had little time to investigate PhD supervision. In any case, the quality of supervision will depend on the supervisor(s), while the quantity (i.e. the frequency of contact between a PhD researchers and supervisors) is safeguarded via the OBP. From conversations with PhD researchers the committee felt that they are generally happy with the supervision they have. One of the things the committee would strongly recommend is that associate professors (UHD's) are to act as promotors themselves. This will give UHD's full credit for their efforts in research supervision, as they are often the main supervisor in dissertation projects. This would also strengthen the academic position and further career of UHD's, as in many other countries associate professors already have this right. However, the committee realizes that such a decision is not in the hands of AIHR, and advices that this issue be broached at the university level and within the VSNU. As suggested above, the committee also feels that is worth looking into the possibilities for PhD researchers to publish with their supervisor(s). This is standard in most scientific fields outside the Humanities, but within the Humanities only linguists seem to do so. It could provide valuable experience for the junior researcher in how to write an article as well as his/her first publication. This should not be obligatory, but might be worth pursuing in fields where communal projects are normal (e.g. archaeology), less so in fields where individual projects are the norm (e.g. history or philosophy).

Training for PhD researchers at AIHR is supplied by the National Research Schools and the Graduate School of the Humanities of the FGw; some schools, ASCA in particular, choose to also provide their own training modules. Talking to PhD researchers, the committee found that they are generally happy with the national and local programmes on offer, even if they are often picking and choosing from things offered at various places and in different constellations. Some feel not directly served by the training programmes of their national schools, but seem to find other training modules elsewhere; others seek out and receive unofficial 'training' within their research group(s) which offer them opportunities to discuss their research on a regular basis with others. To the committee, it would make sense to have the research schools offer some methodological courses or modules that will help to acquire a specific set of competences. In this way, PhD researchers will be more strongly tied to their schools, whereas the schools can offer training they feel fits best with the profile of the school. ASCA is to some extent already doing this, and representatives from ARTES felt that this might also be beneficial for their PhD researchers since they seem to have more trouble finding suitable training at any national school. Thus, PhD researchers will acquire general skills from GSH courses, take general methodological courses from national schools, and get specific courses and/or methodological training from courses offered by their local schools which are not offered by national schools.

A positive developments is that the training program and supervision for non-funded Ph.D. students has been properly structured and formalized. This reduces the risk of supervision times being wasted.

The committee received some mixed reactions regarding the support offered by the faculty/GSH in preparing them for the job market after finishing their dissertation. Some felt that this support was adequate, others wanted more preparation for a life outside of academia (since that is where most PhD´s will end up).
The research schools should systematically monitor how their alumni fare on the job market. This will provide the basis for good job market advice.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

<u>The research organisation</u>
The committee judges the basic structure that came into being in 2014 to be a step in the right direction. It acts as a catalyst to secure openness and enable cooperation between the schools and acts as an ´emancipator´ for the newly formed and smaller research schools. Researchers, those with a position at one of the Schools and those working at a central level (AIHR/the FGw) all seem happy with the changes that have been implemented, particularly regarding the flexible structure that allows for bottom-up initiatives. The

Research Council seemingly works well in bringing people together and should be recognised as an important body. The committee has a positive image about its present and future role in the research organisation of the FGw. Moreover, support offered at a central level is evidently valued by researchers. Hence, the structure of the research organisation should be consolidated, along with the central supported offered.

Generally, the committee suggests that the structural changes that were implemented are taken a step further. The bottom-up gestation process has led to a fragmented organisation and the levels of the research organisation (AIHR-Schools-Groups) are only loosely linked and have little top-down steering and guidance. Hence, choices need to be made and strong(er) visions need to be formulated at each level, which will result in a stronger 'community spirit', a better position when competing with other institutes, schools or universities, and lastly an organisation that will be more easily visible and understood by outsiders. The organisation will be simplified, without losing the flexibility that is at its core.

The following recommendations are offered by the committee to improve the research organisation.

- AIHR might benefit from having additional powers/resources to make it possible to have more top-down influence on the organisation, especially regarding HR-decisions. At this point, there are hardly any formal mechanisms in place and the role of its director (or the head of research and/or the directors of each of the Schools) are limited.
- The research council should continue to bridge differences between schools. With this goal in mind, we suggest that additional and independent members should be added to the council. This would prevent or more easily solve infighting between the Schools.
- A development which results in more specific profiles seems necessary for each Research School, even to the extent that some methodologies, fields, subdisciplines or approaches might be excluded via top-down decisions. In addition, more specific visions for the future need to be formulated. All Schools will need to think about benchmarking if they are to be assessed individually in 2018.
- Lastly, there should be less, larger and more uniform research groups. Thinking about size and shape is key.

