

Research Review Humanities
Faculty of Arts
VU University Amsterdam

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Preface

This report summarises the results of the peer review assessment of the research clusters in humanities of the VU University Amsterdam.

The Committee wants to express its gratitude for the efforts made by all involved to provide the necessary documentation. This documentation contained valuable information and formed a very useful basis for an objective evaluation procedure. The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the constructive atmosphere of the discussions during the site visit. All representatives were willing to share their opinions and concerns in a very open manner.

The organisational and administrative support by QANU and by the Faculty allowed the Committee to focus on the assessment in a well-organised manner.

As chair of the Committee I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their commitment and dedication to this evaluation process. We have worked together as a real team, open-minded and thoughtful. We all realised the challenge of this task, and I am pleased to be able to conclude that this report reflects the common opinion of the Committee.

René Boomkens,
Chairman of the Committee

The review committee and the review procedures

Scope of the assessment

The Review Committee was asked to perform an assessment of the research in Humanities at the Faculty of Arts of the VU University Amsterdam. This assessment covers the research in the period 2006-2011. In accordance with the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 for Research Assessment in the Netherlands (SEP), the Committee's tasks were to assess the quality of the Faculty and the research programmes on the basis of the information provided by the Faculty and through interviews with the management, the research leaders, researchers and PhD students, and to advise how this quality might be improved.

Composition of the Committee

The composition of the Committee was as follows:

- Prof. René Boomkens, Professor of Social and Cultural Philosophy, University of Groningen, the Netherlands, Chair;
- Prof. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, Professor of Cultural Studies, Trent University, Canada;
- Prof. Simon Garrod, Professor of Cognitive Psychology, University of Glasgow, UK;
- Prof. Christine Geraghty, Honorary Professorial Fellow, University of Glasgow, UK;
- Prof. Sabine Iatridou, Professor of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA;
- Prof. Ulrike Mosel, Professor emerita of General Linguistics, Christian Albrechts University Kiel, Germany;
- Prof. Heinz Schilling, Professor emeritus of Early Modern European History, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany;
- Prof. Jay Winter, Professor of History, Yale University, USA.

A profile of the Committee members is included in Appendix A.

Dr. Marianne van der Weiden was appointed secretary to the Committee by QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities).

Independence

All members of the Committee signed a statement of independence to safeguard that they would assess the quality of the Faculty and research programmes in an unbiased and independent way. Any existing personal or professional relationships between Committee members and programmes under review were reported and discussed in the committee meeting. The Committee concluded that there were no unacceptable relations or dependencies and that there was no specific risk in terms of bias or undue influence.

Data provided to the Committee

The Committee has received detailed documentation consisting of the following parts:

1. Self-evaluation report of the unit under review, including all the information required by the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP), with appendices.
2. Copies of five key publications per research programme.

Procedures followed by the Committee

The Committee proceeded according to the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 (SEP). Prior to the Committee meeting, each programme was assigned to two or three reviewers, who independently formulated a preliminary assessment. The final assessments are based on the documentation provided by the Faculty, the key publications and the interviews with the management and with the leaders and researchers of the programmes. The interviews took place on 8 and 9 November 2012 (see the schedule in Appendix C) in Amsterdam. Preceding the site visit to the VU University Amsterdam, the Committee conducted a similar assessment of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Amsterdam.

Preceding the interviews, the Committee was briefed by QANU about research assessment according to SEP, and the Committee discussed the preliminary assessments. For each programme a number of comments and questions were decided upon. The Committee also agreed upon procedural matters and aspects of the assessment. After the interviews the Committee discussed the scores and comments. The texts for the committee report were finalised through email exchanges. The final version was presented to the faculty for factual corrections and comments. The comments were discussed in the Committee. The final report was printed after formal acceptance.

The Committee used the rating system of the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 (SEP). The meaning of the scores is described in Appendix B.

Part 1: Review of the Faculty

1. The Faculty

The focus of the VU University's Faculty of Arts in the broad field of Humanities is on three central areas: Heritage and History; Language, Cognition, Communication; Culture and Values. It aims through its research to improve the understanding of heritage, history, language and culture and to apply the insights of that research. Disseminating knowledge both within academia and in society at large and valorising it into tools, products and advice is part of the Faculty's mission.

The Faculty of Arts is one of the twelve Faculties at VU University Amsterdam (VU). Since 2008 the University Board stimulated the Faculties to organise their research in Interfaculty Research Institutes (IRIs). The Faculty of Arts' research in Heritage and History was made part of the IRI CLUE (Cultural Landscape and Urban Environment), consisting of researchers from the Faculties of Arts, Economy and Business Administration, Earth and Life Sciences, and Social Sciences. Language, Cognition, Communication became part of the IRI CAMeRA (Center for Advanced Media Research Amsterdam), which also includes researchers from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Science, and Psychology and Education. CAMeRA has recently become part of the Network Institute. In the new Network Institute computer scientists and communication scientists collaborate with organisation scientists, economists and linguists. Attempts to turn Culture and Values into an IRI failed on financial grounds. This group then continued as a Faculty Research Institute (FRI). A small number of researchers participated in the IRI VISOR (Research on Religion) until this was discontinued after an evaluation in 2011. Most of these researchers then became part of the FRI Culture and Values. Since the beginning of 2012, within the Faculty, all researchers have been grouped in three clusters, regardless of their participation in an IRI or FRI: Heritage and History; Language, Cognition, Communication; Culture and Values. The Committee was asked to evaluate the work of these three clusters, encompassing all research activities in the Faculty of Arts.

Assessment

It is clear to the Committee that the Faculty has tried to develop a specific and recognisable identity by adopting what is called an 'Applied Humanities' vision. This seems to fit well in the 'Connected World' concept of the VU and may at the same time be an answer to the political demand from universities to specialise and prioritise specific areas and ways of performing research. However, 'Applied Humanities' is a tricky label. It presupposes a strong network outside academia and it raises the question of the future conditions of fundamental research in the humanities, both in general and at the VU. One of the motivations behind the report on Sustainable Humanities (Report from the Committee on the National Plan for the Future of the Humanities, Amsterdam 2009) is exactly the fragile situation of so-called seemingly useless research in the humanities, i.e. useless in the short term sense of the word.

