Groningen Research Evaluation Protocol

Responsible quality assurance in accordance with the SEP 2027-2033

Introduction & Contents

This protocol sets out the procedure and instructions for the quality assurance of research at the University of Groningen,[1] in accordance with and supplementing the national guidelines laid down in the *Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2027-2033* (SEP[2]), effective from 1 January 2027. It serves as a manual for the planning, organization and follow-up of external SEP evaluations once every six years.

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Validity of this protocol

This protocol will remain valid for at least the same period (2027-2033) as the SEP, subject to national adjustments of the SEP or changes in the Groningen research organization or time schedule in GREP Appendix 1.

[1] Where the University of Groningen is mentioned, the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) is also meant. Despite the 2007 transfer in legal position of personnel from the former Faculty of Medical Sciences to the UMCG, final responsibility for academic research and teaching has remained with the Board of the University of Groningen.

[2] Downloadable from the website of the Universities of The Netherlands (UNL).

List of abbreviations

CV	Curriculum Vitae
ECOS	ErkenningsCommissie OnderzoekScholen
FTE	Fulltime Equivalent
GradSchool	Graduate School
HR	Human Resources
KNAW	Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen
KUOZ	Kengetallen Universitair Onderzoek
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NWO	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek
PDCA	Plan–Do–Check–Act
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PRC	Peer Review Committee
R&I	Research & Impact
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RISe	Research Intelligence Services
SEP	Strategy Evaluation Protocol
SODOLA	Structureel Overleg Directeuren met Landelijke Accreditatie
TFQ	Talent, Funding & Quality (University Services department in the R&I cluster)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCW	Universitaire Commissie Wetenschapsbeoefening
UG	University of Groningen
UMCG	University Medical Center Groningen
UK	United Kingdom
UNL	Universiteiten *van* Nederland (opvolger VSNU)
VSNU	Vereniging Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (voorganger UNL)
…	

Chapter I. Main goals and principles SEP

I.1 External evaluation according to the SEP

All Dutch universities[3] are bound to the SEP, the national protocol for the quality assurance of their research. Its main goals are twofold: 1) a formative and development-oriented evaluation of a research unit's strategy, and 2) to be accountable to funders, stakeholders and university management for the unit's research. It stimulates a continuous dialogue as part of the ongoing quality assurance cycle. Compared to the previous 2021 protocol, the focus now is more on the formative aspect, by learning from expert peers who provide feedback that is tailored to the specific aims, context and strategy of the research, and less on evaluation and comparison of past performance.

External evaluations are organized once every six years and based on informed peer review by independent international experts that assess research units on three main criteria:

- Quality
- Societal relevance[4]
- Viability

The judgement of the Peer Review Committee (PRC) on each criterion is provided in the form of text, without a quantitative score, and takes into consideration the results and reflections of the research unit on how it organises as well as performs its research with special reference to four specific aspects:

- Open Science
- PhD Policy and Training
- Responsible Research Practices[5]
- Academic Culture

These aspects are integral parts of the evaluation criteria and should be dealt with accordingly in the PRC's evaluation.

The PRC follows the instructions laid down in the SEP and further detailed in the terms of reference formulated by the Board of the University. It bases its judgement on written documentation provided by the research unit (a self-evaluation report, where needed supplemented with background information in appendices) and on interviews with representatives of the unit and relevant persons or bodies during a site visit.

The findings of the PRC are published in a report that will be made public on the University's website, together with:

- A summary of the self-evaluation, including the case studies presented to highlight the major academic and societal results and the connection between the two, and when relevant, the 'pathways to impact'
- A position document of the Board of the University (hereinafter Board), including a reflection on the PRC's major findings and recommendations and a statement on how these will be monitored as part of the quality assurance cycle.

Sensitive information that might harm the privacy of individuals or non-disclosure agreements with external stakeholders can be provided in a confidential management letter, either at the PRC's own initiative or at request of the Board.

