

Manual for research assessments of the Academy institutes

Implementation of the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027

June 2022

(Chapter 4 and 5 were revised in December 2023)

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1 INTRODUCTION

Research assessments are a key component of the quality assurance system of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) institutes organisation. In the coming years the Academy will evaluate all research of its institutes according to the *Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027* (SEP 2021-2027). This manual provides Academy staff involved with research evaluations with an overview of the most important elements of SEP 2021-2027. It also shows how SEP 2021-2027 is to be implemented in the context of the Academy and its institutes. ***Please note: for issues in which this manual differs from SEP, this manual prevails.***

The most important terms associated with the assessment procedure according to SEP 2021-2027 are described in **section 2**. This is followed by the time-schedule for the assessment of an individual institute in **section 3**. This schedule deviates from Appendix A in SEP 2021-2017 given the differences in role and governance between Academy institutes and research units that are part of a university. This means that ***the time-schedule for KNAW-institutes in section 3 replaces Appendix A of SEP 2021-2027***. **Section 4** provides a schedule of the assessments of the Academy institutes for the years 2021-2027. **Section 5** discusses practicalities and reimbursement for assessment committee members.

2 THE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE – KEY POINTS OF SEP 2021-2027

2.1 Strategy evaluation as part of the Academy's quality assurance cycle

The main goal of an assessment according to the Strategy Evaluation Protocol is to evaluate a research unit in light of its own aims and strategy. SEP 2021-2027 is explicitly part of the Academy's quality assurance cycle. This means that the aims and strategy of the institute are recurring topics during the half-yearly administrative meetings (*periodieke bestuurlijke overleggen*, PBO's) with the Academy board. During the PBO's, the board and the institute discuss the institute's aims and strategy, and the recommendations of the assessment committee with a view to updating the institute's strategic plans. This **focus on the institute's own aims and strategy** with regard to quality, relevance and viability and in the context of **the existing quality assurance cycle** is an important change compared to the previous SEP.

2.2 Self-evaluation report and indicators

Chapter 4 of the SEP 2021-2027 describes the information that must be covered in the self-evaluation report. This information should be presented in the form of a coherent, narrative argument. Appendix D of SEP 2021-2027 includes a **suggested table of contents**; if a different outline works better for the institute, it is free to deviate from the suggested table of contents. Appendix D also states (see D.7) that the self-evaluation is to be complemented with a one-page summary, to be made publicly available along with the case studies after the assessment is completed. For Academy institutes it is **not mandatory to include such a summary** because the Academy publishes the full self-evaluation reports on its website.

A difference with the previous SEP is a more explicit focus on the aims and strategy of the institute, including a more explicit link between these aims and strategy and the indicators that the institute uses. It is up to **the institute itself to choose** (a limited number of) indicators that **logically follow from its aims and strategy** in order to **provide factual evidence** for its reflection on these aims and strategy during the previous six years. This implies a greater freedom with regard to the choice of both qualitative and quantitative indicators, as long as they are used responsibly¹. Appendix E of SEP 2021-2027 further elaborates on the choice of indicators and gives examples of indicators that the institute may use. Please note that institutes may also choose to develop other indicators than the ones listed in Appendix E. For Academy institutes it will be important to **include indicators illustrating the national role of the institute**.

In addition to the indicators, the institute includes one or more **case studies** in its self-evaluation to highlight what it considers to be its most distinctive and societally relevant accomplishment(s) (see SEP-appendix E3 and for the humanities the [QRH-website](#)). The case studies may provide further support for the strategic narrative the institute offers in the self-evaluation.

As stated in SEP 2021-2027, the self-evaluation report includes a reflection on **four specific aspects**: Open Science, PhD Policy and Training, Academic Culture (openness, (social) safety & inclusivity and research integrity), and Human Resources Policy (recognising and rewarding the diversity in people's output, in contributions to teamwork, in career paths and talent management in the general sense). These aspects all contribute to the quality, relevance and viability of research and should therefore be addressed as an integral part of the institute's strategy with regard to these criteria. However, **not every aspect needs to be equally relevant for each criterion: it is up to the institute to make the relevant connections**.