In addition to finding its own niche in research, the Faculty explores the possibility of cooperation with other institutes and universities. The Committee agrees with the policy of trying to cooperate with the University of Amsterdam in a complementary way. This actually may support the initiative of finding and developing the VU's own niche.

On the basis of the documentation provided and the meetings during the site visit, the Committee concludes that becoming an IRI or not has not affected the quality of the research of the three clusters, nor their productivity. Currently, however, one of the three is confronted with the situation that not being an IRI might have serious consequences for its future. The chance

that there may be a possibility to become (part of) a so-called disciplinary core may help, but given the fact that not all successful and fruitful research groups could be integrated in interfaculty institutes, it seems sensible to reconsider the general VU policy of creating IRIs as the only way of organising research activities. It is evident that not all fields of research can as easily be combined as was the case with CLUE and CAMeRA and that sometimes borders and differences are so strong that cooperation will fail. The IRI policy should not affect research performance so directly as may be the case with the Culture and Values cluster.

2. Quality and academic reputation

Most researchers in the three research clusters operate at an international level and publish articles in high impact journals, conference papers, books and book chapters. The self-evaluation report lists a number of researchers and publications that have contributed substantially to the scientific debate. Prestigious awards and grants have been won by a number of researchers.

Assessment

The Committee recognises the important work done in the previous years. The quality of research in the three clusters is very good to excellent. There is a strong participation in debates in a range of disciplines. The reputation of researchers is indeed evidenced by their participation in conference boards and the work of visiting professors.

3. Resources

The multiple reorganisations of research groups in the period 2006-2011 are reflected in the tables in the self-evaluation report. They provided the necessary information and enabled the Committee to come to conclusions, but at the same time clearly showed the complex situation of research groups in recent years.

Table 1. Research staff embedded in the Faculty of Arts

| | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | # | fte |
| Tenured staff | 90 | 28.4 | 82 | 27.2 | 89 | 28.1 | 93 | 28.4 | 92 | 28.2 | 93 | 29.2 |
| Non-tenured staff | 14 | 6.4 | 11 | 4.3 | 15 | 7.5 | 21 | 11.2 | 27 | 15.6 | 30 | 15.8 |
| PhD candidates | 38 | 17.9 | 35 | 18.0 | 50 | 25.7 | 52 | 30.3 | 60 | 32.3 | 52 | 28.9 |
| Total research staff | 142 | 52.7 | 128 | 49.5 | 154 | 61.3 | 166 | 69.8 | 178 | 76.1 | 174 | 73.9 |
| Support staff | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 0.8 | 2 | 1.2 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 2 | 1.5 |
| Total staff | 143 | 53.5 | 129 | 50.3 | 156 | 62.5 | 168 | 71.3 | 180 | 77.6 | 176 | 75.4 |

Table 2. Funding of the research staff embedded in the Faculty of Arts

| | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | fte | % |
| Direct funding | 37.1 | 70 | 31.6 | 64 | 38.6 | 63 | 44.7 | 64 | 42.5 | 56 | 41.3 | 56 |
| National research grants | 12.7 | 24 | 15.2 | 31 | 18.8 | 31 | 20.4 | 29 | 25.4 | 33 | 23.4 | 33 |
| International research grants | - | - | - | - | 0.8 | 1 | 1.4 | 2 | 2.6 | 4 | 2.5 | 3 |
| Contract research | 3.0 | 6 | 2.7 | 5 | 3.1 | 5 | 3.2 | 5 | 5.5 | 7 | 6.8 | 9 |
| Total funding | 52.7 | 100 | 49.5 | 100 | 61.3 | 100 | 69.8 | 100 | 76.1 | 100 | 74.0 | 100 |

Assessment

The Faculty has clearly grown in research funding and staff since 2008. It has successfully increased the percentage of external funding, both from NWO and from European research grants and contract research. Especially the Heritage and History cluster has apparently profited

from its embeddedness in an IRI and having the label of CLUE attached to its work. Half of its funding comes from external sources. The Language, Cognition, Communication cluster attracts an increasing amount of contract funding (up to 15% in 2011), while the contribution of national research grants has steadily decreased from 37% in 2008 to 15% in 2011. The Culture and Values cluster has successfully attracted national research grants, increasing from less than 10% in 2008 and 2009 to 30% in 2011.

The Committee has noted during the site visit that the support at university and faculty level to identify potential grant opportunities and to help researchers to draw up applications and to help with the paper work, is much appreciated by the researchers. This is certainly part of the Faculty's success in attracting more external funding.

Direct funding of humanities research is based on the numbers of bachelor and master students and is at risk because these numbers are declining. The Faculty will offer a revised bachelor programme with broader study tracks in September 2013, hoping to attract more students, but the competition between universities and between faculties within universities is fierce. Compared to the University of Amsterdam the VU seems to attract students with a more varied ethnic background. This should be developed as an asset.

Part of the NWO funding that was available for the humanities has been transferred by the government to the so-called top sectors. These sectors focus mainly on technological and science research. In the light of decreased direct funding and national research grants, the importance of attracting European funding and contract funding has increased and will probably continue to do so in the future. The Committee therefore advises to continue the current policy, based on the strong combination of excellent researchers, recognisable research institutes and good administrative support.

4. Productivity

The self-evaluation report provides information on the number and type of output of the Faculty's researchers. In addition to the standard categories, editorships of edited volumes and inaugural lectures have been included. Edited volumes are seen as a highly valued type of publication in the humanities. The number of inaugural lectures reflects the recent appointments of new chair holders.