[3] The SEP has been formulated by the UNL, the Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), and the Dutch Research Council (NWO). All Dutch research universities and all KNAW and NWO institutes adhere to it.
[4] Largely corresponding with the term 'impact' as generally used in the UK and defined in the REF 2021 as: "*an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life beyond academia. Impact includes the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects.*"
[5] This aspect replaces the *Human Resources Policy* from the previous SEP edition

I.2 Continuous dialogue

The internal, mid-term evaluations, mandatory until 2020 at the UG to warrant continuity in between external evaluation once every six years, have been abolished as of 2021. Instead, follow-up actions have been discussed as part of the regular quality assurance cycle[6].
In exceptional cases, when a PRC evaluation calls for more drastic action, or in case of a significant change in aims or strategy of a unit, or at explicit request of the Faculty Board, the University Committee for Academic Practice (UCW) can advise the Board to request a midterm review (MTR), similar to an external evaluation but following a lighter procedure[7].

I.3 Time schedule and national coordination

The Board decides which research units are to be assessed when and by whom. The University of Groningen still welcomes joint evaluations with comparable units from other universities,[8] but only if the entire institute can be assessed, covering its full mission and all subunits. The guiding principle is 'full evaluation of the institute in its entirety'. In our previous protocol, national or joint disciplinary evaluations were still preferred, mainly to allow meaningful comparison of the unit's performance to those of similar units at other universities. However, due to the advance and availability of tools and methods for nuanced analyses of alt- and bibliometrics, UG's Research Intelligence Services (RISe) can provide responsible quantitative benchmarks, tailored to the unit's mission. These can replace direct comparison with sisters participating in joint evaluations.
A Faculty Board must propose to the Board its preferred choice (local evaluation or joint evaluation with external participants) and substantiate this choice, including an explanation of how the research will be benchmarked.
An overview of the current schedule is presented in GREP Appendix 1. This schedule is discussed at the annual research meetings between the Board and Faculty Boards and can be updated if necessary. Whether SEP evaluations are organized locally or nationally/jointly must be decided well in advance, since this partly depends on the outcome of national consultation of relevant disciplinary bodies. This is stipulated in the action plan (see Section II.4).

I.4 Units of evaluation and level of aggregation

The SEP defines a unit of evaluation as follows:

- "The research unit must have its own clearly defined strategy and be sufficiently large; i.e. at least ten research FTEs[9] among its permanent academic staff, including staff with tenure-track positions but excluding PhD candidates and postdocs. This condition merely indicates the minimum number; larger units are preferable.
- The research unit should be known as an entity in its own right both within and outside of the university.
- The research unit should have been established at least three years previously. If units of a more recent date are to be assessed, their self-evaluation should indicate their stage of development so the evaluation committee can take this fact into account."

Some of the present Groningen units of evaluation are smaller than 10 research FTEs. Section II.2 describes the present organization of research at the University of Groningen and provides the guidelines for the Groningen implementation of the SEP.

I.5 Division of costs, tasks and responsibilities

The three main parties involved in an external evaluation, distinguished in the SEP, are the Board, the Research Unit and the PRC. A clear overview of their respective tasks and responsibilities is presented in SEP Chapters 2, 3, and 4. However, although final responsibility for the University's quality assurance rests with the Board, the execution of many tasks is delegated to the Faculty Boards. In

[6] During the semi-annual management meetings (Bestuurlijk Overleg or BO) between CvB and Faculty Board.
[7] Without obligation to appoint an external PRC, organize a site visit, or make the results public.
[8] Including foreign universities and the KNAW and NWO institutes.
[9] Roughly corresponding to at least 25 (head count) senior staff members.

addition, the supervision and training of PhD candidates is organized in ten[10] (local) Graduate Schools, each with its own Director and all coordinated by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Since the PhD Policy and Training is one of the four specific aspects to be taken into account, the role of the Graduate Schools is an integral part of the evaluations.

Chapter II provides a detailed internal delineation of timelines, tasks and responsibilities. The most relevant Groningen principles, agreements and definitions are described first below.

