

Assessment Report

Religious Studies & Islamic and Arabic Studies
Utrecht University

Peer Review 2012 – 2017

December 2018

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Preface

This report presents the findings and recommendations of an international peer review of the research groups Religious Studies and Islamic and Arabic Studies (RS & IAS) at Utrecht University, carried out on November 4-6, 2018.

Our peer review committee was appointed by the Board of Utrecht University.

The assessment is based on a self-assessment report provided by the RS & IAS units, additional documentation, and two days of meetings with the staff and PhD candidates of the units. This review report is both prospective and retrospective and contains several recommendations to the RS & IAS units, the Faculty of Humanities and the Board of Utrecht University.

The self-assessment describes the research in the programs of Religious Studies and in Islamic and Arabic Studies, as two units within the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of the Faculty of Humanities of Utrecht University. Though two research groups are assessed, the self-evaluation is to a large extent integrated, with differentiation where needed. In this assessment, we will also discuss both research groups together, unless where indicated differently.

As chair I wish to thank my fellow evaluators for their expert and sincere contributions to the discussions and final findings. The work was not only intense, but also socially agreeable and academically rewarding.

We thank all members of the RS & IAS Units, staff and researchers, for their open and constructive participation in the review process.

We hope this report to be the beginning of another successful period of excellent research in the RS & IAS Programs.

December 2018

Prof. Willem B. Drees
Chair

1. Introduction

1.1 The evaluation

All publicly funded university research in the Netherlands is evaluated at regular intervals in compliance with the national standard evaluation protocol (SEP 2015-2021), as agreed by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The evaluation process, which is applied at the research unit or institute level, consists of a systematic external peer review conducted every six years.

The evaluation system aims to achieve three generic objectives:

- *improvement* in the quality of research through an assessment carried out according to international standards of quality and relevance;
- *improvement* in research management and leadership; and
- *accountability* to the higher management levels of the research organisations and to the funding agencies, government and society at large.

1.2 The assessment procedure

The evaluation procedures followed by the Review Committee were those set out in the NWO/VSNU/KNAW “Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 for public research organisations”. This protocol entails two main characteristics:

- *Two levels of assessment*: The assessment takes place at two levels of the research organisation, i.e. the level of the graduate school and the level of research groups/institutes;
- *Three main criteria*: The research institutes are assessed on the three assessment criteria, i.e. research quality, relevance to society, and viability.

The review committee was requested to report its findings on the research institute in line with the three main criteria, which should always be reviewed in relation to the institute’s mission, especially if this mission restricts the institute to operate only for/within a national scientific community.

With respect to the evaluation of the RS & IAS Programs the findings should be reported in qualitative terms with a focus on policy and management questions, and for the assessment the verdict should be cast in both qualitative and quantitative terms. In the text, the most important considerations of the committee should be clarified, while the conclusion should be summarized in a single term according to a four-point scale (annex 1). Checklists and excerpts of the standard evaluation protocol were provided as a tool for assisting in assessment.

The assessment was based on and supported by three main components of evidence:

- A self-assessment report detailing the operation, management, research activities, and SWOT analysis of the units, written as prescribed in the national standard evaluation protocol;
- An overview of the output of the units to allow the Committee to examine the quality of the published work;
- Discussions with boards, researchers, PhD students and council, academic staff, and research managers about the work programmes, the aims and the strategy for the future of the research units and its consisting teams.

The site visit took place during the period of November 4-6, 2018, and comprised a number of components, which can be summarised as follows (see annex 2 for the full programme and the names of participants):

- Start-off committee meeting on the evening of Sunday November 4
- Meetings with the dean and the management team, i.e. the former and present research director, with the head of department and with a representative on behalf of the vice-dean Graduate Studies.
- Meeting with project leaders
- Meetings with assistant and associate professors
- Meeting with directors of research schools NOSTER and NISIS
- Meeting with PhD students and Postdocs
- Meeting with Postdocs and early career researchers

The Peer Review Committee consisted of:

- Prof. Willem B. Drees (chair), Tilburg University, Netherlands
- Prof. Michael Lambek, University of Toronto, Canada
- Prof. John Nawas, Leuven University, Belgium

- Dr. Frans A.J. van Steijn acted as independent secretary to the committee

1.3 Results of the assessment

This report summarises the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the international peer review of the research at RS & IAS. The review covered the period 2012 to 2017. The written and oral information permitted good understanding of the research units. The assessment was rated and weighed according to the rationale explained in annex 1. The conclusions, as given in chapter 3 of this report, follow the structure and criteria which are formulated in the Terms of Reference, annex 2.