Table 3. Main categories of research output in the Faculty of Arts

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Refereed articles | 83 | 84 | 59 | 71 | 78 | 75 |
| Non-refereed articles | 35 | 33 | 24 | 35 | 38 | 30 |
| Books | 24 | 14 | 22 | 12 | 22 | 22 |
| Book chapters | 88 | 121 | 86 | 109 | 103 | 90 |
| PhD-theses | 14 | 14 | 9 | 16 | 10 | 17 |
| Conference papers | 64 | 68 | 90 | 116 | 96 | 82 |
| Professional publications | 97 | 128 | 142 | 118 | 94 | 130 |
| Publications aimed at the general public | 22 | 29 | 55 | 53 | 41 | 29 |
| Editorships | 24 | 31 | 28 | 27 | 25 | 22 |
| Inaugural lectures | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Total publications | 457 | 525 | 519 | 560 | 510 | 502 |

The backslide in academic output in 2008 is explained by the energy and time that were needed for the building and organising of the IRIs and by the introduction of a new registration and classification system. The high number of conference papers and professional publications is an expression of the Faculty's policy for valorisation. The dissemination of academic results to

professionals is seen as instrumental in creating societal and political support and understanding for sustainable humanities.

The Faculty has formulated a publication policy for all staff members, to be implemented in 2013. During the assessment period the minimum requirement was for staff members to produce one academic article per year per 0.4 fte research time, or one book in three years. In practice, individual arrangements were made, with higher expectations, often related to contract negotiations. Researchers who are not able to meet the required standards will be granted less research time. In order to increase the impact of the publications the policy will be to aim for articles in A-rated journals.

Assessment

The productivity of the three clusters ranges from good to excellent. The number of academic publications is high, especially for the clusters Culture and Values and Heritage and History. The Committee was impressed by the handsome books published by CLUE.

The Committee agrees with the policy to choose for quality over quantity. The programme leaders of the three clusters have clearly found the right way to stimulate the researchers in their groups to publish as required. They keep an eye on the balance between teaching load and research and, if necessary, take measures to temporarily shift the balance towards research. The Committee noted with satisfaction that some researchers incorporate in their grant applications a dedicated period of time to publish the results and to prepare a new grant application. This opportunity, especially in larger grants, should be used as much as possible.

5. Societal relevance

The linkage between fundamental and applied research is strong in the Faculty of Arts, especially in heritage research and applied linguistics. The Faculty also focuses on the economic valorisation of research. It has set up a Holding which houses three companies: Gryps-VU to foster the application of research in communication, culture and history; HBS-VU concerned with archaeology; and Taalcentrum VU concerned with language teaching and testing. The NT2-department (Dutch as a second language) will be incorporated in 2013.

Heritage and History research into the Dutch landscape is increasingly supported and funded by municipalities and provinces. Three endowed chairs express the valorisation of Heritage and History research: the Westerbork chair on the heritage of war, the Lalla Rookh Diaspora chair and the Maritime Heritage chair established by the Scheepvaartmuseum. The cluster on Language, Cognition, Communication produces high impact research into language technology, such as Wordnet, which is made available for other researchers and the general public. The studies into the effectiveness of health communication, websites and advertisements are examples of applied research, funded by stakeholders. This cluster is also very active in the Dutch high school system, especially for English, Latin and Greek. Researchers in the Culture and Values cluster interact with media groups, publishers and museums. They have published books for a broad audience that have attracted much attention in the media, participate in ethical committees and train museum staff.

Assessment

The focus on strengthening the applicability of research fits well with the mission of the VU and the Faculty of Arts. The Faculty has invested in specific facilities such as the Media Lab and the SPIN Lab, which are state of the art and therefore able to generate new contract research. The application of Heritage and History research on city planning in the Netherlands (Houten Castellum) and abroad (Rome) is creative and attracts new audiences and new funding. The same

holds true for the communication research in the health sector. For the cluster Culture and Values there is clear evidence of work going on in e-humanities and the creative industries, one of the government's top sectors. Culture and Values researchers are encouraged by the Faculty to find professional partners, such as museums, and they have shown to be successful in this respect. However, these partners are faced with budget cuts themselves and are therefore not in a position to provide research funding. This makes Culture and Values more dependent on direct funding and national research grants than the other two clusters.

6. Strategy for the future

A future strategy for humanities research must deal with a number of policy developments, some of which have already been mentioned. At national level it was decided that NWO should transfer €M200 from humanities to the top sectors, such as chemistry, nano technology and water management. The only category with a link to the humanities is the top sector of creative industries, but its focus is mostly on digital implementation, such as gaming. Because of the decrease of NWO grants, European funding will increasingly become a major resource for research activities. Other developments are the Ministry's request that universities formulate focus and priority areas, and the emphasis on valorising knowledge.

The Faculty and its research clusters aim to strengthen their financial position by trying to secure funds from NWO, from European funds and by the valorisation of research results in its Holding. At university level the merger of faculties and increased cooperation with the University of Amsterdam are discussed.

Assessment

The Faculty has shown that it is able to attract an increasing amount of financial resources from European funds and contract partners. The Faculty's Research Office has been instrumental in this respect. This is a strong point that should certainly be continued.

The IRIs have proven to be labels with a strong identity. This holds especially true for CLUE, and to a lesser extent also for CAMErA (to be succeeded by the Network Institute). This, combined with their academic quality and their societal relevance, allows them to attract funding from diverse stakeholders, thus making them less dependent on direct funding. Lacking such a clear focus and identity, makes the cluster Culture and Values vulnerable despite the fact that the quality, productivity and relevance of this cluster is at the same high level as of the other clusters. The Committee supports the policy to establish coherent and strong groups of researchers in order to have a greater impact, but fails to understand why not being an IRI must lead to a complete lack of financial and administrative support.

