

**Research Evaluation**  
**GRONINGEN RESEARCH**  
**INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF**  
**CULTURE (ICOG)**



**university of  
 groningen**

*dr.* **Floor Meijer**

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*onderzoek, tekst & advies*

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## Preface

It is a fascinating and yet profoundly challenging time for humanities disciplines, with so many familiar, timeworn assumptions about their status, purview and future direction suddenly undergoing active reappraisal in a climate of considerable uncertainty. While this work of renewal may be disruptive, even unsettling on occasion, it is necessary. Such are the pressures being brought to bear on these disciplines to demonstrate their public value, to recraft afresh the case for continued investment in their animating ambitions, it is vital that questions concerning evolving priorities, relevance, and sustainability be answered robustly on the basis of evidence-based analysis.

The Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG) is a leading voice in these debates in the Netherlands. Members of the review committee it has been my honour to chair were eager to hear its assessment of this changing landscape. We were most grateful for the extensive documentation provided to us, so much of it prepared with honest, self-reflexive candour about relative strengths and limitations, as well as for the opportunity to meet and interview senior faculty leaders, scholars at varied career stages, PhD candidates, administrators, and external stakeholders over our three-day site visit in November, 2022.

May I also express warm gratitude to my colleagues on the review committee – Sandra Kisters (Museum Boijmans van Beuningen), Peter Schneck (Universität Osnabrück, Germany), Maria Stern (University of Gothenburg, Sweden), Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz (University of Amsterdam) and Iris Denis (PhD candidate at Radboud University) – for their professionalism, dedication to the tasks at hand, and consistent good humour throughout. It has been a genuine pleasure working together, the logistics of which were proficiently guided by the remarkable talents of Floor Meijer, independent secretary to the committee.

The following report has been collectively written, reflecting as it does our respective interests, expertise and enthusiasms. We trust its insights and recommendations will inspire further dialogue and deliberation across ICOG, appreciating as we do its admirable commitment to innovative strategic planning for the years ahead.

We wish ICOG every success in these endeavours.

**Stuart Allan**

*Professor of Journalism and Communication, Cardiff University, UK, and chair of the review committee*

20 March, 2023

## List of abbreviations

ICOG	Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture
DLG	Council of Deans in Arts and Humanities
GSH	Graduate School for the Humanities
KNAW	Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
LOGOS	Council of Dutch Research Schools in the Humanities
NWO	Dutch Research Council
OIKOS	National Research school in Classical Studies
OSL	Netherlands Research school for Literary Studies
RMeS	Research school for Media Studies
SEP	Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027
UG	University of Groningen
UNL	Universities of the Netherlands

# I. Introduction

In 2022, the executive board of the University of Groningen (UG) commissioned an evaluation of the three research institutes of its Faculty of Arts as part of the university's regular six-year quality assurance cycle. This evaluation of research in the 2016-2021 period aimed to fulfil the dual purpose of improving the quality and relevance of research, and providing accountability to the executive board, funding bodies, the government and society as a whole. Three separate committees were appointed to evaluate the three research centres of the Faculty of Arts during three consecutive site visits in November-December 2022:

1. Centre for Language and Cognition Groningen (CLCG)
2. Groningen Institute of Archaeology (GIA)
3. Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG)

Also included in the research evaluation of the Faculty of Arts were three national research schools currently hosted by the Faculty:

1. Research school for Media Studies (RMeS)
2. National research school in Classical Studies (OIKOS)
3. Research school for Literary Studies (OSL)

These research schools were assessed by the same committee that also assessed the Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG).

The present report contains the findings, conclusions and recommendations on ICOG. At the request of the Faculty of Arts, the committee's findings on the three national research school are reported in three separate reports.

## Composition of the committee

The executive board appointed a review committee (hereafter: 'committee') of six external peers, including a PhD candidate. The committee consisted of:

- Stuart Allan, professor of Journalism and Communication at Cardiff University, UK (chair)
- Peter Schneck, professor of American Studies at Universität Osnabrück, Germany
- Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, associate professor in Medieval History at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Maria Stern, professor of Peace and Development Studies (International Relations) at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden
- Iris Denis, PhD candidate at Radboud University, the Netherlands
- Sandra Kisters, director of Collection and research at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, the Netherlands

Floor Meijer was appointed independent secretary to the committee. Appendix 1 includes a short curriculum vitae of each committee member.