Groningen units of evaluation: SEP institutes and underlying research programmes
A SEP institute is a group of researchers with an articulated shared mission, performing research within one or more research programmes or themes under the same management (director and/or scientific board, further referred to as 'the Director'). The Director is appointed by and accountable to the Faculty Board.[11] If researchers from more than one Faculty participate in a SEP institute,[12] one Faculty Board will act as corresponding author and ensure that proper arrangements are made with the other Faculty Boards regarding the participation of their researchers in the institute. The Director of the institute is responsible for monitoring the mission, strategy, quality and impact of the research within the institute, for scouting and hiring of new talent, acquisition of external research funding, provision of tailored research facilities and the distribution of research capacity and facilities over the institute's programmes and, where applicable,[13] for proper supervision of PhD candidates. In addition, the Director stimulates a sound Academic Culture and Responsible Research Practices within the Institute, and ensures sufficient alignment with the Faculty's and UG's policies on Diversity, Equality, Inclusivity, Integrity, Human Resources and Open Science.

A programme is headed by one or more programme leaders who monitor a specified theme or sub-theme, approach or expertise regarding research within the institute's broader mission.

Local and interuniversity Graduate Schools
The SEP requires the supervision and instruction of PhD candidates to be explicitly addressed in an evaluation. The information to be provided in the self-evaluation report is briefly described in SEP Appendix A (p.23). However, most Groningen SEP institutes do not overlap with local or interuniversity Graduate Schools.[14] At the University of Groningen, PhD programmes are organized in Faculty-based Graduate Schools under the responsibility of a Graduate School Director. These 'local' Graduate Schools are part of the Groningen Graduate School coordinated by the Dean of Graduate Schools.
Besides the Groningen Graduate Schools, additional training and facilities can be provided by national, interuniversity Graduate Schools.
Appendix 2 provides guidelines for the evaluation of both local and interuniversity Graduate Schools. It also explains the role of the local, Faculty-based Graduate School in providing the information needed for the evaluation of the PhD training and supervision, as part of the evaluation of the SEP institute.

Costs
All costs of SEP evaluations will be covered by the Faculty. The Faculty Board is responsible for drawing up and monitoring the budget. In the event of national or joint evaluations, the Faculty Board will ensure that the costs are reasonably shared between the participating Universities. The cost estimate is part of the action plan (see Section II.4) to be approved by the Board.

[10] Including that of University College Friesland, but not the 11th Faculty, University College Groningen., which does not provide graduate courses.
[11] The appointment must be approved by the Board.
[12] At present, the only SEP institute with participants from more than one Faculty is PRECISION (University Medical Center Groningen institute with participation of Faculty of Science & Engineering's Pharmacy institute GRIP).
[13] The tasks allotted to SEP institutes may vary between faculties. A clear description of how tasks are assigned within a faculty must be given in the self-evaluation report.
[14] The term Graduate School is used here to describe both the former ECOS-accredited Research Schools (referred to as interuniversity Graduate Schools here) and the faculty Graduate Schools operative at the University of Groningen.

I.6 Terms of reference, discipline protocol, action plan

The SEP no longer provides guidelines nor templates for the Board's written instructions to the PRC, the terms of reference. Instead, these can now be found in GREP Template 3, to be completed by the Board in consultation with the relevant Faculty Board.
In national or joint evaluations, the terms of reference are usually referred to as the discipline protocol and require additional prior agreements between the participating Universities. These are prepared by a national Disciplinary Body to be appointed by the relevant Faculty Deans. The agreements are laid down in an action plan and include nomination of a lead University (and coordinating Faculty). The action plan must be approved by the Boards of all participating universities and must meet the requirements described in Chapter II.
Local evaluations also require an action plan, to be drafted by the Faculty Board and approved by the Board of the University (see Section II.4).