The close proximity to another, larger university makes it necessary to define the VU's position and niche, aiming for complementarity rather than competition. The Committee considers the current position of the Faculty of Arts, its quality and the choices that have been made so far, a good starting point for further deliberations within the VU and between the VU and the University of Amsterdam.

7. PhD training and supervision

PhD candidates are part of the VU Graduate School of Humanities. The Graduate School also includes the students of the master and research master programmes. The Graduate School offers general skills training, such as writing English for academic publication, courses on research design, time and research management, paper presentation, workshops on how to get articles published in peer-reviewed journals. VU also offers career coaching in the final year of the PhD contract, not only geared towards an academic career but also explicitly dealing with job

and career opportunities outside academia. Most PhD candidates also seize the opportunity to do the teacher training, which is necessary in order to qualify for a post as assistant professor. In addition, the Graduate School organises one-day Graduate Seminars twice a year.

Most of the academic coursework is organised by national research schools, such as the Netherlands National Graduate School of Linguistics (LOT) or the Huizinga Institute for Cultural History. The teaching programmes in the research schools may take very different shapes. LOT offers intensive 2-weeks summer and winter schools with international guest lecturers, while Huizinga offer a 1-year programme to PhD candidates in their first year, for approximately one day per week. All PhD researchers of the VU Faculty of Arts are required to register for one of the research schools. Under the current national arrangement of the research schools, PhD candidates are allowed to participate in courses of other research schools without extra cost.

A PhD researcher is supervised by a promotor, who is always a full professor, and by at least one other supervisor, who can also be an assistant or associate professor. In addition to the daily supervision there are formal annual interviews to monitor progress, and towards the end of the first year this annual interview is a stop/go assessment. The Faculty's PhD coordinator monitors the progress and well-being of all PhD researchers. On a voluntary basis, PhD candidates may participate in self-coaching peer groups. These are highly valued by the candidates.

As of September 1, 2012 32 salaried PhD researchers are enrolled in the Graduate School. Another 21 PhD candidates are in the process of finalising their dissertations, although their employment contract has formally ended. These candidates are still being supervised, monitored and supported. Extramural, i.e. self-funding PhD researchers, number approximately 70. Of all PhD defences, approximately 55% is by salaried PhD candidates, extramurals account for the remaining 45%.

Assessment

The Committee found the PhD researchers to be satisfied with their position, training and supervision. The Faculty has a very flexible approach to the coursework to be selected and attended by the candidates. This allows them to make choices that fit best with their research project and to use their time as efficiently as possible. The Faculty successfully nurtures young talent and enables new researchers to develop their research skills and their academic performance and level. The supervision and mentoring are well arranged.

The clear monitoring arrangements, including the assessment towards the end of the first year to continue or discontinue the PhD project, are beginning to lead to improved success rates of the PhD research projects. The decision to offer part time contracts over a longer period of time (five years of 0.8 fte instead of four years of 1.0 fte) has certainly helped to achieve this. The Committee much appreciates the facilities offered to extramural PhD researchers and the Faculty's successful efforts to attract non-Western PhD researchers. The latter is achieved through the NWO Mozaiek Programme and strengthening the links with research grant bodies in Indonesia and China.

Part 2: Assessments per research cluster

The committee assessed the following research clusters of the Faculty of Arts at VU University Amsterdam:

| | | Quality | Productivity | Relevance | Viability |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Heritage and History | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 2 | Language, Cognition, Communication | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3.5 |
| 3 | Culture and Values | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 |

The detailed assessment per research cluster follows in the next section of this report.

1. Programme Heritage and History

Coordinator: Prof. dr. Jan Kolen
Research staff 2011: 24.1 fte (7.1 tenured, 7.3 non-tenured, 9.7 PhD)

Assessments: Quality: 5
 Productivity: 5
 Relevance: 5
 Viability: 5

Short description

In the research cluster Heritage and History the Faculty's social-economic historians, heritage researchers, archaeologists and architectural historians work together. They are all part of the IRI CLUE (Cultural Landscape and Urban Environment), of which the management is based at the Faculty of Arts.

CLUE initiates and carries out interdisciplinary and innovative research into the history, heritage and present-day transformation of the cultural landscape and urban environment. With this research, CLUE intends to contribute to the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge about (urban) landscapes and regions, and to the social awareness of the history of our living environment, which makes it a treasure of memories and stories. CLUE wishes to contribute to a critical reflection on recent developments in the heritage policies and heritage consumption as well.

The six research themes of CLUE are: A new Mediterranean Panorama: The identity of the Mediterranean world, 3000 BC – 2000 AD; The long-term development of European cities and landscapes; The heritage and memory of conflict and war; Global history and heritage in a postcolonial world; Spatial transformations; The history and heritage of water systems.

Quality

This research cluster follows on from a pre-2008 group's work on 'Transformation of city and countryside', as the humanities' contribution to the Interfaculty Research Institute on Cultural Landscape and Urban Environment (CLUE). The graduate students benefit from the wide range of research interests across the specialisms included in the cluster, though there does not appear to be a year-long seminar which all have to attend. The openness and informality of the structure seems to be sufficient for the stimulation of lateral thinking among young and older researchers. The one weakness which needs to be rectified is the definition of landscape as physical geography rather than human geography. The inclusion of non-material heritage is in line with developments on the international scene, and essential for this group's contribution to the debate on memory and practices of remembrance. Here the work of literary scholars, particularly in the field of comparative literature, is crucial. In addition, the evident fact that landscapes are defined by families using them is the way into the linkage between family history and architectural/landscape history. Families are the vectors of memory transmission, and inter-generation narratives are at the very heart of the study of heritage and history. The appeal of the work of this research cluster would be very likely to grow substantially, improving outreach and opening up unknown sources in family hands to researchers.

Productivity

The productivity of this cluster is excellent. The number of academic publications is high. The Committee was impressed by the well-designed scholarly books published by CLUE. These are effective elements in the outreach achieved by this academic group.