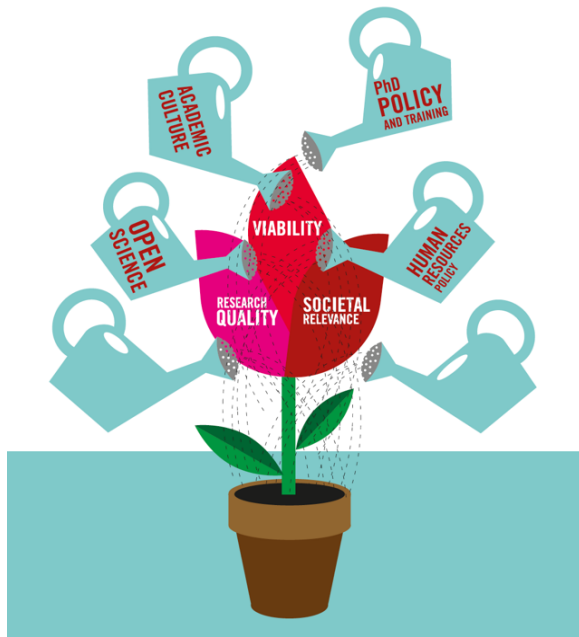
To ensure a transparent and unbiased assessment, all members of the committee signed a statement of impartiality and confidentiality. Prior to the site visit, existing professional relationships between committee members and the research institute under assessment were discussed. The committee concluded there was no risk in terms of bias or undue influence.

## Assessment criteria

The research evaluation followed the aims and methods described in the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027 ('SEP'). This protocol for the evaluation of publicly funded research in the Netherlands was drawn up and adopted by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), the Dutch Research Council (NWO), and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

Under the Terms of Reference issued by UG, the committee was required to evaluate the quality of ICOG's research environment and policies, and to offer recommendations to improve the quality of its research strategy. Specifically, the committee

was asked to judge the performance of the unit on SEP's three main assessment criteria (Quality, Relevance, Viability), and offer its written conclusions as well as recommendations based on the evidence gathered. Four additional aspects also listed in SEP (Open Science, PhD Policy and Training, Academic Culture and Human Resources Policy) were to be taken into consideration when evaluating the three main criteria.



### Documentation

Prior to the site visit, the committee received the self-evaluation reports of ICOG, including the information and appendices required by the SEP. The following additional documents were provided:

- Terms of Reference for the research review
- Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027
- Room for Everyone's Talent. Towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics (2019)

### Working method

Leading up to the site visit, the committee members studied the documentation and formulated preliminary findings, questions and initial recommendations. The committee's secretary collected each committee member's preliminary report and prepared a collective document.

The combined site visit of ICOG and the research schools took place from 15-18 November 2022. It started with a committee meeting, during which the committee discussed its preliminary assessments. In this meeting, the committee also considered procedural matters and agreed upon a working method. The workload was divided by allocating the SEP criteria and aspects to specific committee members, who would take the lead for these subjects during the site visit and assessment process.

Over the next few days, the committee met with ICOG representatives (management, PhD candidates, junior to intermediate scholars, senior researchers, societal stakeholders) and representatives of OIKOS, OSL and RMeS. The site visit was concluded with a meeting in which the committee discussed its findings and conclusions, followed by a presentation of initial findings and recommendations by the committee. The schedule for the site visit is included in appendix 2.

After the site visit, the secretary drafted a first version of the committee report on ICOG, based on oral and written input provided by the committee members. This draft report was circulated to the committee members for comments. Subsequently, the draft report was presented to ICOG for factual corrections and comments. After considering this feedback in close consultation with the chair and other committee members, the secretary finalised the report. The resulting report was presented to the executive board of the University of Groningen.