I.7 Self-evaluation report plus additional documentation

SEP Appendices B-E provide detailed instructions and templates for the information to be provided to the PRC, 6-8 weeks prior to the site visit. SEP Appendix D2 pays special attention to the merits and constraints of quantitative indicators, irresponsible use of which is strongly discouraged. However, this does not mean that quantitative indicators are completely replaced by qualitative evidence or 'case studies' (SEP Appendix D1). UG policy aims at the responsible use of tailored metrics to support the narratives provided in the text of the self-evaluation and case studies. This topic is clarified at this webpage[15] and in GREP Appendix 3.

I.8 Registration of research input and output

Faculty Boards are primarily responsible for the registration of research output and activities in Pure, the current research information system (CRIS), introduced in 2014/2015. Only outputs recorded in and generated by Pure are admissible for inclusion in the documentation needed for a SEP evaluation. The same will apply to research input and activities, but only after UG's and UMCG's registration systems (Pure, AFAS) have been sufficiently adapted to allow central registration and monitoring. Meanwhile, research input and activity data will have to be derived from the Faculty's own registration.
The University PDCA cycle[16] comprises annual reporting of research input and output data following the KUOZ template (see I.2 above) that is more detailed but compatible with the SEP template and included in GREP Template 1.

I.9 Deviation from the SEP

The current SEP is less detailed than previous versions and leaves more room for flexibility and tailored evaluations. It explicitly states that deviations are allowed: "*The protocol allows for significant freedom in the interpretation and application of various evaluation criteria and supporting aspects, in order to account for different institutional contexts, different research disciplines, and the nature of the research units. We strongly recommend that research units take advantage of this flexibility by consciously considering their own quality standards and quality assurance processes.*"
If further deviations are foreseen during initial preparation of an evaluation, the research unit must report this in good time to its Faculty Board, which will seek the approval of the Board. Such deviations must be included in the terms of reference and/or action plan.

[15] https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/policy-and-strategy/research-policy/principles-of-metrics-in-research-assessment/
[16] The Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle is an iterative four-step model for implementing change, also widely used for quality assurance.

Chapter II. UG implementation of the SEP

This chapter describes the way the SEP guidelines are implemented at the University of Groningen.

II.1 Evaluation criteria

Although productivity (i.e. outputs per unit of input) has been abolished as a separate evaluation criterion since 2015, the quality of research units varying in size cannot be compared fairly without consideration of productivity indicators. Therefore, SEP Tables C1 (Staff) and C2 (Funding) remain obligatory parts of the self-evaluation report. However, the SEP no longer requests obligatory output tables, nor other guidelines for quantitative indicators. UG's research and HR policies[17] aim to maintain reasonable levels of output / input ratios, but at the level of the research (sub)unit, not at individual level, and taking into account individual and team contributions to other activities and outputs, aimed at teaching, societal impact, leadership, or Open Science. Therefore, we continue to monitor research in- and output data following the UNL KUOZ definitions (GREP Template 1), and we still encourage adherence to the previous SEP Table E1 ('Demonstrable products', see GREP Template 4).
In addition, although not explicitly included in the SEP formats, summary tables of outputs are indispensable to alleviate the burden on PRC members that will have to deal with full output lists[18] amounting to hundreds of publications. To that end, UG also adheres to the inclusion of output tables corresponding to the UNL definitions and template for the annual reporting of research information (GREP Template 1).

Societal relevance also requires explicit underpinning, but here, robust quantitative indicators are scarce in most disciplines and the evaluation will have to be based largely on qualitative evidence, provided in the text of the self-evaluation and in separate 'Case studies' (see SEP Appendix D1). However, as described in GREP Template 4, responsible impact metrics may be provided to support the narratives: "*Where appropriate, the unit can use quantitative indicators of research activity, progress and impact. Some indicators may also be useful to underpin the case studies.*"

II.2 Research units

Research at the University of Groningen is organized in 24 institutes[19], further referred to as SEP institutes (see GREP Appendix 1), representing its main units of evaluation. However, most SEP institutes have subdivided their research into research programmes or themes, and some SEP institutes may prefer evaluation at programme or theme level.