1.4 Quality of the information

The information that was made available to the committee consisted of:

- Self-assessment RS & IAS with appendices

- Terms of Reference Religious Studies
- Programme of the site visit
- Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 (SEP)
- Full list of Publications, RS & IAS 2012 – 2017
- List of abstracts of PhD theses
- Quality Monitoring Plan PhD Candidates
- 2012 Research Review Theology and Religious Studies at UU
- DGO NOSTER list of publishers and journals
- KNAW report 'Klaar om te wenden'
- KNAW report Quality Indicators for Research in the Humanities
- Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Research
- Department of Religious Studies Self-Study, Toronto University, 2012
- A Beginners' Guide to Dutch Academia

The committee finds the information ample, honest and adequate.

2 Structure, organisation and mission of the RS & IAS Research Units

2.1 Introduction

The RS & IAS research units attained their present form in 2014, when the theology section was discontinued and the units became part of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, one of the four departments of the Faculty of Humanities. RS & IAS's core competences lie in the areas of the transdisciplinary study of religion and society, in particular in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and Islam, in particular its intellectual history, with additional expertise in Jewish Studies, the history of Christianity and of Christian-Muslim relations, religion and gender, and religion and pedagogy.

This research assessment concerns the RS & IAS units only, the three philosophy sections are reviewed by another, national, committee.

2.2 Mission of the RS & IAS Programs

In its self-assessment report, RS & IAS states its ambitions threefold in general terms:

- To conduct first-rate internationally recognized research to be measured by publications in top-tier publishing venues, by sustained imbedding in transnational networks, and by the ability to attract competitive national and international research grants;
- To have impact not only within the academy but also in terms of raising public awareness of the role of religion in society and thereby fostering democratic citizenship in increasing pluralistic societies;
- To maintain a well-structured and viable environment for research talents (PhDs, postdocs and early career researchers) that facilitates international collaboration and cultivates a collegial atmosphere, built on a mutual support system and characterized by a shared sense of curiosity and commitment to scholarly excellence.

RS & IAS seek to achieve this mission by (1) Sharpening the research profile of the unit; (2) Integrating RS and IAS; (3) Nurturing talent; (4) Unifying and solidifying impact activities; and (5) Monitoring performance indicators.

The programs pursue their relevance for society by focussing on questions of research and gender; of religion in the (post)secular public sphere; and of Islam and modernity.

2.3 Management and organisation

RS & IAS consists of two sections or units, one led by the chair of Religious Studies, since 2011 Prof. Birgit Meyer, and one by the chair of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Prof. Christian Lange, also since 2011.

The RS section had in 2017 12 tenured and 6 non-tenured staff, the IAS section had 4 tenured and 2 non-tenured staff. RS and IAS had 9 and 5 funded PhD candidates, respectively. Furthermore, the programs welcomed 18 external PhD candidates for supervision. PhD research and training is organized in the Graduate School of Humanities for all candidates, and in the national research schools NOSTER (Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion) for the RS-students and NISIS (Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies) for the IAS students.

Research funding of RS & IAS has been stable between 16 and 18 FTE over the review period, but there was a remarkable shift from 62% direct funding in 2012 to only 28% in 2017 and at the same time from 38% funding from research grants, including ERC/EU, in 2012 to 72% in 2017. The decline in direct funding took mainly place in the first two years of the assessment period, not least due to the reorganisation and discontinuation of the theology section.

3 Assessment of the research of the RS & IAS Units

3.1 Research RS & IAS Programs

Principal	Utrecht University,
Units	Faculty of Humanities
	Religious Studies &
	Islamic and Arabic Studies
Directors	Prof. Birgit Meyer (RS)
	Prof. Christian Lange (IAS)

Assessment RS & IAS Programs:

Research input scientific staff 2017	6.42 fte (16 pers.)
Research input post-docs 2017	4.97 fte (8 pers.)
PhD candidates in 2017	14
Research quality	1 (excellent)
Relevance to society	2 (very good)
Viability	2 (very good)

Assessment Religious Studies

Research input scientific staff 2017	4.71 fte (12 pers.)
Research input post-docs 2017	4.14 fte (6 pers.)
PhD candidates in 2017	9
Research quality	1 (excellent)
Relevance to society	2 (very good)
Viability	2 (very good)

Assessment Islamic and Arabic Studies:

Research input scientific staff 2017	1.71 fte (4 pers.)
Research input post-docs 2017	0.83 fte (2 pers.)
PhD candidates in 2017	5
Research quality	1 (excellent)
Relevance to society	2 (very good)
Viability	2 (very good)

Research quality

The committee was requested to assess the research achievements of the combined programs of Religious Studies and Islamic and Arabic Studies as well as the achievements of the two units individually. The committee found that leadership and staff appeared equally committed to their own programmes as to the various and intensive ways of cooperation in the combined programs. The two programmes live together as 'neighbours without fences', as one of the

faculty members remarked. Therefore, this assessment addresses the entire RS & IAS programs with specific remarks on either programme where needed and indicated.