## II. Evaluation of Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG)

### Organisation, mission and strategy

With approximately 200 staff members and 73 PhD candidates, the Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture (Dutch acronym: ICOG) is the largest of the three research institutes of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Groningen. ICOG is arguably also the most diverse: it hosts a wide range of disciplines, from history, the arts, literatures and cultures, American studies, and media and journalism studies to international relations, humanitarian action and area studies.

Research is organised in thematic research centres, each striving to advance cross-disciplinary enquiries to advantage. All staff are appointed to one of the centres according to their research interests and expertise, and the chair group within which they reside. Following the previous evaluation, a process of strategic realignment has taken place, streamlining the centres in terms of size and scope.

The five current centres are:

1. Centre for Arts in Society (AiS)
2. Centre for Historical Studies (CHS)
3. Centre for International Relations Research (CIRR)
4. Centre for Media and Journalism Studies (CMJS)
5. Centre for the Study of Democratic Cultures and Politics (DemCP)

During the review period, ICOG has also facilitated the establishment and growth of three independent interfaculty centres: the Centre for Digital Humanities (CDH), Culture, Religion and Society – Interdisciplinary Studies in the Ancient World (CRASIS), and the Groningen Centre for Health and Humanities (GCH<sub>2</sub>).

### Governance

Since the last evaluation, ICOG has implemented a decentralised governance structure, giving the

research centres and their underlying chair groups greater autonomy over their own decision-making. The new model of shared leadership entails that the five centres each have a director who is responsible for fostering a positive and vibrant research climate. Directors organise and chair meetings at centre level and regularly discuss policy and activities with associated chair groups. Furthermore, they are tasked with implementing faculty-wide strategy concerning HR and quality assessments of research, taking up positions on selection committees, and monitoring the research output of staff on an annual basis. As the committee understood it, this also includes mentoring or coaching of individual staff, helping them to identify and pursue opportunities for professional development and funding opportunities.

Whereas the centres and their underlying chair groups are effectively in the lead in terms of content, the faculty and ICOG to a large extent play a facilitating role, giving structure, coherence and vision to the research at the lower levels of governance. The board of the Faculty of Arts bears formal responsibility for the governance and management of the faculty. It appoints the directors of the research institutes and the director of the Faculty of Arts' Graduate School for the Humanities (GSH). Within the board, the dean holds the research portfolio.

Together with ICOG's overall director, the five centre directors constitute ICOG's executive board, which sets out the institute's research policy and funding strategies. ICOG's director also regularly meets with the faculty board and the GSH. Revised governance principles have also been implemented in ICOG's advisory board. In a recent renewal, the board enlarged its representation of ICOG's staff, from junior to senior level. The board's role is to provide input on policy to the ICOG director and communicate the needs of ICOG staff.

The committee has a favourable impression of the new governance model, which appears to have produced operational benefits and helped to build a stronger institutional identity. Directors are clearly becoming more confident in their roles of



creating and maintaining collaborative dynamics within their research centres. Centres are firmly at the forefront in all possible ways – except in a formal sense, as only ICOG and the chair groups have a formalised role within the governance structure.

A point of improvement raised by staff is that researchers themselves could be given a greater say in which centre they are assigned to, perhaps also allowing staff to be a member of more than one centre. According to the committee, more flexibility would be welcome and desirable. Furthermore, the committee argues in favour of giving (junior and mid-career) researchers more space for representing their interests, by integrating them in all decision processes that concern their research (and their teaching). On the whole, the committee would like to see ICOG championing the interests of staff more strongly at the faculty level.

The committee noticed that chair groups occupy a central position within the governance model, which is appreciated by many. Nonetheless, several interviewees mentioned there can be quite substantial differences in how ICOG standards and procedures are interpreted and implemented at this level. This, for example, concerns expectations with respect to research output, grant capture, hiring and PhD supervision. Furthermore, the frequency of meetings and events seems to vary. Although some variation is to be expected in a diverse institute such as ICOG (and may even be desirable where it is reflective of discipline specific practices), the committee does advise to be alert to possible arbitrariness. That is, it is important that staff situated within different chair groups experience even, consistent applications of faculty or institute policy. To counter arbitrariness, ICOG could encourage the discussion and introduction of a common standard of procedure, promoting a sort of 'inter-chair agreement'.