2.3 Assessment committee

Requirements for the assessment committee are included in Appendix G of SEP 2021-2027. A difference compared to the previous SEP is that **the committee should include one PhD student and at least one early/mid-career researcher**. Depending on the institute's aims and strategy, the committee may contain one or more non-academic members. **The assessment committee of Academy institutes generally has five members. The chairperson preferably is an elected member of the Academy.**

The assessment committee is assisted by an **independent secretary**. It is important to work with an experienced secretary who is able to guide and assist the committee in preparing an assessment report

¹ See also <http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>

containing sharp, discerning texts and clear arguments. The secretary should also be able to adequately explain the Dutch situation and recent developments in quality assurance, especially to non-Dutch and/or non-academic committee members.

Fee and reimbursements

The members of the assessment committee receive a fee of € 1,000 (the chairperson receives € 2,000) for participating in an assessment and are reimbursed for their travel and accommodation expenses. More information on practical matters such as travelling, accommodation, and reimbursements can be found in section 5 of this manual: *Practicalities and reimbursement for assessment committee members*.

2.4 Site visit

The assessment committee visits the institute for a maximum of two consecutive days. This visit is referred to as the site visit. Guidelines for the programme of the site visit are described in Chapter 4 and Appendix F of the SEP 2021-2027. ***In addition to the interviewees listed in Appendix F, the KNAW prescribes a meeting with representatives of the institute's works council (Onderdeelcommissie, OC).***

2.5 Assessment report: no scores

After the site visit, the committee draws up a report of its findings (assessment report) in compliance with the SEP-guidelines (Chapter 5 and Appendix I). In its report the committee reflects on the three assessment criteria ('scientific quality', 'relevance to society', and 'viability') in relation to the aims and strategy of the institute, while also taking into account the four specific aspects (Open Science, PhD Policy and Training, Academic Culture, and Human Resources Policy). For each of the three criteria, the committee assesses the accomplishments of the institute in qualitative terms. This means that ***no scores are given for the three assessment criteria***. In its conclusion, moreover, the committee passes a qualitative judgment on the institute as a whole.

2.6 Follow-up

The follow-up of the assessment is monitored in the half-yearly meetings between the Academy Board, the director general and the institute's management (PBO's). In preparation for the half-yearly meetings the institute's management prepares a management report ('marap') in which it reflects upon the progress that has been made with regard to the recommendations of the assessment committee. Furthermore, progress on implementing the institute's strategy is described in a narrative supported by relevant indicators. Delays, accelerations or other changes in the aims and strategy for the years to come are indicated and motivated in the text.

SEP 2021-2027 explicitly advises against midterm reviews in order to limit workload. The Academy institutes will only conduct mid-term reviews in exceptional circumstances; e.g. in the case of a significant change in the aims or strategy.

3 PLAN OF ACTION FOR A SEP-ASSESSMENT

Below the plan of action for a SEP-assessment is given. For each of the actions performed in the procedure of a SEP-assessment, this plan indicates by whom it is performed, and when. This plan is based on SEP Appendix A but the actions are adjusted to the specific situation of the KNAW and its institutes; it **replaces Appendix A of SEP 2021-2027**.

KNAW Appendix A: Schedule – actions for the research unit and assessment committee

Time	Action	By
The years preceding the evaluation	Regular discussions on aims and strategy within the institute as well as between the institute and the board in the half-yearly administrative meetings (<i>periodieke bestuurlijke overleggen</i> , PBO's).	Board & Institute Director
1 year prior to site visit	Announcement to conduct an assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The director general informs the institute's director of its intention to conduct a SEP-assessment and draws up a general schedule in consultation with the institute's director. The institute's director reports the Academy's intention to conduct an assessment to its staff (including the institute works council) and the scientific committee. The director general asks the institute's director to make the necessary preparations (the self-evaluation report must be ready 8 weeks prior to the site visit). 	Director General & Institute Director
12-10 months prior to site visit	Board specifies Terms of reference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The director general draws up the draft Terms of Reference (assessment instructions) for the assessment committee. The draft version is discussed with the institute's director.² The Academy Board decides on the Terms of Reference and so informs the institute's director. <p>Composition of assessment committee + appointment of secretary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The director general asks the institute's director to propose a longlist of potential chairpersons and members of the international assessment committee. The director general will consult the scientific committee of the institute about the proposal before sending it to the Academy Board³. The Academy Board decides on the preferred composition of the committee and so informs the institute's director. The director general will invite the committee members in order of priority on behalf of the Academy Board. The director general selects an independent and demonstrable qualified secretary after consultation of the chairperson of the committee. The director general asks the committee members and the secretary to sign a statement of impartiality and confidentiality (SEP, Appendix H). 	Board