Recommendations for research quality, societal relevance and viability

- The 40% research time is not a reality for most researchers. Hence, steps should be taken to make this happen, especially for junior researchers.
- Researchers should be actively discouraged from writing grant applications if the grant team or others (above all the director of AIHR or the director of a school) feel that they have no chance of receiving a grant, especially in the light of AIHR´s stated goal of complementarity.
- The (online) visibility of the research organisation and its constituent parts needs to be improved.
- Provisions need to be put in place to monitor the research quality of research groups.
- There should also be guidelines on how to measure and monitor the societal impact of AIHR research, especially if AIHR wants to achieve its goal of complementarity among its researchers.

Recommendations regarding PhD selection, supervision and training

- The Schools can and in some cases have to take a more active role in training their own PhD researchers, with a focus on teaching particular methodologies or competences that are at the core of the profile of the School.
- UHD´s should be allowed to act as promotors.
- It is worth exploring whether PhD researchers and their supervisors should be encouraged to publish together.

Practical recommendations for future (self-)assessments

- It would be helpful to have more time to conduct the interviews. The schedule made it difficult to reflect on what had been discussed. To have 10-15 minutes after each interview seems reasonable.

- A concise profile for each School, with a strongly articulated mission and a vision for the future, will need to be included in the main document on the AIHR, if AIHR is to be the chosen level of aggregation. Otherwise, it would suffice to have them in each of the Schools self-assessments.
- The committee would have liked a table and an analysis of the output (per School) in relation to the fte. The lack of this makes it very difficult to give a grade for all the research conducted at the FGw.
- As noted above, a full list of research projects, including PhD research, is necessary to get an impression of the actual research carried out, even if the SEP does not ask for this. To have such a list on the level of the AIHR would result in a very long list, which is one of the reasons why the committee suggest to carry out future assessments at the level of the Schools.
- Benchmarks are only to be found on the level of the Schools, not the AIHR. Again, this would be a reason to have the assessment on the level of the Schools.

Appendix: programme site visit

Monday 12 December 2016

Time	With whom/what	Location
12.00-13.00	Lunch	E1.01 D (first floor)
13.00-15.00	Private meeting for committee members only	E1.01 D
15:00-15:45	Fred Weerman (dean), Thomas Vaessens (director AIHR and vice-dean), Elske Gerritsen	F 1.14 (first floor, Dean's office)
16.00-17.00:	First series of meetings with research staff	
16.00-16.30	Professors: Kees Hengeveld, Frank van Vree and Giovanna Fossati	E1.01 D
16.30-17.00	Assistant professors: Paul Bijl, Gemma Blok, Guido Snel	E 1.01 D
17:15-18:00	Meeting on the educational programme for PhD's: Thomas Vaessens, Elske Gerritsen and Carlos Reijnen (director Graduate School)	E1.01 C
19.00-	Dinner	

Tuesday 13 December 2016

Time	Who/what	Room
9.00-10.00	Private meeting (committee members only)	E1.01D
10.00-12.30:	Meetings with representatives of Research Schools and Research Priority Area´s (listed in the following order: director and coordinator of School, senior researcher, PhD researcher, director of RPA)	
10.00-10.30	ACLC and RPA Brain&Cognition: Paul Boersma, Marten Hidma, Maja Curcic and Henkjan Honing	E1.01D
10.30-11.00	ASCA and RPA Globalisation: Patricia Pisters, Eloe Kingma, Esther Peeren (vice-director), Ellen Rutten, Simon Ferdinand and Jeroen de Kloet	E1.01D
11.00-11.30	ARTES: Christian Noack, Paul Koopman, Luiza Bialasiewicz and Milou van Hout	E 1.01D
11.30-12.00	AHM and RPA Cultural Heritage: Rob van der Laarse, René Does, Robin Boast, Dana Dolghin and Julia Noordegraaf	E 1.01D
12.00-12.30	ASH: Geert Janssen, Brigit van der Pas, Irene Zwiep and Janna Coomans	E 1.01D
12.30-14.00	Lunch	E 1.01C
14.00-15.00	Second series of meetings with research staff	E 1.01D
14.00-14.30	PhD researchers: Martje aan de Kerk, Enno Maessen, Irene Villaescusa Illan	E1.01D
14.30-15.00	Associate professors: Robin Celikates, Judith Rispens, Yolanda Rodriguez Perez	E1.01D
15.00-16.00	Private meeting (committee members only)	E1.01D
16.00-17.00	Presentation of preliminary conclusions by the Committee to the Research Council and all those who have been interviewed.	VOC room (E0.02)
17.00-	Drinks	F1.01 (first floor)