This being said, the two programmes at first sight seem to be quite different in methodology and orientation. IAS's research is text-oriented with an emphasis on historical scholarship and history of ideas, and thereby also more diachronic; RS's research is more anthropological, focusing on practices and material manifestations rather than on immaterial ideas, and thereby mostly contemporary. Though this difference is there, the researchers recognize it more as complementarity; the text-based scholarship on Islam does raise issues that also regard material, bodily and sensory aspects. Some of the IAS scholars have a more anthropological side to their fieldwork as well, while the anthropological research in RS might profit from the eye for detail that the text-oriented scholarship maintains and from the diachronic emphasis on long term development. It is therefore not surprising that the two programs, content though they are with the high levels of cooperation and synergy, have no plans to integrate fully, as it might put their unique identities and strengths in jeopardy, but at the same time will continue to collaborate intensely. The committee agrees with this policy.

The committee was very impressed by the engaged academic atmosphere in RS & IAS, created and nourished by the two programme leaders, the staff and the PhD candidates.

One area where the positive engagement with each other's work clearly shows is how support from colleagues is perceived when preparing grant applications. The groups have been very successful in acquiring grants in the period under review. The committee was able to confirm that this success was entirely justified by the quality of the research in RS & IAS, but also by the mutual 'coaching' throughout the development of grant proposals. The previous grants have attracted active researchers, thus enriching the scholarly community in which coaching and challenging for future applications is common practice.

Furthermore, the Research Institute in which RS & IAS resides together with three philosophy programs, is very supportive for the quality of grant applications, with 'mock interviews' when preparing to present proposals to disciplinary mixed committees. The committee has observed that RS & IAS is well placed within the Faculty of Humanities' Research Institute of Philosophy and Religious Studies. Enhancing the cooperation with the other sections in that institute remains an objective for the future.

The programs' ambitions are reflected by the many excellent and very good publications that were presented to the committee. They are published in reputed journals, mostly refereed, and by respected book publishers. The publication strategy of both groups works out very well. The relatively high

number of book chapters is inherent to the character of these scholarly fields. The output is also high, despite the heavy workload caused by the intensive teaching obligations.

Within the two programmes, in particular the RS-group, some projects or individual researchers seem to operate slightly outside the main research focus. The reasons for this may be found in the history of the unit and in the fields of expertise needed for the taught programmes. The committee became convinced that also in these cases the researchers concerned were well incorporated in the cooperative and supportive atmosphere of the research units. Cooperation with experts outside their own programs is encouraged and well facilitated.

The university's previous focus on Europe on the one hand and the programme's focus on Christianity and Islam on the other hand might put pressure on the comparative ambition of religious studies. In practice, however, RS & IAS' research has a broader and more global focus, which the committee encourages. In combination with the particular methodological and theoretical concentration on material religion, in Religious Studies, the group has a profile that is unique in the Dutch context. The committee suggests that the comparative approach could be strengthened further through collaboration with Utrecht's university professor Van der Veer, director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, who towards the end of the period assessed became associated with the RS research group.

The programs currently contribute modestly to the university-wide focus areas. During the site visit, the committee learned of an interest in exploring the possibility of a new focus area for Utrecht University, concentrating on issues related to migration and diversity. This would be an excellent opportunity for these two research units to participate more substantially in university wide collaboration. The committee recommends this initiative.

The facilities for doing research in RS & IAS seem well in place, also with the inspiring housing of the Department. The Library collection might need improvement, in particular with respect to Islamic studies; acquisition opportunities at UU seem to be very restricted by limited budgets, but access to resources at other Dutch universities compensates for this.

The committee considers the research quality of the RS & IAS Programs, the Religious Studies Programme, and the Islamic and Arabic Studies Programme to be excellent.

Relevance to society

In our globalizing world, in which people with various identities and backgrounds have to interact, for better or for worse, the research of the RS & IAS Programs is intrinsically highly relevant. They contribute to understanding cultures and societies, and multiple minorities within societies, by focussing on religious practices and convictions, and in particular those of migrant religions in Dutch society (Islam, African / Charismatic varieties of Christianity, secularization), and religious change in the world. It is therefore no surprise that researchers of RS & IAS are frequently asked to present the results to the world outside or shed their light on current issues.

Knowledge and expertise are also important for policy, more so apparently for the IAS group members some of which have done advisory work for the national government, e.g. mapping migrant communities.

Members of RS & IAS are involved in an impressive number of lectures, blog posts, publications for broad audiences such as the book *Mohammed* by Christian Lange (2017), and more. The Utrecht Religion Forum, established in 2016, stands out as an exemplary platform for these activities.