² If the institute has a formal collaboration agreement with an external party (e.g. a university or UMC), the board of the external party may be consulted when preparing the Terms of Reference

³ If the institute has a formal collaboration agreement with an external party (e.g. a university or UMC), the board of the external party may be consulted about the proposed composition of the assessment committee

Informal check around 12-10 months prior to site visit; formal signing of statement 4-8 weeks prior to site visit	Assessment committee and secretary sign statement of impartiality.	Assessment committee
Right after the decision on the composition of the assessment committee up to 4 weeks before the start of the site visit	Board installs committee and secretary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The director general appoints the chairperson and members on behalf of the Academy Board. The director general appoints the secretary of the committee 	Board & Director General
10-2 months prior to site visit	Writing of the self-evaluation	Institute Director
4 months prior to site visit	Composing the site visit programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institute's director proposes a programme for the site visit. The director general discusses the proposed programme with the chair and the secretary of the assessment committee. They may suggest changes for the programme. The(vice)president and director general assess the final programme 	Board
3 months prior to site visit	Logistical arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy secretariat books the trips and hotel rooms in consultation with the committee members (see section 5 of this manual). The institute secretariat arranges meeting rooms and catering at the institute. Where necessary, the Academy secretariat arranges meeting rooms and catering at the Trippenhuis building. The Academy secretariat reserves the restaurant tables (for the first evening and the second evening, and, possibly, also the third evening) and arranges transport to the restaurants 	Director General & Institute Director
4-8 weeks prior to site visit	Board provides assessment committee with self-evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The institute's director sends the self-evaluation report and appendices to the general director. The general director sends the report, together with the Terms of Reference and the site visit programme, to the members of the assessment committee (via the committee's secretary). 	Board
More than 1 month prior to site visit	Logistical arrangements for site visit sent to the assessment committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy secretariat sends the committee members the latest information about their travel arrangements, reimbursement of expenses, the hotel, the restaurants, the institute, the Academy, and so forth. 	Director General

Site visit		
Last day of site visit or right after site visit	If the assessment committee gives a short first impression of its findings at the end of the site visit to the unit a representative of the Academy staff (policy advisor) may be present. Alternatively the committee's secretary will be contacted shortly after the site-visit.	Policy advisor on behalf of Director General
Right after site visit	Payment of expense claims The Academy secretariat ensures that the committee members' fees and expense claims are paid	Director General
8 weeks after site visit	Draft assessment report made available to the research unit	Assessment committee
10 weeks after site visit	Comments by research unit on factual inaccuracies made available to assessment committee	Institute Director
20 weeks after site visit	Final version of assessment report made available to the board	Assessment committee
22 weeks after site visit	Written response to the assessment report made available to the board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The director general sends the final report to the institute's director, asking the institute's director for his/her written comments that are prepared in consultation with the science committee. The science committee will be given the opportunity to provide its comments on the report to the director of the institute, who will communicate the report, the comments of the science committee, and his/her views on said comments to the general director. 	Institute Director
20-23 weeks after site visit	Board determines its position in a position document <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft position paper will be drawn up by the director general. The director general discusses it in outline with the institute's director The Academy Board adopts the position paper The Academy Board sends the position paper to the institute's director and to the scientific committee. 	Board
23 weeks after site visit	The institute's director informs the institute's staff (including the institute works council) about the outcome of the assessment.	Institute Director
No more than 6 months after site visit	Publication of assessment report + position documents of the board and of the institute + self-evaluation report on website	Board
Annually	Discussion of assessment outcome and potential actions in quality assurance cycle, including strategic consequences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy Board reports on the assessment and the follow-up actions in its annual report. The assessment outcome and potential follow-up actions are annually discussed in the administrative meetings that are part of the quality assurance cycle 	Board

