Template 3 for GREP 2027: Terms of Refence (ToR)

The Terms of Reference specify the purpose and criteria of the evaluation, the overall schedule of the procedure, and the responsibilities of the Peer Review Committee (PRC).

The SEP 2027-2033 no longer provides a template for the ToR. UG adheres to the procedure and template used previously, as described below.

In January of the year preceding a scheduled local evaluation at the latest, and one year earlier for a national / joint evaluation, the Executive Board (CvB) will send a letter instructing the Faculty Board (FB) to start preparations. It will ask the FB to draft an action plan, addressing among other things these topics, to be included in the ToR:

1. an overview of the UG research units to be evaluated, and
2. in case of national/joint evaluation, of the other units to be evaluated
3. the period to be evaluated
9. additional information to be provided to the Peer Review Committee, besides the documentation prescribed by the SEP (e.g., a bibliometric analysis, stakeholder survey)
10. additional instructions and/or questions for the PRC

Examples of the latter, additional questions or special elements the PRC should pay attention to, are:

- the sufficiency or appropriateness of the unit's 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 CvB 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

At least three months prior to the site visit, the CvB sends all members of the Peer Review Committee the Terms of Reference (ToR), together with the letter of appointment.

Terms of Reference

SEP evaluation … *< Name unit(s) >* …

Date

1. Introduction: Research evaluations in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the boards of the universities, KNAW and NWO are responsible for the quality of the research at their institution. As part of their quality assurance cycle, all academic research in the Netherlands is evaluated every six years. The executive board of the relevant university, the board of NWO or the board of KNAW commissions the research assessment and determines which research units are to be evaluated each year. For the coordination of the assessment, all research organisations associated with VSNU, KNAW and NWO use the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The main goal of a SEP evaluation is to evaluate a research unit in light of its own aims and strategy. In the self-evaluation, the unit reflects on its ambitions and strategy during the previous six years as well as for the future in a coherent, narrative argument, supported wherever possible with factual evidence. This fact means that there should be a direct relationship between the arguments with regard to the aims and strategy on the one hand and the type of robust data underpinning the self-evaluation on the other. The SEP evaluations help to monitor and improve the quality of the research conducted by the research unit. Additionally, the assessments of the research quality and societal relevance of research contribute to fulfil the duty of accountability towards government and society. The boards of the institutes may use the outcomes of the research evaluations for quality assurance purposes and institutional strategy development. The protocol itself is reviewed every six years in order to move along with important developments in research.

The board of the University of Groningen hereby issues the following Terms of Reference to the assessment committee for *<name of the Unit(s)>.*

2. Objectives of the research assessment of the research units

The committee is requested to assess the quality of research conducted by the unit, as well as to offer recommendations in order to improve the quality of research and the strategy of the unit. The committee is requested to carry out the evaluation according to the guidelines specified in the SEP. The evaluation is partly backward-looking (summative), but the main focus is forward-looking, answering the question whether the unit is sufficiently prepared for the future, and providing recommendations for improvement (formative). Specifically, the committee is asked to judge the academic and societal performance and viability of the unit in qualitative terms, and to offer its written conclusions as well as recommendations, motivated by clear considerations and arguments.

The main assessment criteria are:

1) Research quality;
2) Societal relevance;
3) Viability of the unit.

During the evaluation of these criteria, the assessment committee is asked to incorporate four specific aspects, as they are becoming increasingly important in the current scientific context and help to shape the past as well as future quality of the research units. These aspects are:

1) Open Science: sharing of research output and data, collaboration with other academics and wider society, transparency within all research phases;
2) PhD Policy and Training: supervision and instruction of PhD candidates;

3) Responsible Research Practices: research integrity, responsible use of metrics and Generative AI, Knowledge security;
4) Academic Culture: academic freedom, openness, (social) safety, diversity and inclusivity, talent management, training and career perspectives.

The main assessment criteria and the four specific aspects are described in detail within the SEP.

3. Committee requirements: statement of impartiality

The members of the committees are requested to sign a statement of impartiality before they conduct their assessment work. In this statement, the members declare that they have no direct relationship or connection with the corresponding assessed research unit.

4. Schedule of the assessment and reporting

The self-evaluation and the site visit form the main sources of information for the committee, on which basis it draws up its report. The self- evaluation will be sent at least 6 weeks prior to the site visit, together with the Strategy Evaluation Protocol and the programme for the site visit.

The research assessment will take place on < *date site visit* >. The unit will contact the committee members about relevant issues related to the research assessment approximately two months prior to the site visit.

The committee is requested to report their findings in an assessment report drawn up in accordance with the SEP guidelines and format. The committee is asked to send the draft report to the faculty board no more than eight weeks after the site visit. The faculty board will check the report for factual inaccuracies; if such inaccuracies are detected, the committee will ensure that they are corrected. The committee will then send the final version of the assessment report to the Board of the University. The Board publishes the final version of the assessment report.