### **Strategic aims**

Humanities research is rapidly evolving, not least because of increasing digitisation, interdisciplinarity and conceptual/methodological developments across globalising contexts. In recognition of the rapidly evolving field, ICOG's

mission is to foster and support excellent, innovative scholarship in the study of culture, creating an intellectual climate for development and exchange to enhance both academic and societal impact agendas. ICOG clearly aims for its researchers to be at the forefront of initiatives, stimulating and coordinating cutting-edge research that breaks new ground. In its planning for the 2016-2020 period, the institute has translated its mission into a number of strategic aims. Principal strategy commitments address research quality, funding, PhD programme recruitment and success rates, open science, and societal impact.

The mission and strategies designed to achieve quality goals seem – on the whole – to make good sense. ICOG's mission aligns with faculty-wide priorities, and its strategic aims are in accordance with aims formulated for the humanities and social sciences at national and international levels. The committee particularly appreciates the strong emphasis on the contribution to the wider society, including within the framework of the UG research themes and through the connection of fundamental research with societal questions. This is in line with the general trend of increasingly permeable boundaries between academic and societal impact, and ties in well with available funding opportunities. The committee does note that some of the aims, such as producing 'innovative and cutting-edge research', are rather broad and would benefit from further elucidation. This would contribute to a proper mutual understanding amongst staff of what exactly ICOG is working towards, and how relative success will be measured.

## **People and Community**

### **Academic culture**

Like the Faculty of Arts in general, ICOG strives to offer its staff an open, inclusive and respectful environment, where everyone feels free to contribute. The site visit confirmed that staff and PhD candidates alike experience ICOG as a welcoming, open and inclusive forum where there is room for providing input, developing new initiatives, and bringing them to fruition.

In general, staff reported that a significant cultural shift has unfolded in recent years. Whereas ICOG used to have a strong tradition of staff working individually and chair groups functioning as 'micro territories', there is now a tendency towards stronger collaboration and building bridges. This is facilitated through joint institute meetings and cross-attendance of seminars and colloquia at centre and chair group level. A mutual source of information is the ICOG newsletter, which highlights events and news from all groups. The committee warmly welcomes this increased degree of exchange between groups, also in view of its earlier observation that chair groups still set the tone at the everyday working level, also when it comes to determining the type of culture that predominates. Greater interaction promises to breathe fresh air into the chair groups and among different fields included in ICOG. The implementation of mechanisms for evaluating working cultures at group level could also contribute towards a collaborative ethos at ICOG.

Concerns were raised during the site visit about the limited visibility of teaching-only staff (and their lack of voice), and the sometimes marked divisions in working and material conditions between them and staff on combined teaching and research contracts. As teaching-only staff are not formally considered research-active, they cannot be members of ICOG and are not officially informed on ICOG events. As emphasised by their colleagues who are ICOG members, this happens despite the fact that many of them do write publications in their own time and would like to take a next career step towards a combined teaching and research position. The committee invites discussion about whether these divisions between staff are proving counterproductive to ICOG's commitment to an open and inclusive academic culture, as well as to its commitment to research-led teaching.

Several formal feedback loops for fulfilling the aim of an open, respectful and inclusive culture are in place – with the committee commenting that unevenness at chair group level may cause some to function better than others. Staff can choose to report undesirable behaviour or incidents of misconduct to their manager, the UG wide

ombudsperson, a confidential advisor, or, if necessary, to the Faculty Board. The strategy for promoting research integrity is practical. The Faculty of Arts adheres to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and university-wide regulations, with due attention for talking about these policies. At faculty level, there is a research ethics committee. An advisor for scientific integrity is available at the central UG level. In addition to the faculty policies and strategies, ICOG emphasises the need to raise awareness about research integrity in the coaching and training of researchers.

