



Amsterdam Public Health research institute
Location VUmc, Van der Boechorststraat 7
1081 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands

To: Prof. Dr. Jeroen Geurts
(Rector Magnificus Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Subject: Response to the research review report of the Amsterdam Public Health research institute

Dear prof. dr. Geurts,

The Board of Directors of Amsterdam Public Health research institute (APH) has received the final review report of their external research evaluation and acknowledges its contents and the recommendations of the assessment committee. The assessment was conducted in the context of the national Strategic Evaluation Protocol (SEP) and covered the period 2017-2022. A self-evaluation report, written by the research institute, together with a site visit by an independent assessment committee carried out on January 24-25, 2024, formed the basis for this external evaluation.

The APH Board of Directors would like to thank all members of the assessment committee sincerely for their contribution to this evaluation. We highly appreciated the future directed critical constructive approach during the site visit. The committee consisted of:

- Em. prof. dr. Koos van der Velden (chair), Radboud UMC, The Netherlands
- Prof. Elaine Hay, Keele University, United Kingdom
- Monique van den Hoed MBA (PhD student), Maastricht University, The Netherlands
- Professor Arfan Ikram, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
- Professor Janusz Janczukowicz, Medical University of Lodz, Poland
- Professor Manuela Joore, Maastricht University, The Netherlands
- Dr. Lonneke van Leeuwen, Julius Center, UMC Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Simone Kukenheim, former councilor and deputy Major of Amsterdam and Director of Public Health, GGD Flevoland
- Professor Martin Preisig, University Hospital of Lausanne, Switzerland.

The Executive Boards appointed dr. Meg Van Bogaert as the secretary to the committee.

We are pleased with the positive assessment of our research institute. Overall, the assessment committee considers the quality of our research outstanding and is positive about the many initiatives and activities at APH that are aimed at improving the quality of the research, stimulating outreach and societal impact and creating a supportive and stimulating research environment. The major role Amsterdam Public Health played in the merger of public health research of VUmc, AMC and VU, leading to a successful interdisciplinary research institute on public health was appreciated by the assessment committee.



The APH Board of Directors appreciates the useful comments and suggestions for further improvement. We found the recommendations relevant and accurate and are in the process of addressing and translating the recommendations to recalibrate our strategic plans together with those involved, i.e. program leaders, committee members and affiliated departments. We are convinced that this will further strengthen APH's position in the next years and optimally facilitate our researchers. We have highlighted our response to some of the recommendations below.

Branding, function & PR

We agree with the assessment committee that APH is a unique research institute in the region and City of Amsterdam with the potential to serve as a connector in the scientific field as well as the societal field but does not yet use its full potential. To increase our internal and external visibility we will revisit our strategic focus in terms of branding and positioning of APH as a public health research institute. We will continue the ongoing shift towards a coherent public health-oriented research network serving the cohesion of our internal community and intensify our efforts to link with external non-academic partners and citizens in our region. Concerning the internal function of APH, we will stimulate more cohesion within the research institute and research programs, with a clear focus around public health. We will make use of cross-cutting themes and initiatives, in order to create coherence between the research programs in the organisational structure. Moreover, we will clearly articulate the APH strategy for external communication around common themes and ask the research programs to make clear how they will contribute to this strategy. As part of the process of redefining our internal and external branding we will also intensify our collaborations with partners that can influence the construction of the public health research agenda in the region. In addition, we will monitor and make transparent which relationships are established and will be intensified with international bodies within the research institute.

Culture, atmosphere and career development

We will sustain the current trust-based collaborative culture by formal structures within the APH network and continue our attention and efforts for culture and atmosphere both in the research institute and where possible at the affiliated research departments. For instance, by intensifying our (indirect) efforts on openness, safe working environments, research integrity, inclusivity, and diversity within the departments of the different organizations.

Special attention will be paid to the mid-career researchers within our research institute, by improving policies and the availability of information on career development and promotion criteria, recognition of different research profiles incorporating the Recognition and Rewarding initiative and by taking action on their needs and experiences. We will continue and intensify our support for PhD candidates and postdocs, aligned to the work of the graduate schools and postdoc networks.

Governance and embedding within Amsterdam UMC and VU

As an inter-faculty network institute APH's influence and decision-making power on departmental policies related to HR, strategic co-financing, PhD policy, academic culture and nominations depends on good relations, joined ownership, mutual involvement in strategic plans and appointments early in the decision process. We will continue and intensify our efforts around these themes with the departments and faculties involved within Amsterdam and VU, and we will further work on a sustainable governance. With regard to academic professorship appointments, APH wants to further strengthen the anchoring of the research institute's influence in all faculties involved.



Future leadership

To continue strong and inspirational leadership based on fixed terms, we aim for timely and open succession planning to recruit board leaders able to grow and steer APH's strategic agenda. Moreover, we will increasingly invest in educating our future leaders with the research institutes on all levels.

APH Board of Directors



Prof. M.C. (Martine) de Bruijne, Director



Dr. D.S. (Dionne) Kringos, Vice Director



Dr. F.C.M. (Frank) van Leth, Vice Director

This response has also been approved by prof. dr. Saskia Peerdeman (dean VU, member Board of Directors Amsterdam UMC), the corresponding dean of the APH Board of Deans.

cc: prof. dr. Saskia Peerdeman, prof. dr. Elga de Vries, prof. dr. Peter Paul Verbeek, Richard de Waard, Simon Speksnijder