However, whereas the grant- and publication-process seems to be very effective, and rightly has priority, the 'impact' side seems more dependent upon invitations, on people coming to lectures, on people finding the posts.

There are opportunities for further development of the societal relevance, in particular by combining the insights in the dynamics and variety of lived religions with the work on religion and education, thus reaching out via teachers to potentially large numbers of young people.

The committee considers the relevance to society of the RS & IAS Programs to be very good.

Viability

For the RS & IAS Programs a great challenge for the future is to continue its successes in acquiring research grants. As indicated above, the leaders and staff have ample ambitions and competences to meet this challenge successfully, and organize the process of developing grant proposals very well. The whole team, both the senior scholars and the younger staff, have a track record of creativity and energy in developing proposals, and of mutual support in challenging each other and thereby improving the proposals.

On the downside of this bright outlook on the ability to acquire grants is the relatively low share of basic funding for the research in the two groups.

Depending on the enrolment in the educational programmes and the numbers of completed PhD theses, the institutes' and faculty's possibilities to guarantee sufficient basic ('first stream') funding, let alone increasing finances, are largely due to external factors. It is not easy to attract more students in the majors of

religious studies and Arabic, so it is recommended that the group continues its efforts in attracting students in minor and elective courses.

The teaching/research staff fulfils their teaching tasks with enthusiasm and competence. The workload due to teaching is high. The internal model that distributes these teaching tasks among the staff is considered fair. But especially staff who teach in all four education blocks may find it hard to put a concentrated effort into their research projects. The committee strongly recommends RS & IAS and/or the Humanities Faculty to arrange teaching duties in such a way that no researcher teaches in four consecutive blocks.

The future is bright with respect to the continuation of a competent and well-reputed leadership and staff. Also the support received from the Humanities Faculty counts strongly in favour of a very good viability of RS & IAS.

The committee considers the viability of the RS & IAS Programs to be very good.

3.2 PhD training and education programme

The committee was able to interview the majority of PhD candidates who work on their theses in the programs of RS & IAS. The committee was impressed by the way they spoke about their research projects and the supervision they receive. PhDs behave and are treated as colleagues who are glad to take part in the excellent research atmosphere of the programs. There are frequent colloquia in the programs in which the PhDs participate. Almost all PhD candidates have two supervisors with whom they have regular informal and formal meetings. Conforming to faculty and university guidelines, for the starting PhDs there is a formal go-no-go assessment after at most 18 months, based on a research proposal for the thesis research and an early sample of their scholarly capabilities. Apparently, the selection procedure at RS & IAS is such that all new candidates in the period assessed have been allowed to continue with their research work.

Outside the two units, at the level of the research institute, the research coordinator and director organize monitoring and various ways of support for the PhD candidates.

The Faculty Graduate School also organizes academic and professional skill training programmes. Scholarly training in field-related subjects is offered by the national research schools of NOSTER—for religious studies—and NISIS—for Islam studies. From interviews with the directors of these two schools, the committee learned that the staff of RS & IAS plays nationally a prominent role in the education of graduate students in the two disciplines.

There is no uniform or obligatory training programme for all PhD candidates in RS & IAS; their participation in the broad offering of courses and training depends on their individual needs. The training plan is the result of an agreement between candidate and supervisors and is checked by the research coordinator and research director.

The success rates of the PhDs seem fair, although the completion time of a thesis is always a trade-off between efficiently limiting oneself and a high academic ambition. RS & IAS's graduates frequently continue their careers in academy, but during their training period proper attention is given to skills needed for non-academic careers.

3.3 Integrity

The committee perceived during the interviews at all levels a genuine awareness of the need for ethical conduct in research. In the research with living people there is tension between a scholarly push for transparency on data and the need to protect the privacy, and sometimes even the safety, of informants. In research based on personal archives, certain restrictions arise in order to maintain the trust of the families involved, as the committee learned from one of the researchers in Islamic studies. The research culture accommodates an open and serious atmosphere in which such dilemmas are discussed.

With respect to the formal treatment of integrity issues, the institute adheres to the national and university/faculty rules and procedures. However, some procedures are still in development, e.g. the installation of an Ethics Committee by the Faculty of Humanities. This should be taken care of in the near future. The faculty employs a data-manager, but the storage of sensitive data emanating from, for instance, field work often needs further reflection, with respect for the character of the data in such research.

3.4 Diversity

By its nature, research in religious studies and in Islamic studies is sensitive to cultural diversity, and the rich and sometimes challenging interactions in pluralistic contexts. This certainly holds for these two research groups. In their own composition, the RS & IAS units are diverse in terms of gender, nationality and (religious) background. The committee was able to verify, especially with the younger staff members, that people from all kinds of backgrounds feel welcome in the institute.