### **Diversity**

In the self-evaluation report, diversity is labelled a core value in the faculty's organisational culture, as it is seen to open up new perspectives, bring in new leadership styles and stimulate creativity. Notably, several of the senior managerial positions at ICOG are filled by women, which is commendable. There is also a clear commitment to internationalisation, both in terms of research topics and staff composition, which comes with the ambition to be a bilingual institute/faculty. While ICOG's current research is (still) mainly centred on culture in the Global North, there is an incipient movement towards studying topics from the South (Latin America, Asia etc). The committee is firmly in favour of (further) prioritising the integration of topics and perspectives from the Global South.

Data on the composition of staff at faculty level reveal that 38% of the academic staff is non-Dutch, and 40% is female. Specific data at ICOG level were not available to the committee. While the faculty's gender balance at professorial level (34% female, 66% male) does not compare unfavourably with the current situation elsewhere in the Netherlands, there is certainly room for further improvement. Presumably, the same goes for other aspects of diversity (such as age, ethnicity, cultural and/or social-economic background) on which data are not available (due to legal restrictions on collecting such information).

The faculty is aware that more work needs to be done to achieve a good balance, especially among

the higher ranks. The committee was informed that efforts to diversify the faculty and ICOG through hires and fellowships are underway. Gender balance is, for instance, a focal point in strategic personal plans and thus informs hiring decisions. The committee was pleased to hear that concrete plans and strategies for promoting other aspects of diversity are under development. The faculty will appoint a diversity officer who will be charged with developing an action plan in collaboration with the university's chief diversity officer. The committee notes that this appointment is somewhat overdue. It hopes that new mechanisms for promoting and monitoring various types of diversity and inclusivity will ensue shortly.

### **HR policy**

#### *Hiring and performance criteria*

From the self-evaluation report and conversations with management and staff, the committee learned that current HR policies place (far) more emphasis on research performance than was previously the case. ICOG's current hiring policy starts from the premise that research performance, in terms of past performance and – even more importantly – future promise, needs to be a leading criterion in hiring decisions. The committee acknowledges that this research performance-driven approach holds the promise of further strengthening ICOG's research quality, bolstering its fundraising potential and furthering research-led teaching.

However, in the committee's experience, research skills are far from the only essential quality for academic staff: skills in the fields of teaching, management and outreach are no less vital for a well-functioning academic institution. Within international academics it is increasingly accepted that such skills should also be properly recognised and rewarded.

As the committee understood it, the national 'recognition and rewards' programme (which started in 2019) has deliberately opened the door to recognising and rewarding such skills in academic HR policy and research evaluation, thus enabling diversified career paths. The committee learned that the faculty is looking into ways to

implement the principles of this programme in its HR policy, which would involve taking a clear stand on what is expected of staff in terms of management and outreach, and on how such efforts are compensated and rewarded. The committee hopes that the planned implementation of 'recognition and rewards' will be given priority in the coming period.

A related recommendation is to think carefully about how ICOG can best meet the needs of its staff while it is working to attract an excellent and diverse group of scholars. This specifically includes managing the expectations of international colleagues, both before and after they are hired, since national practices in academia can vary widely. Caring for international colleagues in such a way is an essential part of being an inclusive organisation.

#### *Mentoring*

Since the previous evaluation, commendable steps have been taken to promote personal and professional development of staff. ICOG attaches particular value to mentoring and coaching, helping staff to better supervise PhD candidates and supporting them while writing grant applications. The faculty, furthermore, has set up a leadership programme, with separate pathways for full professors and assistant/associate professors. From the interviews it was clear that staff appreciate the options available to them, but signalled a desire for mentorship support to be more inclusive. Currently, senior staff members perform most of the mentoring, which means that a small number of people must meet a high demand. ICOG could consider opening up mentorship to a greater extent, making it more organic to the structure of the organisation. An interesting option would be to explore the possibilities of so-called 'reverse mentoring', through which senior staff receive feedback from younger colleagues.