All Groningen SEP institutes must undergo a SEP evaluation once every six years (i.e. 100% coverage). In addition, a Faculty Board can propose to the Board (in its action plan, see Section II.3) to carry out additional evaluation of a SEP institute's underlying research programmes. Such additional evaluations must always be performed by the same PRC and simultaneously with that of the SEP institute and must be sufficiently motivated by the Faculty Board.

Consequently, the present Groningen units of evaluation comprise two levels of aggregation: that of the SEP-institute and that of underlying research programmes. Research programmes, and even some SEP-institutes, may not quite meet the minimum size requested by the SEP. Until further notice, the University of Groningen will maintain its existing research organization in SEP institutes and programmes, irrespective of their current size. However, smaller units are expected to strive for sufficient critical mass to remain nationally and internationally visible.
In addition, the following requirements must be met if additional evaluation at programme level is proposed:

[17] See Recognition & Rewards
[18] Full publication list are generally disclosed to PRC members via a secluded website or by providing the PRC access to the local CRIS.
[19] Situation May 2026, referring to the Groningen main units of evaluation. Research collaboration takes place in many more forms and networks, often labelled as 'Institute' as well, but these are not evaluated as such under the SEP.

- For programmes significantly smaller than 10 research FTE of senior staff, the PRC will be instructed to pay special attention to the viability of the programme. If necessary, the PRC can be asked to provide its judgment in a confidential management letter.[20]
- The information to be provided in the self-evaluation report on the institute's programmes is limited to only those components of the SEP format that provide complementary information (i.e. without duplication of information provided at the institute level).

In case of ***national or joint external evaluations***, agreement must be reached between the participating universities, as apparent from the discipline protocol / terms of reference. This includes consensus on the preferred size of the units of evaluation.

Some research within a Faculty may not be part of a SEP institute or programme, as may be the case for parts of old programmes recently terminated. The research input and output must be reported but may be kept out of the SEP tables for the SEP institutes and programmes. This must be clearly explained in the self-evaluation report.

II.3 Scheduling and managing an external evaluation

The last two pages (12-13) of SEP Chapter 1 provide a clear description and schedule for planning the actions of the Board, the research unit, and the PRC. Also see Sections I.3-5 and GREP Appendix 1. In addition, the guidelines below apply.

Timely national coordination

Given the higher complexity of interuniversity evaluations, which will have to be aligned with both the SEP and participating universities own protocols, it is highly desirable that the choice of either local or national / joint evaluation is known at least 2 years prior to the external evaluation. This should allow sufficient time for the Boards to approve the discipline protocol drafted by national assemblies of involved Deans and/or Directors[21].

Kick-off

In January of the year preceding a scheduled local evaluation at the latest, and one year earlier for a national / joint evaluation, the Board will send a letter instructing the Faculty Board to start preparations. It will ask the Faculty to appoint an administrative coordinator in charge of the logistical and other practical arrangements to be made, and to submit an action plan to be approved by the Board at least 6 months before the planned site visit.

Action plan

The action plan must address the following topics:

1. an overview of the SEP institutes to be evaluated and their estimated size; if additional evaluation of underlying research programmes is proposed, this must be motivated
2. whether or not other universities will join the evaluation
3. the period to be evaluated
4. a draft timetable / schedule of the preparations and site visit
5. the profile / required expertise of the PRC
6. nomination of the PRC's chair and members, including brief CVs
7. nomination of a secretary for the PRC
8. a draft programme for the site visit
9. additional information to be provided to the PRC, alongside the self-evaluation and other documentation prescribed by the SEP (e.g. a bibliometric analysis, stakeholder survey)
10. additional instructions and/or questions for the PRC, to be incorporated in the terms of reference (see below); including a request for a confidential management letter if smaller programmes are to be assessed

[20] Which will not be included in the public PRC report, see Section I.1.
[21] Usually referred to as '*Discipline Overleg Orgaan*', DOO.

