



UvA Protocol for Research Evaluations pursuant to 2021-2027 SEP

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1. Introduction

This protocol serves as an internal manual for the assessment of UvA research units in accordance with the 2021-2027 Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP; formerly the Standard Evaluation Protocol). The 2021-2027 Strategy Evaluation Protocol has been adopted by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) as well as the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) to assess the quality, relevance and feasibility of research at Dutch public institutions in a six-year cycle. Committees of national or international experts and peers evaluate the research units during assessments. The SEP describes the assessment criteria and procedures involved. It is recommended to apply this UvA Protocol alongside the SEP, which includes examples of required documents such as the Terms of References, the self-evaluation and the evaluation, among other things. This protocol refers to these documents.

2. Purpose of the SEP

The SEP evaluations offer an opportunity for boards and research units to monitor and improve research quality within the framework of the internal quality assurance cycle. Regularly evaluating the quality and societal relevance of research also provides accountability to the government and society. Universities are individually responsible for evaluating all their research pursuant to the SEP scheme. It is possible to organise assessments either locally or nationally. Three phases are distinguished in evaluations under the SEP:

1. preparation for the assessment;
2. self-evaluation;
3. assessment, preparation of the evaluation report and conclusion.

3. 2021-2027 SEP: key changes

Compared with the 2015-2021 SEP, the 2021-2027 SEP has several key differences in emphasis (also see Appendix 1). Specific aspects must no longer be considered separately but as part of research quality, relevance to society and feasibility. The number of specific aspects has increased from two to four: 1) Open science; 2) PhD policy and programme; 3) Academic culture; and 4) Talent policy and diversity. In addition, the requirements for the composition of the assessment committee have changed. While a PhD candidate and an early- to mid-career scientist must now be included in the assessment committee, the presence of a non-academic member has remained compulsory. The diversity of the panel in terms of sex, cultural background and academic discipline should be ensured. Excluding appendices and case studies, the maximum number of pages in the self-evaluation has risen from 15 to 20. A summary of the self-evaluation must be publicised including case studies, the committee report and the executive viewpoint. The self-evaluation and the external evaluation should conform to the DORA principles, which advise against the use of the Journal Impact Factor and the H-index. Instead, they recommend considering other types of research output such as data sets and software in addition to articles, while also suggesting a wide range of indicators.

4. National evaluations

One of the participating universities will act as lead organisation in national evaluations. The Executive Board and the dean of this lead organisation will be responsible for the evaluation, aligning the various steps of the process with the other universities. In Paragraph 8, the term 'lead organisation' applies to national visitations.

5. Phase 1: Preparation for the assessment

Executive Board as commissioning party

No less than a year in advance, the Executive Board will commission the intended assessment from the dean of the research unit to be assessed. The Executive Board is ultimately responsible for the assessments, appoints the members of the assessment committee and commissions them to evaluate the research unit. One of the participating universities will act as lead organisation in national assessments. The Executive Board will publish the assessment schedule on the website. If there any deviations from the schedule, the dean will present them to the Executive Board for approval.

Mandate to dean

The UvA Executive Board mandates the dean of the faculty in which the research unit to be evaluated is embedded or which acts as lead organisation of the research assessment with responsibility for the organisation and coordination of the assessment. Included in this responsibility are project coordination, secretarial work, proposals for the composition of the assessment committee, reception and accompaniment of the assessment committee, organisation of the site visit, as well as creating and monitoring the timetable, up to the presentation of the final report written by the committee to the Executive Board. The costs of the external evaluation shall be borne by the faculty. After the dean has proposed the Terms of Reference/evaluation commission (Appendix C of the SEP), the proposal for the composition of the committee (Appendix G of the SEP) and the intended secretary to the Executive Board, the latter will adopt them.

Composition of the assessment committee

The assessment committee must include a PhD candidate, an early to mid-career scientist and a non-academic member. Ideally, the assessment committee has an international character and a diverse composition (in terms of gender, cultural background and academic discipline). The assessment committee evaluates the unit's research on the three assessment criteria and the four specific aspects, for which it should be able in its entirety to issue a thorough opinion on the research in such a way that all aspects are evaluated to satisfaction. No one committee member must be able to assess all aspects individually. Having received their declarations of independence (Appendix H of the SEP), the Executive Board appoints the members of the assessment committee via a letter of appointment and commissions the evaluation from them. All members of the assessment committee receive a reimbursement, the PhD candidate receives the same fee as other members.