3.5 Benchmarks

The research units have suggested to consider the Religious Studies Program of Lancaster University (UK) and the Department for the Study of Religion at Toronto University as potential benchmarks; the second one more 'aspirational',

considering its size (8.11). Both would have a similar mix of anthropology of religion and textual and anthropological studies of Islam. These are highly respectable institutions, at major universities, and in that sense quite appropriate as benchmark for the research at Utrecht University. These programs are also religious studies, with an emphasis on anthropological and historical studies, rather than primarily theological.

In terms of profile, as far as can be gleaned from the material made available and current information on their websites, there are interesting differences. In Lancaster there is a Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, formed in 2010 by a merger of three departments. Collectively, their research was submitted to the research assessment exercise, panel Religious Studies and Theology. In 2014, they ended first of the UK for impact, 2d for research environment, and in 3d place overall. The department has four research areas: Religion and Society, Politics and Religion, Conceptual and Theoretical Issues, and Contemporary Ethical Debates. Thus, the structure is primarily thematic, and encompasses political sciences and philosophy as well as religious studies. In Toronto, the presentation refers more explicitly to major religious traditions. Compared to the program in Utrecht, there is more emphasis on Buddhism and Hinduism, and even one specialist in Sikh Studies, as well as on contemporary Judaism and philosophy of religion. The report made available is an assessment of teaching as well; in that context, we are informed that "faculty and students work in at least thirty-three languages". However, in this context they draw on resources from Toronto University as a whole. Within this department, the number of specialists on Islam is fairly modest. However, the University has an Institute on Islamic Studies with a large number of faculty from various backgrounds (Law, History, Middle Eastern Studies, and so on).

Given the resources available, it seems wise that the research unit in Religious Studies has a somewhat narrower profile than Toronto, with anthropology of religion, in particular with respect to Europe, Africa and the Middle East at the center. So too for the focus of the research unit in Islamic and Arabic Studies, with its emphasis on intellectual history.

The structure in Lancaster raises the question whether a more thematic orientation in research might allow closer collaboration with the colleagues in philosophy in the same department. However, given the disciplinary orientation of most research and teaching in philosophy in the Netherlands, it is not likely that this will be very effective. Thus, these benchmarks may provide inspiration, but do not encourage the committee to recommend a change in the profile of the two units in Utrecht.

With respect to the quality of research, the Utrecht University research groups in Religious Studies and Islamic and Arabic Studies seem to be of a comparable

level as the research by their colleagues in Lancaster and Toronto. The website of the department in Toronto presents books by the faculty; we see the same publishers of similar stature as listed by the UU Group; both have major publications with Cambridge University Press and with University of California Press.

With respect to impact, Lancaster was ranked 1st in the 2014 Research Assessment Exercise. With the sociologist of religion Linda Woodhead, who headed the Westminster Faith Debates, they have a scholar who is a voice in the UK. However, Woodhead is also engaged in debates within the Church of England; she combines the roles of an outsider/ scholar and an insider/ critical participant in a way that is not typical of the scholarly climate for religious studies at a public university such as Utrecht University. Though the Utrecht units do not seem to have a similar impact, it thus seems inappropriate to suggest that this is a deficiency on their side.

3.6 Recommendations

In the assessment above, the committee has made the following recommendations:

1. The committee agrees with the policy of RS & IAS to maintain the high levels of cooperation and synergy, while maintaining the unique identity of the two units.
2. The committee encourages enhancing the cooperation with the other sections in the Faculty of Humanities' Research Institute of Philosophy and Religious Studies.
3. The committee recommends that the department continues to put more effort in attracting students in minor and elective courses, to strengthen a basic grant-independent component in the income for research.
4. The committee strongly recommends RS & IAS and/or the Humanities Faculty to arrange teaching duties in such a way that no researcher teaches in four consecutive blocks.
5. The committee advises RS & IAS to seek opportunities for the further development of the societal relevance, in particular by combining the insights in the dynamics and variety of lived religions with the work on religion and education.
6. The committee advises to further explore the potential contribution to the research of RS & IAS by Utrecht's university professor Van der Veer.

7. The committee supports the initiative to participate more substantially in university wide collaboration by concentrating on issues related to migration and diversity.
8. The committee advises the Faculty of Humanities to shortly implement the plans for an Ethics Committee.
9. The committee advises to study the possibilities to improve the library collection and facilities.