11. a cost estimate
12. additionally, only for national / joint evaluation:
    a. the other universities that will participate, including an overview of their units of evaluation plus estimated size
    b. the lead university (and coordinating Faculty)
    c. the national body in charge of the preparations
13. additionally, only for local evaluation:
    a. how to meet the need for a benchmark with comparable research groups outside Groningen

In case of a national / joint evaluation, the department Talent, Funding & Quality (TFQ) must be informed sufficiently and timely about the discipline protocol, in particular if deviations from SEP or GREP are foreseen. If Groningen is the lead university, TFQ will be responsible for the coordination and communication between the Boards of the universities and their central staff.
The Faculty Board is requested to share the final programme of the site visit with TFQ, as soon as available, and to invite the Rector Magnificus to the PRC's presentation of provisional findings at the end of the site visit.
GREP Template 2 provides a generalized timeline for the actions to be taken.

Terms of reference / discipline protocol
See Section I.6 and the description of the action plan above. In addition, good note should be taken of the additional instructions to be provided by the Board in consultation with the Faculty Boards, as described in SEP Chapter 2, Section 2 and GREP Template 3:

- specification of the research unit(s) to be assessed
- special elements or additional questions the PRC should pay attention to, such as:
    - the sufficiency or appropriateness of its aims and strategy
    - other aspects, not requested by the SEP, the PRC should focus on, related to either strategic issues or a unit's specific tasks or issues the Board deems relevant to get a clear picture of the past and anticipated future performance of the research unit
- if units with < 10 research FTE of senior staff are to be assessed, the PRC will be asked to explicitly reflect on the consequences of size for viability and national / international visibility and, if appropriate, to publish its judgement on these small units in a separate, confidential management letter
- strategic recommendations for the entire discipline at the national level, in case of a nation-wide evaluation covering a discipline

If the example in GREP Template 3 leaves too little room for questions tailored to different units, additional instructions and questions can be incorporated in the action plan.

A discipline protocol may in fact be defined as the combination of several terms of references (one for each university) plus the action plan.

The ToR will be sent at least three months prior to the site visit to all PRC members, together with the letter of appointment.

Composition of the Peer Review Committee (PRC)
In case of a local evaluation the PRC is appointed by the Board, which bears final responsibility for its composition, competence and impartiality, as described in SEP Chapter 2, Section 3 and GREP Template 5. The PRC must include at least one PhD candidate and one early-/mid-career researcher, and may also include a non-academic expert. The PRC shall have a chairperson and be supported by an independent secretary, who is not considered to be a member of the evaluation committee. It must be appropriately diverse and, wherever possible, have an international composition. The diverse composition of the committee should be understood in a broad sense, focusing on relevant dimensions of diversity such as gender as well as cultural, national and disciplinary background, etc.

The Faculty Board is expected to find candidates and to substantiate the nominations of the PRC members in terms of academic excellence, areas of expertise and independence (see also the action plan above). In addition, the following directions apply:

- In the event of doubt, the Board may consult external peers for advice on the expertise and independence of candidates.
- PRC candidates may have to be contacted by the Faculty before their eligibility has been confirmed by the Board, e.g. to check their availability. If so, they should be explicitly informed that their nomination is pending, subject to formal approval by the Board. The same applies to the secretary.
- The Board formally confirms the appointment of the PRC members through a letter, accompanied by the terms of reference, the SEP, this protocol (GREP) and the 'Statement of impartiality and confidentiality' (GREP Template 5).

In case of a national / joint evaluation, the lead university will appoint the PRC members, in consultation with the other participating universities.