Relevance

The clear leadership of the cluster has enabled this group to be productive and to engage in socially-relevant projects. The Committee was particularly struck by the outreach potential of the research on Second World War camps and on the Atlantic Wall from Norway to southern France, as well as the cityscapes and archeological projects.

Viability

The cluster Heritage and History evidently profits from the cooperation within the IRI CLUE. The fact that the continuation of CLUE has been ensured for the coming years on the basis of a positive evaluation of the previous period, convinces the Committee of its excellent viability. In addition, the success of applications to national funding bodies is clear. The Committee suggests that the broader field of European or extra-European funding should be explored too.

2. Programme Language, Cognition, Communication

Coordinator: Prof. dr. Gerard Steen
Research staff 2011: 19.3 fte (7.6 tenured, 4.8 non-tenured, 6.8 PhD)

Assessments: Quality: 4
 Productivity: 3
 Relevance: 5
 Viability: 3.5

Short description

The vision of the research cluster Language, Cognition, Communication is to improve effective communication in all sorts of ways by developing and applying new scientific insights into the relations between language, cognition and communication. In order to achieve this, the language research combines two approaches: (1) structural-functional approaches to language systems and their use and (2) behavioural approaches to the interaction between language processes and processes of cognition and communication. The genre-analytical perspective, adopted by the cluster, reveals how language use is functional, variable, changeable, and how it can be transferred, trained, evaluated and improved.

The mission of the research cluster is to conduct fundamental and applied research on effective communication by language, utilising relevant theories, methods and research from psychology, communication science and computer science (language technology). The improved quality of interdisciplinary work is a condition for formulating reliable and valid insights that can be employed in the development of successful intervention tools for optimising effective communication while retaining a maximally sophisticated view of the role of specific language structures and functions as uncovered in linguistics.

Quality

The quality of the work is generally good. In particular, work by Cienki, Steens, de Vries and Vossen has had some impact over the period. This relates to metaphor and gesture research (Cienki, Steens), linguistic typology (de Vries) and computational lexicology (Vossen). Although the research is good within these sub-areas it reflects only a small part of the spectrum of linguistic research at large. So the Committee notes that the focus is narrow with respect to linguistics as a field, which had it not been for the self-identified focus of LCC would have been a problem.

The Committee understands that this focus gives the group an identity complementary to that of similar groups in the Netherlands, but feels that the LCC still needs to work on defining this identity in a way that will make it more coherent as a group. For example, the Committee sees the possible coherence of work on metaphor and improvement of health related communication, but was not clear how this related to work on cochlear implants in infants or journalism studies.

The Committee noted that the group supports a number of PhD students involved in collaborative cross-faculty projects. And, the PhD students the Committee saw seemed well satisfied with their supervision and training.

Productivity

The productivity of the group is good. However, the Committee would like to see a greater emphasis on publishing in higher impact outlets.

Relevance

The Committee was particularly impressed with de Vries's public dissemination work and Vossen's work on the international multilingual WordNet project, which has an important impact on the development of language technology. An essential contribution to research on the Dutch language and on Dutch language technology is the creation of the one-million sense-tagged Dutch Corpus DutchSemCor and the Cornetto database. A further noteworthy area of societal relevance is the research on public discourse, especially in the domain of health services.

Viability

As for organisation aspects, the Committee felt that the LCC might not be viable if it was to go it alone, but could form a strong part of the larger Network IRI of which it is now a part. However, the Committee felt that it was important to insure that the contribution of LCC to this larger IT dominated cluster should not be marginalised. The Committee also noted good collaborations with other institutions in various areas including typology, gesture, language technology, metaphor and the classics. And the committee was particularly impressed with LCC's acquisition of research funding, especially by Steen, Vossen and De Vries.

In general the Committee felt that defining a common research agenda should enhance the synergy of their research and improve their reputation both nationally and internationally. Hopefully, this will be possible within the context of the expanding Network IRI.

3. Programme Culture and Values

Coordinator: Prof. dr. Inger Leemans
Research staff 2011: 26.8 fte (13.4 tenured, 3.0 non-tenured, 10.5 PhD)

Assessments: Quality: 4
 Productivity: 4
 Relevance: 4
 Viability: 2

Short description

The Culture and Values cluster researches the way cultural frameworks shape societies in the past and present. The mechanics of cultural processes from antiquity to the present day are studied from political-historical, social-cultural and anthropological perspectives. Members of a cultural community are ‘sensibilisiert’ through their minds and senses to adapt to and incorporate the sensibilities of a community. In this cluster cultural communities and sensibilities are researched with special attention for dynamics and diversity, power relations, communication strategies, medialisation, cultural infrastructure and emotional communities.

Eight thematic lines can be indicated: Diversity, mobility and power; Religion; Senses and emotions; ‘Sensibilisering’: the business of culture; Humanities in society; The power of imagination: visual culture and the art of knowledge; Creative industries; E-Humanities.

Quality

The range of outputs within this FRI is impressive, making a significant contribution across a range of disciplines and demonstrating that staff keep abreast of and participate in contemporary scientific debates. The reputation of research staff is evidenced in their participation in conferences, workshops, academic events and editorial boards. Work has gone into organising conferences at VU or elsewhere in Amsterdam (e.g. the lecture series by Visiting Professors, in collaboration with the Metamatic Research Initiative, on the work of Jean Tinguely). Potentially exciting work is being encouraged through the innovative Centre for Emotions and Sensory Studies and there is good evidence of participation and leadership in the University’s eHumanities and Creative Industries initiatives.

The Committee found clear evidence of leadership being given by the Chairs in the C&V cluster both intellectually in terms of their own academic field and in terms of support for staff in their subject group and beyond. There have been real attempts to establish a certain kind of intellectual coherence with, for instance, the lecture series on the Humanities. In particular, there is an interesting proposal to bring together different disciplinary approaches through the theme of Sensibility. Worked out through the three proposed levels, this could be an innovative and inclusive theme but it is as yet underdeveloped and it is unclear quite why it should operate through the C&V FRI rather than Centre for Emotions. Research policy is set and managed at Faculty level so decisions about staff evaluation, recruitment and retention strategies are taken outside the FRI.