#### *Career development*

ICOG identified limited career perspectives for staff as a weakness in its SWOT-analysis. Potentially, this could lead to frustration and the loss of talented early career researchers. From the interviews, the committee learned that postdoc

positions are very rare, which means that the position of assistant professor is the only real steppingstone to an academic career at the Faculty of Arts. Some graduates of the PhD programme not able to advance to assistant professor end up in teaching-only positions. In the interviews, these positions were more or less described as a 'dead end', since teaching-only staff are excluded from ICOG, including from its events and the research support structures that it offers.

Considering the above, the committee's suggestions would be to discuss and introduce effective structural measures to open up alternative career paths for young researchers (for instance: internally funded postdoc positions). These could be strategically linked to promising projects and individuals contributing to and strengthening the research profile and grant attraction potential. This would provide early scholars with the opportunity to publish their PhD findings and/or develop their ideas for external grant funding.

In addition, the committee again stresses that it would be beneficial to include lecturers without research time in the academic activities of ICOG. This would not only support their individual career development, making it easier to transition to a combined teaching-research appointment (in Groningen or elsewhere), but also help to ensure that teaching is informed by research – something that is clearly stated as a faculty wide ambition.

While (tenured) assistant and associate professors are in a much more secure position than teaching-only staff, they hinted at not feeling fully in control of their career paths. Assistant professors, in particular, may face difficulties in conveying their status in a manner that is recognisable in international contexts. That is, from some vantage points the term 'assistant professor' implies a non-tenured, relatively junior position, which does not reflect the responsibilities and level of experience expected of Dutch assistant professors. The terminology used may therefore hamper their career development (for instance by preventing them from applying for more prestigious international grants). The committee would

encourage a discussion on whether another term might be more fitting.

Another potential measure to improve the career development of intermediate staff would be to make the *ius promovendi* available to them with the shortest possible delay, essentially as soon as they can demonstrate adequate skills and experience. Currently, associate professors at ICOG can expect to receive *ius promovendi* after successfully supervising two PhD candidates as co-promotor. The committee learned that this can take 6-8 years, which is a long time to bear what is a significant responsibility yet receive little credit for successful PhD supervision and completion.

#### *Workload*

As elsewhere in Dutch academia, the workload of staff is high. The 60:40 ratio of teaching to research is mostly a construct on paper. This is especially so for early career researchers, who are building their careers and have to submit grant applications, supervise PhD candidates, develop courses, administer projects and/or fulfil other administrative duties within the faculty. Moreover, it is often the case such staff are maintaining caring responsibilities in their private lives at the same time. The threat of burnout is very real at this career stage – as is recognised by ICOG. To the extent teaching and administrative tasks take up time allocated to research, such staff will be under pressure to prepare publications in their spare time.

Compensation for hours spent on PhD supervision appears to be very limited, both for junior and senior researchers. The committee would strongly suggest a revision of the compensation model.

The committee was pleased to note that there are some recent developments within Dutch academia that have improved the situation or will soon improve it, partly in connection to additional national 'sector plan' funding becoming available. The Faculty of Arts has chosen to use this funding for allocating additional hours for teaching responsibilities and for introducing research sabbaticals. The latter was a result of consulting with the researchers themselves, which is testimony to a good bottom-up dynamic and a

management that listens to the needs expressed by the research community.

### **Support**

At the faculty level, ICOG staff can apply for support with respect to writing grant proposals, financially managing research projects, research data management and engaging in public engagement and science communication. Support staff collaborate closely in order to be able to offer researchers streamlined services. The quality of the services offered is evaluated positively by staff. However, it was also mentioned to the committee that the number of FTEs devoted to support could be increased. With just one funding officer, one communications expert and one data steward supporting the entire Faculty of Arts, there are clear limits to the amount of time and attention that can be offered to individual researchers. Given that these support staff are closely linked to strategic goals (e.g., increasing grant capture), the committee highly recommends an expansion of their number. Nonetheless, researchers highly praised the attentiveness and dedication of support staff.

The UG research infrastructure includes a digital competence centre which offers researchers the opportunity to safely store their research data in accordance with the FAIR principles.