II.4 Self-evaluation and additional documentation

We here provide some further directions for UG implementation of SEP Chapter 3 and SEP Appendices B-E.
The self-evaluation report and additional documentation must be provided 6-8 weeks prior to the site visit, depending not only[22] on the size but also on the number of the unit(s) to be assessed. For each single Unit of Evaluation, the total set of documentation (hereinafter self-evaluation docs) comprises three mandatory (A-C) parts and one optional part (D):

A. a one page summary
B. the main text of the self-evaluation report, following the guidelines of SEP Appendix B and comprising no more than 20 pages (plain text), excluding part C, but including:
    1. an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), as part of chapter 2, *Vision, Mission and Strategy*
    2. a description of the factual *evidence* for the production, use and recognition of research outputs aimed at academic peers (research quality) versus non-academic stakeholder groups (societal impact); this represents a narrative explanation of GREP Template 4, organized along the six cells of Table E1, and, where appropriate, supported by quantitative indicators that may be provided in separate Appendices
C. separate mandatory Appendices to the self evaluation report:
    1. where appropriate: indicators for each of the six cells of *Table E1*, tailored to the mission, strategy and specific characteristics of the unit or (sub-)discipline(s)
    2. one or more *case studies*, as explained in SEP Appendix D1, to further illustrate or highlight, in a narrative form, specific elements of the research, providing information about both academic and societal aims and output, as well as the connection between the two and/or addressing 'pathways to impact' (to be made publicly available after the evaluation)
    3. quantitative information on the input of research staff (SEP Table C1), funding (SEP Table C2), and on PhD enrolment and graduation rates (SEP Table C3)
    4. although the SEP no longer requires uniform tables for research output and activities, this information remains mandatory as part of UG's annual PDCA cycle, as explained in Section I.8 above, and following and following the KUOZ format provided in GREP Template 1; the idea behind this, is that combination of 6 annual KUOZ tables should suffice and will keep the administrative burden to a minimum. However, the number of KUOZ output types may be limited to the major ones relevant for the unit, and activities may be described qualitatively, rather than counted, if at all

[22] The SEP only mentions size but has been formulated for the evaluation of single units. For multi-unit evaluations, the text should be interpreted more widely, as indicated in brackets.

5. a list of key publications / outputs: a fair number, e.g. 5 per 10 research FTEs senior staff, aimed at an academic audience, and, if applicable, a similar number aimed at a non-academic audience; plus (links to) the full text versions / descriptions
6. access to Pure or a secluded website providing access to the full list of outputs and activities produced in the period evaluated

D. other relevant documents, in particular providing additional information on the four 'specific aspects' Open Science, PhD Policy and Training, Responsible Research Practices, and Academic Culture (e.g. summaries of or links to UG or Faculty policy documents.

All self-evaluation docs may be provided to the PRC on a secure website. However, it is advised to first ask the PRC members whether or not they wish to receive hard copies of all or certain parts of the documentation, and to provide these on request.

Regarding the procedures for compiling and approval of the self evaluation docs, the following directions apply:

- The self-evaluation docs must be compiled by the SEP institute, which will also write most of the texts; the section on the PhD programme may be drafted by the local Graduate School and subsequently supplemented by the institute.
- In an early stage of the preparations for a SEP evaluation, preferably one year before the site visit, the Faculty Board member responsible for research and/or the SEP institute Director are invited to present their plans to the University Committee for Academic Practice (UCW).
- The documentation must be approved by the Faculty Board before it is submitted it to the UCW, 6-8 weeks prior to the PRC deadline.
- The UCW advises the Board on parts B. and C. of the documentation. Where necessary, it provides suggestions for improvement that are directly communicated to the Faculty Board and the SEP institute, within 4 weeks of receipt.
- The Board will generally adopt a positive UCW advice prior to receiving the final documentation, subject to an adequate response to the UCW suggestions.
- The department TFQ will subsequently receive the final version of the self-evaluation docs and will check, in consultation with the most involved UCW members:
    - whether the UCW suggestions have been sufficiently incorporated or addressed
    - the tables in part C.3
    - as far as possible: parts C.4 and C.5.
- Regarding SEP table C1 (Input of research staff), special attention must be paid to:
    - Research staff not employed by the University of Groningen (i.e., receiving no salary, ‘zero-hours contract’), such as emeriti, honorary professors or visiting staff. They may still produce output but do not count in the input tables, which is why their output should be excluded from SEP table C1 but may be reported separately.
    - Scholarship PhD students form an exception: as agreed in the UNL definitions, their research input is included in the FTE counts.
    - Employed research staff with another appointment at an external research institute. Their output may only be counted insofar as it is based on their Groningen position.