Annex 1 Criteria and scores of national protocol SEP

Criterion 1: Research quality

The committee assesses the quality of the institute's research and the contribution that research makes to the body of scientific knowledge. The committee also assesses the scale of the institute's research results (scientific publications, instruments and infrastructure developed by the group, and other contributions to science). The following elements are to be considered in assessing this criterion:

- scientific quality
- productivity to the scientific community (in relation to the volume of the tenured scientific staff)
- the academic reputation of the group
- the strategy to provide the output at the highest relevant level possible

Criterion 2: Relevance to society

The committee assesses the quality, scale and relevance of contributions targeting specific economic, social, or cultural target groups, of advisory reports for policy, of contributions to public debates, and so on. The point is to assess contributions in areas that the institute has itself designated as target areas. The following elements—if applicable—are to be considered in assessing this criterion:

- a narrative in which the group demonstrates its relevance for society
- research products for societal target groups such as: professional publications and outreach to the general public, other research output to society
- use of research products by societal groups such as patents, licences, training courses
- projects in cooperation with societal partners (European Union, *Topsectoren*, international funds)
- contract research (including consultancies), also co-publications and use of facilities
- present jobs of alumni
- demonstrable marks of recognition by societal groups such as demonstrated by advisory reports for the government
- media exposure as presentations on radio / TV, invited opinion articles etc.
- membership societal advisory boards

Criterion 3: Viability

The committee assesses the strategy that the institute intends to pursue in the years ahead and the extent to which it is capable of meeting its targets in research and society during this period. It also considers the governance and

leadership skills of the institute's management. The following elements are to be considered in assessing this criterion:

- leadership
- (scientific) visibility and recognition
- research vision and strength of the research lines
- innovative strength
- strategic choices and decisions
- composition of the group (expertise, people)
- acquisition capacity

The meaning of the scores for the three main assessment criteria:

Score	Meaning	Research quality	Relevance to society	Viability
1	Excellent / world leading	One of the few most influential research groups in the world in its particular field	An outstanding contribution to society	Excellently equipped for the future
2	Very good	Very good, internationally recognized research	A very good contribution to society	Very well equipped for the future
3	Good	Good research	Makes a good contribution to society	Makes responsible strategic decisions and is therefore well equipped for the future
4	Unsatisfactory	Does not achieve satisfactory results in its field	Does not make a satisfactory contribution to society	Not adequately equipped for the future

Annex 2 Terms of Reference Religious Studies

The board of Utrecht University hereby issues the following Terms of Reference to the assessment committee of the Religious Studies research unit, chaired by prof. dr. Willem B. Drees (Tilburg University).

Assessment

You are being asked to assess the quality and relevance to society of the research conducted in the research unit *Religious Studies (including the two research groups, Religious Studies and Islamic and Arabic Studies)* at Utrecht University, as well as its strategic targets and the extent to which it is equipped to achieve these.

You are kindly requested to do so by judging the unit's performance on the three SEP assessment criteria (a. to c.) listed below. Please be sure to take current international trends and developments in scholarship and society into account in your analysis.

The assessment criteria are:

- a. research quality;*
- b. relevance to society;*
- c. viability*

For a description of these criteria, see Section 2 of the SEP. Please provide a written assessment on each of the three criteria and assign both the research unit as a whole and the two individual research groups (i.e. Religious Studies and Islamic and Arabic Studies) to a particular category (1, 2, 3 or 4), in accordance with the SEP guidelines. Please feel free to provide recommendations for improvement for the research unit and, separately, for the individual research groups.

At the level of the research unit as a whole, you are also asked, in accordance with the SEP, to reflect in your report on the following three aspects:

- a. PhD programmes;
- b. research integrity;
- c. diversity

By way of a further specification of the SEP criteria, we kindly ask you to make sure that your assessment pays special attention to the following five aspects:

1. Please formulate your assessment of the unit's research quality with reference to the quality indicators specified in Table D1 of the SEP (p. 25). You may also refer to the ranking of journals and publication outlets agreed on by the national consultative body Theology and Religious Studies (DGO) and published on the

website of the National Research School of Theology and Religion (NOSTER) (<http://noster.org/dgo-journal-ranking-list/>).

2. Please take into account the research unit's success in creating an environment that facilitates high-quality, cutting-edge research in Religious Studies, in particular by supervising excellent PhD and postdoctoral research, fostering discussion both within the scholarly community (in Utrecht and beyond) and with the broad public, and stimulating the writing of competitive national and European grant applications.

3. Please assess the research unit's relevance to society in terms of the quality and effectiveness of the research unit's 'valorization' activities, that is, its societal impact.

4. Internationally accepted standards of research excellence should guide your assessment. More particularly, we would like your assessment to make use of (i.e. to refer to) the three international benchmarks provided in the self-evaluation (a description of these benchmarks and a discussion of their commensurability is provided in an appendix).

5. Finally, your report is expected to provide an overall qualitative assessment of the research unit as a whole in relation to its strategic targets and to the governance and leadership skills of its management.