Ultimately, in terms of the ambitions for the FRI, it is very difficult to demonstrate dynamic leadership when, in Human Resources and financial terms, there is no post of Director, little recognition in workload organisation of the work involved in building such a group and no financial resources directed towards building it up.

PhD support is effectively organised through the subject groups, the National Schools and the Graduate School, with little formal sense of the C&V role.

Productivity

Published work shows research being accepted by a range of publishers including University Presses and international journals. There is evidence of the success of the policy to encourage staff to publish in refereed journals, a policy which the Committee would support. Tables showed a reduction in publication numbers between 2008 and 2011 but this was explained by a number of factors including the demands of the reorganisation of undergraduate teaching now completed; a number of research active staff who have retired or left; the desire to emphasise quality rather than quantity in the publication of research; and the new emphasis on applying for research funding which means that time has to be devoted to research applications. Good support for writing such applications is received from the Faculty Research Co-ordinator and in the case of European applications from University support services. The outputs presented largely addressed the scientific community but there was also evidence of publications aimed at a wider audience which tied into the policy on societal relevance.

Relevance

The aim in this C&V cluster is to work on the edge between scientific research, media and art institutes and other creative partners, recognising that only some of this will involve financial support as well as societal relevance. Staff are encouraged to find professional partners and there were good examples of exhibitions and shows in museums and other heritage foundations, creative writing projects and an artistic-scientific funded project carried out with an artist on logos in the commercial district in Amsterdam. In addition, publications in Religion and History, often supported by public lectures or other activity, successfully aimed at an audience beyond academe.

Viability

The Committee has every confidence in the value of the research being carried out by members of the C&V FRI. However, the viability of the C&V FRI is another matter. Staff expressed disappointment at not being in an IRI and a number felt that the original excitement at the possibilities for collaboration had turned to a feeling of loss at losing interfaculty possibilities and at diminished access to resources. It seems clear that members of this FRI are turning to other structures internally (e.g. Centre for Emotions) and externally by building up personal national and international links. In addition, junior staff identified much more strongly with their subject groups and PhD students were largely unclear about the C&V identity, even when prompted.

In the Committee's view, the C&V FRI is an example of a reorganisation that has failed and staff are now having to live with the consequences. The Faculty Self-Evaluation Report suggests that 'stronger cohesion . . . is urgently needed' (p.30) in C&V but it is unclear whether the staff (and Faculty) would be rewarded for the effort that building such an imposed cohesion would require; there could be a negative impact on research quality and productivity if the leading staff on whom this work would fall are not supported through an increased budget and an adjusted workload. Unless there are changes in terms of Faculty organisation which would strengthen staff and budget resources in C&V, it would be better for this cluster to focus on building up current strengths and encouraging the organic development of intellectual and societal collaborations.

The committee learned that VU University is amidst a process of accommodating research that is not part of an IRI. Faculties can apply for a so-called 'disciplinary core', of which there will be 3-5 at the University. C&V is currently engaged in formulating such an application and the Faculty believes that chances for C&V are high, because of its positive scores on Quality, Productivity and Relevance. If C&V would indeed obtain the status of 'disciplinary core', the committee would rate its viability as 'good'.

Appendices

Appendix A: Curricula vitae of the committee members

René Boomkens is Professor of Social and Cultural Philosophy at the University of Groningen, Visiting Professor at the Franqui Chair of the University of Antwerp, Belgium (2011-2012) and Visiting Professor at the University of Bremen, Germany (2013). His work focusses on cultural globalisation, urban, popular and everyday culture, the philosophy of architecture and urbanism, Critical Theory and modernity, and on the philosophy of Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault and Gianni Vattimo. From 2005 until 2010 he chaired a NWO-research project in the Humanities Programme 'Transformations in Art and Culture', entitled 'New Media, Urban Culture and Public Domain'. He published several books, among which 'De Nieuwe Wanorde' (The New Disorder) (Van Gennep, 2006), 'Topkitsch and Slow Science' (Van Gennep, 2008) and 'Erfenissen van de Verlichting (Heritages of the Enlightenment) (Boom, 2011), and articles in several international journals. From 2006 until 2012 he was member of the Raad voor Cultuur (Council for Culture), that advises the Dutch government on cultural and artistic policy. He was member of several programme committees of NWO-humanities and of the KNAW, and chaired several review committees on academic teaching and research. At present he is advisor of the Council for Culture on the future of Dutch cultural policy.

Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth is Saintsbury Professor emerita at University of Edinburgh (UK) and Professor and Founding Director of the PhD Programme in Cultural Studies at Trent University (Ontario). Her work has focused on history as an explanatory method with roots in early modernity and facing challenges today across the range of practice from philosophy and politics to science and art. She is the author of articles in *History and Theory*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Time and Society* and other journals, and six books: *Realism and Consensus* (Princeton 1983; 2nd ed. Edinburgh 1998) defines historical explanation as a late expression of insights first expressed in Renaissance modernity; *Sequel to History* (Princeton 1992) defines the alternatives to historical explanation as they have emerged since the late 19th century; *George Eliot* (Macmillan, 1987) studies the work of the novelist, including her translations of Spinoza and Feuerbach and her political essays. *The English Novel in History, 1840-1895* (Routledge 1997) takes a multidisciplinary approach to the methodology of historical narrative in its period of hegemony; *Rewriting Democracy* (2004, essays by Edward Said, Chantal Mouffe, Mark Bevir et al.) on the political implications post modernity poses for conventional understanding of democratic process; and recently, *History in The Discursive Condition: Reconsidering the Tools of Thought* (Routledge 2011), compares modernity and post modernity in terms of their systemic values and practical implications.