II.5 Site visit

To maintain a healthy balance between discussions of managerial and strategic aspects versus content of the research, the programme for the site visit must provide room for brief ‘pitches’ of both senior and junior researchers on their own research. In case of local evaluation of a SEP institute, the Faculty

Board is requested to invite the Rector Magnificus to attend the presentation of provisional findings at the end of a site visit, mentioned in the SEP as an optional element (chapter 4, p.20).

II.6 Evaluation report + Follow-up

See SEP chapter 4, section 4 for a brief description of the content of the evaluation report (here referred to as the PRC report). In addition to the SEP guidelines, the following procedure will be adhered to:

- The comments of the research unit on factual inaccuracies in the first draft of the PRC report (correction phase) will be formulated by the management of the SEP institute, but must be approved by the Faculty Board before sending to the PRC (2 weeks after receipt of 1st draft). The Board[23] must receive a copy.
- Upon receipt of the second draft of the PRC report (4 weeks after the 1st draft; UCW receives a copy), the Board will ask the Faculty Board whether it approves this version, and to prepare a response (see below). Both the Board and the Faculty Board will check whether the report is complete, consistent with the SEP and meets the additional requirements laid down in the terms of reference or discipline protocol.
- If the latter conditions are not met, or in case of doubt, the Board will ask the PRC for additional information or clarification. The PRC is obliged to respond but not to adapt its evaluation. After receiving the PRC's response and/or a next, final version of its report, the PRC will be formally discharged through a letter from the Board of the lead university.
- Before determining its position (8-12 weeks after the 1st draft), the Board will request the SEP institute and the Faculty Board to respond to the PRC's judgement and recommendations. The Faculty Board response will focus on its main conclusions and measures.
- The UCW will be asked to advise on the Faculty response, in particular whether it is deemed adequate, given the PRC report and the response of the SEP institute.
- The Board will discuss the Faculty response plus the UCW advice with the Faculty Board at the semi-annual management meeting ('*BO'*), after which it will publish its final position document on a UG webpage, together with the PRC report (4 months after the 1st draft), a summary of the self-evaluation and the case studies.
- A brief report on evaluations, conclusions, recommendations and follow-up will be published in the UG annual report.
- Self-evaluation reports may also be published but are generally kept confidential. It is up to the Faculty Board to decide upon this.

Note that rejection of the PRC report is in fact impossible. Instead, the Board can decide to ignore the PRC's judgement and substantiate its decision in its position document. Alternatively, the PRC could be requested to move the most disputed parts from the report to a confidential management letter.

Management letter

As already stated in Sections I.1 and II.3 above, the PRC can decide or be instructed (in the terms of reference or the discipline protocol) to add confidential advice in a management letter to the Faculty Board and the Board. This should be based on interviews with the management of the SEP institute and concern sensitive information of a personal nature or be about the current or future position of a research programme. When needed, the Faculty Board, in consultation with the Board, will discuss the letter in a personal interview with the PRC's chair.

In the correction phase, the management may also request the PRC to move restricted parts of the draft report to a management letter, provided it has valid reasons to do so (such as a non-disclosure agreement with an external stakeholder).

In the follow-up, the Board will discuss the management letter with the Dean of the Faculty, who will request the management of the unit concerned to respond to the letter. The Board, in consultation with the Faculty Dean, will draw its final conclusions regarding the management letter and decide on any follow-up action deemed necessary.

[23] Note that throughout this protocol, 'the Board' refers to the 'College van Bestuur', not to be confounded with Faculty Board.