Independent secretary

An independent secretary, who is not a part of the committee, will support its activities. The secretary of the assessment committee does not work at the university in question. This secretary will guide the assessment committee through the entire evaluation process and ensure that the committee members have all the information required on time. The secretary drafts the final report in close consultation with the assessment committee. Should the costs of the secretarial work exceed €50,000, a multiple private tender must be organised and an offer must be requested from three parties at least.¹

6. Phase 2: Self-evaluation by UvA research units

Self-evaluation in accordance with the SEP

A key part of the evaluation is the self-evaluation report (Appendix D of the SEP). This self-evaluation report must comprise a coherent argument of 20 pages at most, excluding appendices and case studies. The research unit should use the self-evaluation to reflect on the past six years and look to the six years ahead. The unit should use the report to evaluate the results achieved during the past

¹ <https://medewerker.uva.nl/content-secured/az/inkopen-en-aanbesteden/inkopen-en-aanbesteden.html>

period against its own objectives and strategy on the basis of robust data. The self-evaluation report should include a description of the unit's position in the academic field, relevant developments in society, a forward-looking SWOT analysis and one or more case studies. To substantiate the observations of the self-evaluations, the unit should make a selection from the specific indicators that apply (Appendix E of the SEP).

Self-evaluation reports of UvA research units in accordance with UvA SEP standards

Given the UvA's vision on research as laid down in the Strategic Research Framework and the focus of the majority of the assessment panels, the strategic reflection of the research unit should be the centrepiece of the self-evaluation report. It follows that the self-evaluation report should devote considerable attention to the relative position of the research unit on the basis of its competitive advantage, the impact of internal and external developments on that relative position, and the strategic measures the research unit is taking in response.

The consequences for the structure and content of self-evaluation reports of UvA research units in accordance with the SEP (max. 20 pages) are as follows.

Content of the self-evaluation reports of UvA research units

0. Summary (~1 page)

1. Introduction to the research unit (~1 page)

- a. Organisation of the research unit
- b. Main characteristics of the research unit
- c. Relevant developments and/or changes in the past six years

2. Mission for the past six years (< 0.25 page)

- a. What is the research unit's competitive advantage (e.g. methods, paradigms, interdisciplinary approach, innovations, partnerships)?
- b. What is the research unit's relative position in academia and/or society on the basis of that competitive advantage?
 - i. What is the research unit's purpose (i.e. what are the substantive needs or requirements on the part of academia, the research area and/or society that the research unit satisfies)?

3. Strategic objectives for the past six years (< 0.5 page)

- a. Which strategic objectives did the research unit set for itself in order to accomplish the mission?

4. Reflection on the accomplishment of the mission and strategic objectives for the past six years (~2 pages)

- a. To what extent has the mission been accomplished? Give examples of added value.
- b. To what extent have the strategic objectives been accomplished? Give examples of results.

5. Status and achieved results with regard to research quality, viability of the unit and relevance to society (Appendices E2 and E3 of the SEP) (~2 pages)

- a. Looking back on the efforts of the past six years, where does the research unit currently stand with regard to these three areas? Give examples of results.

6. Status and achieved results with regard to open science, academic culture, PhD policy and HR policy (~2 pages)

- a. Looking back on the efforts of the past six years, where does the research unit currently stand with regard to these four areas? Give examples of results.

7. Reflection on the assessment panel's recommendations following the last SEP evaluation (~1 page)

Prospectus

8. SWOT analysis (~2 pages)

- a. Strengths (internal): e.g. internal organisation, positioning, partnerships, partners, innovations, image, position on an adoption curve, capacity, academic output, impact, methods and paradigms.
- b. Weaknesses (internal): e.g. internal organisation, positioning, partnerships, partners, innovations, image, position on an adoption curve, capacity, academic output, impact, methods and paradigms.
- c. Opportunities (external): developments in society and academia (e.g. positioning, challenges, partnerships, external research agendas, legislation and regulations, innovations and funding) that (may) have a positive impact on the content and direction of the research unit's research and/or organisation.
- d. Threats (external): developments in society and academia (e.g. positioning, challenges, partnerships, external research agendas, legislation and regulations, innovations and funding) that (may) have a negative impact on the content and direction of the research unit's research and/or organisation.

9. Mission for the six years ahead (< 0.25 page)
 - a. Given the internal and external developments that are most important to the research unit (see the SWOT analysis) and the research unit's competitive advantage, what is the research unit's relative position in academia and/or society or how will it change?
 - i. What is the research unit's purpose (i.e. what are the substantive needs or requirements on the part of academia, the research area and/or society that the research unit satisfies)?
10. Strategic objectives for the six years ahead (< 1 page)
 - a. Which strategic objectives does the research unit set for itself for the years ahead in order to accomplish the mission?
 - i. What are its objectives with regard to internal and external partnerships, academic innovation/progress, interdisciplinarity and positioning (as a minimum)?
11. Plans and/or objectives to optimise research quality, viability of the unit, relevance to society, open science, academic culture, PhD policy and HR policy (~2-3 pages)

The dean will present the draft self-evaluation report to the Rector Magnificus. After the management of the research unit has discussed the draft self-evaluation with the dean as well as the Rector Magnificus and the final self-evaluation has been presented, the Executive Board will adopt the self-evaluation.