Simon Garrod is a Professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Glasgow. Between 1989 and 1999 he also directed the ESRC Human Communication Research Centre in Glasgow and between 2009 and 2012 he directed the ESRC Large Grant on "Social Interaction: A Cognitive Neurosciences Approach". He has published two books, one with Anthony J. Sanford, *Understanding Written Language*, and one with Kenny R. Coventry, *Seeing, Saying and Acting: The Psychological Semantics of Spatial Prepositions*. Additionally, he has published more than 100 research papers on various aspects of the psychology of language. His special interests include discourse processing, language processing in dialogue, psychological semantics, and graphical communication. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2001 and received the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award of the Society for Text and Discourse in 2011.

Christine Geraghty is an Honorary Professorial Fellow, University of Glasgow/Honorary Research Fellow, Goldsmiths, University of London. She has published extensively on film and television with a particular interest in fiction, form and performance. Her publications include *Women and Soap Opera* (Polity, 1991); *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'New Look'* (Routledge, 2000); and *Now a Major Motion Picture Film Adaptations of Literature*

and Drama (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). She was Chairperson of the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association from 2001-2011, participated as a sub-panel member in the UK RAE 2008 and has extensive experience of external assessments. She is on the editorial board of the Journal of British Cinema and Television and sits on the advisory boards of a number of journals, including Screen and Adaptation.

Sabine Iatridou is Full Professor in Linguistics with a focus on Syntax and Semantics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA since 2001. Since 2007 she has been the Director of the Graduate Program in Linguistics; Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, MIT, and she directed the 2005 LSA Summer Institute, hosted by MIT and Harvard University. Prior to her full professorship she has been an Associate Professor at MIT (1997-2001) and an Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania (1991-1996). She has been a Visiting Professor in Europe (Spain, Russia, France) and the USA. Sabine gained her PhD in Linguistics in 1991 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was awarded the National Young Investigator Award, National Science Foundation (1994-1999). She is on the editorial board of a number of journals.

Ulrike Mosel is Professor emerita of General Linguistics at the University of Kiel and a specialist on linguistic typology, language documentation and grammaticography. After gaining her PhD in Semitic languages at the University of Munich (1974), she started researching South Pacific languages and became an expert in collaborative fieldwork. Before becoming the Chair of General Linguistics in Kiel in 1995, she was a Senior Lecturer at the Australian National University in Canberra. Her books include *Tolai Syntax* (1984), *Samoan Reference Grammar* (1992, with Even Hovdhaugen), *Say it in Samoan* (1997, with Ainslie So'o). Together with Christian Lehmann, Hans-Jürgen Sasse and Jan Wirrer she initiated the DoBeS language documentation programme funded by the Volkswagen Foundation since 2000. Currently she is working on the documentation of the Teop language of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. She has compiled a digital corpus of annotated audio recordings of the Teop language and is writing a corpus-based grammar of the Teop language, which explores the use of corpus linguistic tools for the analysis of previously unresearched languages. She has worked as a reviewer for the NWO, Deutsche Forschungs Gemeinschaft, and the Volkswagen Foundation.

Heinz Schilling studied German literature, philosophy and history at Cologne and Freiburg/Br., where he gained his PhD in 1971. As an Assistant Professor (1972-1978) at the History Department of the University of Bielefeld he passed his habilitation at this Institute in 1977. Afterwards he held chairs as Professor for Early Modern European History at the Universities of Osnabrück, Gießen and from 1992 to his retirement in 2010 at the Humboldt University of Berlin. His fields of research and publications are 1. European Comparative History; 2. History of the Reformation and of "Confessionalisation"; 3. Early modern migration and minorities; 4. History of political theory in early modern Europe; 5. History of the international system and foreign policy, 16th and 17th centuries; 6. Early modern Dutch history; 7. Social and mental history of Calvinism and Calvinistic communities in Germany and North-western Europe; 8. Urban history, territorial and regional history, mainly of the Holy Roman Empire. He is a Member of the Berlin-Brandenburgische (formerly Preußische) Akademie der Wissenschaften; Fellow of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen; the British Academy and the Academia Europaea. In 2002 he was awarded the Dr. A. H.-Heineken-Prize for History by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences; in 2009 he was promoted by the Faculty of Theology of the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen to a Doctor honoris causa in Theology. He has been on the boards of various museums and journals.

Jay Winter studied history at Columbia University. He earned his PhD at the University of Cambridge in 1970, his Litt.D. in 2000, and was awarded a DPhil (Honoris Causa) by the University of Graz in 2010. Currently, he holds the Charles J. Stille Chair as a Professor of History at Yale University and is Visiting Professor at Monash University. He has been Member of bureau and comité directeur of the Research centre of the Historial de la grande guerre, Péronne, Somme, France, since its inception in 1989. Previously he was Lecturer in Modern History, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1970-73), Lecturer in Social History, University of Warwick (1973-79), University Lecturer in British social and economic history, the University of Cambridge (1979-1997), Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge (1979-2001), Reader in Modern History, University of Cambridge (1997-2001), Professor of History, Columbia University (2000-2001) and Professor of History, European University Institute (2005-6). He has published numerous books, book chapters and articles. He is a member of editorial board of journals *History & Memory*, *Theory & Society*, and *Memory Studies*. Jay was Chief historian and co-producer of the award winning PBS/BBC television series 'The Great War and the shaping of the Twentieth Century'. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Member of the Norwegian Academy of Arts and Sciences and Fellow of the Royal Irish Academy.

