

## MEMO

**To:** College van Bestuur  
**From:** Paul van Geest, vice-dean of research, on behalf of the MT  
**Date:** November, 1 2018  
**Subject:** Comments on the research report of the review committee  
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On 17 October 2018 TST received the final report of the review committee who was asked to perform a research review of TST. After TST had submitted its self-evaluation on May 1, 2018, the review committee visited the TST on June 1, 2018. The committee's investigation took place on the research being conducted in the period 2012-2017. The committee followed the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 (SEP), which was developed for the assessment of research in the Netherlands and was supported by the QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities). In this administrative response we inform you about the positive results and address the recommendations mentioned.

### Process

The MT of TST was impressed by the considerable care the committee took in the review of our research programs and the pleasant atmosphere in which the visit to our institution took place. The interviews and discussions held during the visit showed that the members of the committee had prepared themselves thoroughly and had studied the self-study carefully. A draft version of the final report was received by the TST on 20 September 2018. The draft report also showed that the Committee members were very serious about their task. TST was very pleased with the assessments and only a few factual inaccuracies were corrected in the draft version.

### Positive observations

The most striking elements in the report were the observations that the quality and impact of the research at TST had continued to increase. The quality of the research of both the research program *Initiation and Mystagogy in the Christian Tradition* and the program *The Transformation of Religion in Late Modernity* was assessed as 'very good'. According to the committee, original innovative contributions to a better understanding of the formation and transformation of both individuals and religious institutions had been made at a global level by the researchers of both programs.

The committee also noted that the production and quality of scientific publications was very high and had increased considerably in comparison with the previous review period. It praised the acquisition of national and international research grants. Partly on this basis, the faculty was also assessed as 'very good' in terms of its viability. Finally, the TST was

even assessed as 'excellent' on the third and final assessment criterion 'relevance to society'. The frequent response to current events in religions and churches nationally and internationally is characteristic of the research at the TST and resulted in this exceptional qualification.

## **Recommendations**

The end result is, of course, a reason for us to be very pleased. However, the recommendations made by the Committee and the points for improvement put forward deserve attention. With regard to the recommendation to connect TST's research to Tilburg University's strategic impact initiatives in Artificial Intelligence and Empowering the Resilient Society, we note that, as yet, TiU has no separate impact initiative on artificial intelligence. TST aims to intensify its contributions to the impact themes 'Enhancing Health and well-Being' and 'Empowering the Resilient Society'.

With respect to the recommendation to publish more articles in English - not only in the in-house journals, but also in external, international, peer-reviewed journals from different publishers – we note that TST aims to reconsider its publication strategies in light of the trend towards open access. Both to develop its internal journals into joint open access journals (the *European Journal for the Study of Thomas Aquinas* (EJSTA) functions as a pilot project), and to investigate ways to facilitate the publication of dissertations in open access. Moreover, we will continue to invest in publishing in peer-reviewed journals from established publishers, preferably in open access.

With respect to the recommendation to establish one or several structural collaborations with institutes abroad that are comparable to TST in size and quality we note that this will be a priority for the period to come.

With respect to the recommendation to unite all researchers in Judaism in the Netherlands into a TST Institute for Jewish Studies we note that that plans have now been developed to transform the Centre for Patristic Research (CPO) of TiU-VU into a broader Centre for Early Christian Studies at VU and TiU. The transformation of the RJC into a broader centre will be taken into account in this process.

With respect to the recommendation to continue applying for competitive funding schemes, such as NWO, we note that it appeared that, after the research assessment, our attempts to obtain NWO subsidies were rewarded in the form of a grant for the project PLOEG: Palliatief Landelijk Onderzoek Eerstelijns Geestelijke Verzorging. Subproject 2: In dialoog met je levensverhaal. (Subsidy round : Palliantie. Meer dan zorg. Geestelijke verzorging 2018; NWO-domain ZonMw). This is encouraging. Strengthened, we continue to submit applications.

With respect to the recommendations to consider including a tenure-track system in the Next Generation Management Plan and recruit staff members from outside the Netherlands to promote the School's international profile we note that, unfortunately, there's no money for a tenure track system for those involved in the Next Generation Management Plan. When filling vacancies, however, we will not lose sight of the overall balance among the academic staff with respect to age and gender diversity. Moreover, we have recruited young scholars from abroad and we will actively try to recruit more foreign staff members, especially from English-speaking countries, and more clergy.

With respect to the recommendation to increase the focus on career guidance, presentation skills and teaching in the educational program for PhD candidates, encouraging them to go abroad during their research, and with respect to the recommendation to schedule progress conversations with PhD candidates every year in order to improve the duration and success rates of PhD projects we note that, parallel to the introduction of *Hora Finita* we will monitor the progress of our PhD candidates as well as our newly appointed assistant professors more closely.