7. Phase 3: Assessment, evaluation and conclusion

Assessment and evaluation

The assessment panel will receive the relevant documentation no less than a month prior to the assessment. Under the responsibility of the dean and in consultation with the secretary as well as the chair of the assessment panel, the management of the research unit will arrange the site visit programme (Appendix F of the SEP). The assessment panel will read the self-evaluation, visit the unit and write a draft evaluation report (Appendix I of the SEP), paying attention to the criteria of research quality, relevance to society and viability as well as the four specific aspects (open science, PhD policy and programme, academic culture, and talent policy and diversity). After the unit has corrected any factual inaccuracies, the final evaluation report with recommendations will follow.

Response by the dean and advice from the University Committee on Research (UOC)

At the request of the Executive Board, the dean will discuss the evaluation report with the unit and write a reflection that must include the follow-up on the results. Next, the evaluation report and the dean's response will be presented to the University Committee on Research (UOC). The UOC will advise the Executive Board on whether the faculty's response and the proposed measures sufficiently address the assessment panel's conclusions and recommendations. Where necessary, the UOC may ask the faculty representative and the dean to provide an explanation in a meeting. On the UOC's recommendation, the dean may be asked to clarify the response further or to alter it.

Publication and quality assurance

It is then compulsory for the Executive Board to publicise the following documents on the website within six months after the visit of the assessment committee: the summary of the self-evaluation report including case studies, the evaluation by the assessment committee and the executive viewpoint. The UvA Annual Report will include the units evaluated, the main conclusions and the executive response. Progress will be discussed during the periodic executive consultations between the Executive Board and the dean.

8. Timetable and actions for UvA research evaluations

	Step	Action	Moment
Phase 1: Preparation for the assessment	1	<i>Executive Board</i> commissions a research evaluation from the dean of the research unit to be assessed	No less than 1 year before the assessment ²
	2	<i>Dean</i> presents a proposal for the Terms of Reference/evaluation assignment (Appendix C of the SEP), the composition of the assessment committee (Appendix G of the SEP) and the intended secretary to the Executive Board, which then adopts them. The Executive Board of the lead organisation subsequently presents these matters to the Executive Boards of the participating universities in a national assessment	12-10 months before the assessment
	3	<i>Dean (of the lead organisation)</i> requests that all committee members sign the declaration of independence (Appendix H of the SEP) and return it within two weeks at most	7 months before the assessment
	4	<i>Executive Board (of the lead organisation)</i> receives the declarations of independence, appoints the members of the assessment committee via a letter of appointment and commissions the evaluation from them	6 months before the assessment
Phase 2: Self-evaluation	5	<i>Dean</i> presents the draft self-evaluation (Appendix D of the SEP) to the Executive Board	4 months before the assessment
	6	<i>Dean</i> and director(s) of the institute(s) discuss the draft self-evaluation with the Rector Magnificus	4 months before the assessment
	7	<i>Dean</i> presents the final self-evaluation to the Executive Board	3 months before the assessment
	8	<i>Academic Affairs</i> verifies within a week whether the self-evaluation conforms to the 2021-2027 SEP	1 week after receipt
	9	<i>Executive Board</i> adopts the self-evaluations	2 months before the assessment
	10	<i>Dean (of the lead organisation)</i> makes documentation available to the assessment committee	4-8 weeks before the assessment
	11	<i>Dean</i> arranges the site visit programme (Appendix F of the SEP)	4 weeks before the assessment
Assessment			
Phase 3: Evaluation report and conclusion	12	<i>Assessment committee</i> makes the draft evaluation report (Appendix I of the SEP) available to the deans of the participating institutions	8 weeks after the assessment
	13	<i>Dean</i> notifies the committee of factual inaccuracies	10 weeks after the assessment
	14	<i>Assessment committee</i> makes the final evaluation report available to the Executive Board(s)	12 weeks after the assessment
	15	<i>Executive Board</i> requests a response to the evaluation report from the dean	12 weeks after the assessment
	16	<i>UOC</i> discusses the evaluation report as well the dean's response and advises the Executive Board	Next UOC meeting
	17	<i>Executive Board</i> publishes a summary of the self-evaluation, the evaluation report including case studies and the executive viewpoint on the website	No more than 6 months after the assessment
	18	<i>Executive Board</i> reports the research evaluations in its Annual Report and discusses the progress in its periodic executive consultations	Annually and biannually

² The recommendation is to commence preparations for national assessments more than a year in advance.

Appendix 1: Differences in emphasis of new SEP

	2015-2021 SEP	2021-2027 SEP
Criteria	Research quality	Research quality
	Relevance to society	Relevance to society
	Feasibility	Feasibility
Specific aspects	PhD programmes	PhD policy and programme
	Academic integrity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research data management 	Academic culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Social safety • Inclusion • Academic integrity
	Diversity	Human resources management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Talent management
	(Research data management)	Open science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open access • FAIR Data • Stakeholder involvement
Composition of the committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-academic expert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-academic expert • PhD candidate • Early- to mid-career scientist • Diverse committee (gender, cultural background, nationality and field of study)
Assessment	Quantitative	Qualitative
Length of self-evaluation	15 pages excluding appendices	20 pages excluding appendices
Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation • Executive response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of self-evaluation including case studies • Evaluation • Executive response