Documentation

The necessary documentation will be made available at least 10 weeks prior to the site visit. The documents will include at least the following:

- Self-assessment RS & IAS with appendices
- Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2015-2021
- Programme of the site visit
- Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 (SEP)
- Full list of Publications, RS & IAS 2012 – 2017
- List of abstracts of PhD theses
- Quality Monitoring Plan PhD Candidates
- 2012 Research Review Theology and Religious Studies at UU

Site visit

The site visit will take place from 5 – 6 November 2018. The provisional programme for the site visit will be sent shortly. We will contact you about logistical matters approximately [xx] months prior to the site visit.

Statement of impartiality

Before embarking on your assessment work, you will be asked to sign a statement of impartiality. In this statement, you declare that you have no direct

(personal or professional) relationship or connection with the research unit, and that you feel able to conduct an independent and impartial review.

Assessment report

We ask you to report your findings in an assessment report drawn up in accordance with the SEP guidelines and format. You are kindly requested to send the draft report to the research unit within 8 weeks after the site visit. The research unit then has the time to check the report for factual inaccuracies; should such inaccuracies be detected, you will be asked to correct them. The corrected version of the assessment report should then be sent to the board of Utrecht University.

Annex 3 Programme Site visit RS & IAS

4 – 6 November 2018

Stijkkamer 006, Janskerkhof 13, Utrecht

Sunday, November 4	18.00	Start-off meeting committee Welcome by dean Humanities (prof. Keimpe Algra) and former OFR research director and research assessment coordinator (prof. Christian Lange)
	19.00	Dinner Committee only
Monday, November 5	9:00-10:30	Preparatory meeting committee
	10.30-11.30	interview with management team: dean (prof. Keimpe Algra), head of dept. (prof. Martha Frederiks), OFR research director (prof. Paul Ziche), former OFR research director and research assessment coordinator (prof. Christian Lange), and secretary graduate school (Moniek Lijster MSc).
	11.30-12.45	interview with project leaders: prof. Anne-Marie Korte, prof. Birgit Meyer, dr. Eric Ottenheim, prof. Christian Lange, prof. Cok Bakker
	12.45-13.45	lunch committee
	13.45-15.00	assistant and associate professors, Religious Studies dr. Christoph Baumgartner, dr. Lucien van Liere, dr. Eric Ottenheim, dr. Katja Rakow, dr. Jo Spaans, dr. Pooyan Tamimi Arab
	15.00-15.15	coffee break
	15.15-16.00	directors NOSTER (prof. Heleen Murre-vd Berg) and NISIS (dr. Petra de Bruijn)

	16.00-17.15	PhDs and postdocs, RS and IAS (Erik Meinema, Albertina Oegema, Annelise Reid, Clemens van den Berg, Mariecke van den Berg, Eyad Abuali, Adam Bursi, Cornelis van Lit O.P., Arash Ghajarjazi)
	17.15-18.00	meeting committee
	18.30	dinner committee
Tuesday, November 6	9.00 -10.15	preparatory meeting committee
	10.00-11.00	assistant and associate professors, IAS (dr. Nico Landman, dr. Mehdi Sajid, dr. Joas Wagemakers)
	11.00-11.15	coffee break
	11.15-12.45	postdoc/early career researchers presentations (Pooyan Tamimi Arab, Cornelis van Lit, Adam Bursi, Eyad Abuali, Mariecke van den Berg)
	12.45-13.45	lunch committee
	13.45-15.15	meeting committee
	15.15-15.30	break
	15.30-16.15	programme leaders: Prof. Birgit Meyer and Prof. Christian Lange
	16.15-17.00	Presentation first impressions drinks

Annex 4 Research data

a. Composition of the RS & IAS Institute (fte / #)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Scientific staff (fte)	8.68	6.68	6.54	5.87	6.27	6.42
Post-docs (fte)	1.25	2.79	5.06	4.60	4.39	4.97
PhD candidates (#)	17	18	15	13	16	14
Visiting fellows (#)	0	1	4	5	9	8
Total research staff	9.93	9.47	11.60	10.47	10.66	11.39

b. Financing structure

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<i>Funding (FTE):</i>						
Direct funding	10.74	7.74	4.54	3.80	4.75	5.15
Research grants	1.53	2.67	4.50	4.03	5.97	9.30
ERC/EU/contracts	5.12	5.67	8.73	7.75	6.00	4.12
Total funding	17.39	16.08	17.77	15.58	16.72	18.57
<i>Expenditure (k€)</i>						
Personnel costs	1.299	1.327	1.323	1.182	1.224	1.335
Other costs	39	39	53	47	49	55
Total expenditure	1.338	1.366	1.376	1.229	1.273	1.390

c. Numbers of publications

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Refereed articles	18	18	19	25	20	28
Non-refereed papers	7	3	5	3	10	4
Books	4	2	1	6	5	1
Book chapters	30	55	34	29	45	34
Book editorships	6	6	4	4	6	7
PhD theses	4	4	6	5	6	4
Professional publications	23	32	21	19	17	16
Publ. for general public	6	17	17	25	14	17
Other (research) output	104	70	103	188	133	215
Total publications	202	207	210	304	256	326