4 SCHEDULE SEP ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMY INSTITUTES

Institute	Date last assessment (assessment period)	2023 (assessment period)	2024 (assessment period)	2025 (assessment period)	2026 (assessment period)	2027 (assessment period)
DANS	Nov 2017 (2011-2016)		18-19 June (2017-2023)			
Huygens	March 2018 (2012-2017)		19-26 March (2018-2023)			
Hubrecht	Sept 2021 (2015-2021)					Sept 2027 (2021-2026)
IISG	March 2018 (2012-2017)		19-26 March (2018-2023)			
KITLV	April 2018 (2011-2017)			April (2018-2024)		
MI	March 2018 (2012-2017)		19-26 March (2018-2023)			
NIAS	Nov 2017 (2011-2017)		Nov 2024 (2018-2023)			
NIDI	May 2021 (2014-2020)					May 2027 (2021-2026)
NIN	March 2018 (2012-2017)			March (2018-2024)		
NIOD	April 2018 (2012-2017)		June (2018-2023)			
NIOO	April 2018 (2012-2017)		8-9 April (2018-2023)			
Westerdijk	June 2021 (2014-2020)					June 2027 (2021-2026)

5 PRACTICALITIES AND REIMBURSEMENT FOR ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Please note that the KNAW is a publicly funded Academy, which acts in accordance with general reimbursement rules of public administration.

Travel arrangements and reimbursements

- For Committee Members travelling from outside of the Netherlands, KNAW will book their trips via Uniglobe travel agency. KNAW will check beforehand if the proposed travel schedule fits the schedule of the member of the Committee.
 - If travelling by train takes less than 8 hours, a train ticket will be booked. In these cases reimbursement of flights will only take place when approved by the KNAW beforehand, and with good reasons.
 - If a Committee Member travels internationally by train, KNAW will reimburse first class tickets.
 - KNAW will reimburse economy class for all flights. If a Committee Member prefers business class, additional costs are for the account of the member.
 - KNAW reimburses train tickets from the airport to the train station closest to the hotel, as well as taxi costs from this train station to the hotel, and vice versa. In the same way, KNAW reimburses train tickets and taxi costs to and from the airport in your home country, or parking costs at the airport.
 - **Please note that the first meeting of the site-visit usually starts on the evening before (around 17:00h) and the actual site-visit takes up two full days.** We kindly ask you to allow for sufficient time for travelling to and from the airport/station within the Netherlands.
- For Committee Members travelling from within the Netherlands, KNAW will reimburse first class train tickets to the train station closest to the hotel, as well as taxi costs to and from the hotel, and vice versa.
- For all Committee Members, KNAW will book a taxi for journeys from the hotel to the KNAW institute (and to restaurants), and vice versa.
- Committee Members should use the Reimbursement Form provided by the KNAW for reimbursement of travel expenses and fees.
- Please note that the KNAW can only reimburse expenses if the receipts are enclosed.
- If a Committee Member, for any reason, misses his or her flight or train, the KNAW cannot be held responsible for the costs of rescheduling or booking a new ticket.

Stay arrangements

- Committee Members are in principle offered a maximum of three nights in the hotel: the night before, during and after the site visit.
- KNAW will make the hotel reservations (including continental breakfast).
- If a Committee Member wishes to stay longer, or arrives earlier, additional accommodation costs are for the account of the member. KNAW offers to arrange the extension of the hotel reservation.
- KNAW does not reimburse extra costs in the hotel (e.g. for minibar or room service, change of room).

Meals

- All Committee Members and the executive secretary to the Committee are offered dinner on the evenings before the site visit and of day 1 and 2 of the site visit.
- Lunch is provided for all Committee Members at the institute on day 1 and day 2 of the site visit.

Contact

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