Appendix B: Explanation of the SEP scores

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|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Excellent (5)</i> | Research is world leading. Researchers are working at the forefront of their field internationally and their research has an important and substantial impact in the field. |
| <i>Very Good (4)</i> | Research is nationally leading. Research is internationally competitive and makes a significant contribution to the field. |
| <i>Good (3)</i> | Research is internationally visible. Work is competitive at the national level and makes a valuable contribution in the international field. |
| <i>Satisfactory (2)</i> | Research is nationally visible. Work adds to our understanding and is solid, but not exciting. |
| <i>Unsatisfactory (1)</i> | Work is neither solid nor exciting, flawed in the scientific and/or technical approach, repetitions of other work, etc. |

Quality is to be seen as a measure of excellence and excitement. It refers to the eminence of a group's research activities, its abilities to perform at the highest level and its achievements in the international scientific community. It rests on the proficiency and rigour of research concepts and conduct; it shows in the success of the group at the forefront of scientific development.

Productivity refers to the total output of the group; that is, the variegated ways in which results of research and knowledge development are publicised. The output needs to be reviewed in relation to the input in terms of human resources.

Societal relevance covers the social, economic and cultural relevance of the research. Aspects are:

- Societal quality of the work. Efforts to interact in a productive way with stakeholders in society who are interested in input from scientific research, and contributions to important issues and debates in society.
- Societal impact of the work. Research affects specific stakeholders or procedures in society.
- Valorisation of the work. Activities aimed at making research results available and suitable for application in products, processes and services. This includes interaction with public and private organisations, as well as commercial or non-profit use of research results and expertise.

Vitality and feasibility. This dual criterion regards the institute's ability to react adequately to important changes in the environment. It refers to both internal (personnel, research themes) and external (developments in the field, in society) dynamics of the group. On the one hand, this criterion measures the flexibility of a group, which appears in its ability to close research lines that have no future and to initiate new venture projects. On the other hand, it measures the capacity of the management to run projects in a professional way. Policy decisions and project management are assessed, including cost-benefit analysis.

Appendix C: Programme of the site visit

Wednesday 7 November 2012

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| 18.00-18.15 | Reception at VU University | Assessment committee Michel ter Hark, Dean Marco Last, Research Coordinator Jan Kolen, Director of CLUE |
| 18.15-19.00 | Opening meeting | Assessment committee |
| 19.00- | Dinner | Assessment committee Michel ter Hark, Dean Marco Last, Research Coordinator Jan Kolen, Director of CLUE Inger Leemans, Coordinator of Culture & Values Gerard Steen, Coordinator of LCC |

Thursday 8 November 2012

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|--------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 8.45-9.15 | Preparation Heritage & History | Assessment committee |
| 9.15-10.00 | Dean/Faculty Board | Michel ter Hark, Dean Andries Mulder, Managing Director Mike Hannay, Director of Teaching & Learning Marieke Oprel, Student Member Marco Last, Research Coordinator |
| Heritage & History | | |
| 10.00-10.45 | Research policy and management | Jan Kolen, Director of CLUE Koos Bosma, Board Member of CLUE Petra van Dam, Former Board Member of CLUE Michel ter Hark, Dean/ Board Member of CLUE |
| 10.45-11.00 | Break | |
| 11.00-11.45 | Research practice | Nico Roymans, Chair of West European Archaeology Stijn Heeren, Postdoc, West European Archaeology Bert van der Spek, Chair of Ancient History Harm Pieters, PhD researcher, Water History |
| 11.45-12.30 | SPIN-lab excursion | Niels van Manen, Maurice de Kleijn, SPIN-lab staff |
| 12.30-14.00 | Lunch | |
| Culture & Values | | |
| 14.00-14.30 | Preparation Culture & Values | Assessment committee |
| 14.30-15.15 | Research policy and management | Inger Leemans, Chair of Cultural History Diederik Oostdijk, Chair of English Literature Ben Peperkamp, Chair of Modern Dutch Literature Ginette Verstraete, Chair of Cultural Studies |
| 15.15-16.00 | Research practice | Nelleke Moser, Assistant Professor, Dutch Literature Paul van den Akker, Assistant Professor, Art History Ivo Blom, Assistant Professor, Cultural Studies Ronald Kroeze, PhD researcher, Political History |
| 16.00-16.15 | Break | |
| 16.15-17.00 | Media Lab excursion | Joyce Lamerichs, Assistant Professor, Language & Communication |

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| 16.15-17.00 | Open consultation hour (parallel to excursion) | Assessment committee |
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Friday 9 November 2012

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| Language, Cognition, Communication | | |
| 8.45-9.15 | Preparation Language, Cognition, Communication | Assessment committee |
| 9.15-10.00 | Research policy and management | Gerard Steen, Coordinator LCC/Chair of Language and Cognition Martine Coene, Chair of Applied Linguistics Piek Vossen, Chair of Computational Lexicology |
| 10.00-10.45 | Research practice | Alan Cienki, Associate Professor, English Linguistics Lourens de Vries, Chair of General Linguistics/Bible Translation Joyce Lamerichs, Assistant Professor, Language & Communication Agata Cybulska, PhD researcher, Computational Lexicology |
| 10.45-11.00 | Break | |
| 11.00-11.15 | Director Graduate School | Leo Wetzels, Head of Graduate School Marco Last, Research Coordinator |
| 11.15-11.45 | Graduate School | Keun Young Sliedrecht, PhD researcher Language and Communication Rose Tzalmona, PhD researcher, Art History Wouter Reitsema, Research master student, History Anne-Fleur van der Meer, PhD researcher, Dutch Literature Eva van Hooijdonk, PhD researcher, Latin Language and Literature Sadiah Boonstra, PhD researcher, Political History |
| 11.45-12.30 | Research Committee | Michel ter Hark, Dean Gerard Steen, Chair, LCC Representative Inger Leemans, Culture & Values Representative Jan Paul Crielaard, Heritage & History Representative Marco Last, Secretary |
| 12.30-14.00 | Lunch | |
| 14.00-14.30 | Final meeting with Dean | Michel ter Hark, Dean Marco Last, Research Coordinator |
| 14.30-15.45 | Reflection | Assessment committee |
| 15.45-16.15 | Preparation presentation preliminary findings | Chair Assessment committee |
| 16.15 | Presentation preliminary findings | Open to all |