Annex 5 Curricula vitae of the Committee members

Prof. Willem B. Drees (chair) is professor of philosophy of the humanities at Tilburg University and dean of the Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences (2015-2018). Previously, he held the chair in philosophy of religion and ethics at Leiden University (2001-2014), and from 1995 until 2001 at Twente University, the extraordinary Nicolette Bruining Chair of philosophy of nature and of technology from a liberal protestant perspective. At Leiden University, he served as dean of the Faculty of Theology, renamed faculty of Religious Studies (2005-2008) and as vice-dean for education of the Faculty of Humanities (2009-2013). He has been the editor of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* (2008-2018) and president of the European Society for Science and Theology, ESSSAT (2002-2008). He has advanced degrees in theoretical physics (Utrecht University) and theology (Groningen), and earned doctorates in theology/religious studies (Groningen 1989) and in philosophy (VU Amsterdam, 1994). He twice received a Fulbright Scholarship, and for his first dissertation the prize of the Legatum Stolpianum, and the Prins Bernhard Fonds Prize (later renamed Keetje Hodshon Prize). In 2018, he was elected to the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities (KHMW). Among his publications are *Beyond the Big Bang: Quantum Cosmologies and God* (Open Court, 1990), *Religion, Science and Naturalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), *Religion and Science in Context: A Guide to the Debates* (Routledge, 2010), and edited volumes including *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century* (with P.S. van Koningsveld; Leiden University Press, 2008).

Prof. Michael Lambek (PhD University of Michigan, 1978) is a cultural anthropologist who teaches at the University of Toronto. Previously he spent some years cross-appointed at the London School of Economics. His main fieldwork was conducted in northwest Madagascar and the neighbouring island of Mayotte. Books include *Human Spirits: A Cultural Account of Trance in Mayotte* (Cambridge 1981, reissued 2009); *Knowledge and Practice in Mayotte: Local Discourses of Islam, Sorcery, and Spirit Possession* (Toronto 1993); *The Weight of the Past: Living with History in Mahajanga, Madagascar* (Palgrave-MacMillan 2002); *The Ethical Condition* (Chicago 2015); and *Island in the Stream: An Ethnographic History of Mayotte* (Toronto 2018); co-author of *Four Lectures on Ethics* (Hau Books 2015) and editor of 8 other books, including *Tense Past* (with Paul Antze, 1996), *Ordinary Ethics* (2010), *Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (2002, 2nd ed. 2008), and *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion* (with Janice Boddy, 2013). He holds a Canada Research Chair in the Anthropology of Ethical and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Since 2012 he has been chair of the Anthropology Department at University of Toronto Scarborough.

Michael Lambek served from 2003-11 on the International Advisory Board of The Future of the Religious Past, Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

Prof. John Nawas studied History and Philosophy at the Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen/Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, earning in both fields a doctorandus cum laude title. In 1993 he finished his PhD at Nijmegen by writing on the religio-political policies of the seventh Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (d. 833 AD). He is currently professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the KU Leuven, Belgium, and fellow of the Institute for Advanced Arabic and Islamic Studies (Antwerp), Belgium. He has written extensively on the religio-political and social history of Classical Islam with focus on the caliphate and the ulama. He has been Assistant Editor of the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an, and is now one of the five Executive Editors of the third edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, responsible for Islamic History up to 1100 AD and the Islamic religious sciences. His most recent book is entitled *Al-Ma'mun, the Inquisition, and the Quest for Caliphal Authority* (2015). He is currently editing and translating a ninth century literary chronicle, *Kitab Baghdad* by Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur, for the Library of Arabic Literature (LAL), New York University Press.

Dr. Frans van Steijn (secretary) studied physics (BSc) at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and philosophy (MA) at the University of Amsterdam. He received a PhD at the UvA on a thesis "The Universities in Society; a Study of part-time professors in the Netherlands"(1990). Since 1996 Frans was senior advisor at Vereniging van Universiteiten (VSNU), the Association of Universities in the Netherlands. He was Secretary to the Board and Secretary to the Rector's Conference. His expert fields are quality assurance, research policy and research integrity.

In September 2014 Frans retired from VSNU and established an independent office for consultancy and project management, specialized in quality assurance in universities and research organisations. In that capacity Frans van Steijn assisted the review committees of the National Experimental Plant Sciences Graduate School, the Leiden University Teacher Training Institute, Tilburg Law School, the Institutional Audit of Utrecht University and three Institutes of the KNAW Humanities Cluster (Meertens, IISG and Huygens ING).