### **PhD policy and training**

ICOG's PhD candidates are part of a faculty-wide PhD programme run by the Graduate School for the Humanities (GSH). GSH hosts PhD candidates in two main categories: PhD candidates with an employee status and scholarship PhD candidates, who are either funded by the UG or by other (foreign) scholarship providers. GSH aims to increase recruitment of so-called 'sandwich PhD's', whose PhD projects are co-financed by the UG and an international partner institution. Typically, PhD candidates are given four-year contracts and have at least two supervisors (promoter and daily supervisor). Agreements on training and supervision are formalised in a training and supervision plan (TSP), which is drawn up by the supervisor and the candidate at the start of the project. GSH and the supervisors involved share

the responsibility for monitoring the progress of projects.

The committee finds several aspects of ICOG's PhD programme worthy of praise, starting with the PhD candidates themselves. The committee met with a dynamic, enthusiastic group of young researchers who demonstrate a sense of ownership about their projects. Generally, PhD candidates seem pleased with training and supervision arrangements. The 30 EC training programme that PhD candidates complete over the course of their projects offers quite a bit of flexibility. Apart from a few general mandatory modules, PhD candidates follow a tailor-made individual programme, consisting of GSH courses on transferable skills and practical aspects, and in-depth discipline specific courses offered by national research schools. PhD candidates have opportunities to suggest changes to the curriculum, both at GSH and national research school level. Interviewed PhD candidates highlighted the value of PhD colloquia at chair group level. These sessions encourage them to share ideas with fellow researchers (both junior and senior) and appear to inspire enthusiasm and motivation.

The committee also approves of the availability of voluntary instruction and coaching programmes for supervisors. Such professionalisation activities are a good way of equipping supervisors with the skills required for supervising and mentoring a broad range of PhD candidates with varying needs. Supervisors and their PhD candidates seem to experience the existing options as effective. The committee would like to suggest extending professionalisation activities to all supervisors. This would help to further standardise supervision practices, so that all PhD candidates can expect the same level of guidance, supervision and mentoring.

A formal structure of representation is in place: candidates are represented through the GSH's PhD council, which also offers a support system when needed. However, there was some ambiguity concerning whether the PhD council represents the full breadth of the PhD community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings and

contacts continued online and the committee was pleased to hear that there are possibilities for contract extension for those PhD candidates who suffered delays due to the pandemic.

The committee identified several opportunities for improvement. A first concern is that a relatively large number of PhD candidates do not complete their research within the course of their contracts. GSH is fully aware of this issue and has already taken steps to improve the situation (e.g., closer scrutiny of project feasibility, introduction of a 'go/no go' decision after the first year of the project and 'six-month review' close to the end of the contract). The committee nonetheless believes that further consideration of this issue is necessary to help safeguard both the quality of PhD research and the PhD candidates' work-life balance and general wellbeing. A suggestion is to expand the number of contact moments with (a representative of) the GSH between the go/no go moment and the 'six-month review' to check in with PhD candidates without there being formal consequences.

Another important issue that came up in the conversations with staff is that different categories of PhD candidates work under divergent conditions, apparently causing them to have rather different experiences at ICOG. Although supervision and training agreements are similar for all, material differences appear to be substantial. The monthly remuneration of scholarship PhD candidates (especially those funded by foreign scholarship providers) is (much) lower than that of salaried PhD candidates. Moreover, salaried PhD candidates enjoy better employment conditions and are entitled to social benefits. In contrast to most scholarship PhD candidates, they also gain teaching experience during their PhD project, which gives them an evident career advantage.

The committee is convinced that such differences are undesirable, making further mitigation necessary. Fostering a vibrant, supportive environment in which young scholars learn to be independent researchers requires paying attention to fairness, both for ethical reasons and because an equitable PhD community will be a strong,

mutually respectful one. This may facilitate retention and improved completion rates as well. The committee therefore strongly encourages ICOG and the GSH to mitigate material and other differences between different types of PhD candidates wherever possible. Additionally, it suggests that ICOG and the GSH clearly communicate (e.g., as part of an introductory event) the differences between various types of PhD trajectories, as well as what the particular PhD candidate can expect in terms of material resources (e.g., parental leave) and rights (e.g., assistance with housing). With respect to the efforts to create 'joined' types of PhD trajectories (interfaculty PhD candidates, 'sandwich' PhD candidates), the committee advises that care is taken to streamline these arrangements and balance the requirements of the different faculties/institutions involved.

Finally, it was the committee's impression that the Faculty of Arts is a good host to the three national research schools based in Groningen (OIKOS, OSL, RMeS). Agreements made between DLG and LOGOS to compensate locally employed staff for hours spent on teaching at the national research level seem to be honoured at the UG Faculty of Arts. The committee would be in favour of facilitating further information relay between the schools. By sharing best practices with respect to the curriculum offered and activities developed to strengthen their academic network (e.g., joint grant applications), the schools should benefit even more from each other's proximity and respective expertise.

## Quality

In the reporting period, ICOG's strategic aims have been firmly directed at further enhancing research quality, stimulating collaboration and boosting external funding capture. As the self-evaluation report puts it, 'the first responsibility of ICOG is to work towards excellent research in all its research centres'.

*Contribution to scientific body of knowledge*  
ICOG is clearly an active and robust scholarly community which makes impressive, substantive contributions to a wide range of research areas both nationally and globally. Researchers at ICOG

regularly publish in top-ranked international publishing venues. They engage in both national and global collaborative projects across disciplines and within the individual fields included in ICOG. While it is difficult to assess the scope of ICOG's contribution as a whole from the self-evaluation report and the type of data provided, the conversations held with ICOG researchers attested to a staff committed to academic excellence and societal relevance in its research.

For future reference, however, the committee recommends that ICOG gives further consideration to the choice of the quality indicators in its self-evaluation report. For example, it mentions citations, yet these are not evidenced in the report or its appendices. It is also difficult to ascertain precisely what is meant by 'excellent' or 'cutting-edge' research. Nonetheless, the committee was suitably impressed with examples given in the self-evaluation report, including the nature and scope of projects behind the outputs being generated.

#### *Academic reputation and leadership*

Several markers of external esteem are identified in the self-evaluation report. ICOG's leadership status varies from one subject area to the next, as would be expected, with evidential indicators including prizes, grant capture, membership of research councils and committees at national and international levels and, lastly, guest researchers and professorships by special appointment.

#### *Collaborations*

ICOG researchers engage in exciting and fruitful collaborations among its component research groups and centres. These collaborative efforts are highly appreciated by the staff, and emphasised in the self-evaluation report. During the site visit, any concern that this emphasis on cross-disciplinary collaboration within ICOG came at the expense of other innovative collaborations nationally or globally was waylaid in the conversations with the researchers.

Notable examples of collaboration include the REGROUP project (*Rebuilding governance and resilience out of the pandemic*), which is a swift academic response to the way Covid-19 was

handled by governments and other institutions. This DemCP-led project was awarded a Horizon Europe RIA grant. The committee was similarly impressed by the project on digital literacy (*Informed Citizenship for All. Digital Literacy as Prerequisite for an Inclusive Society*) which was initiated by CMJS and resulted in the Digital Literacy Coalition. This is an alliance consisting of twenty partners from education and research, administration, health care, business and the cultural sector who joined forces to stimulate the level of digital literacy in all societal groups. During the site visit, the committee further learned about the faculty wide initiative to set up 'collaboratoria' as part of the faculty's strategic plan for 2021-2026. These physical spaces offer welcome opportunities to stimulate interaction and exchange among (ICOG) researchers.

#### *Open Science*

The committee noted a clear commitment to open science, such as through open access publications. The UG and the faculty have developed an open-access policy by which researchers are encouraged to publish in high-quality open-access journals. While the stated goal of 80% open access publications by 2020 was not met, ICOG has increased the share of open access publications from 34% in 2016 to 63% in 2021. The University Library covers the costs of most open access journals based on agreements between the UNL and publishers, and stimulates Green Open Access. Furthermore, many projects have resulted in databases which enable the sharing of data in an accessible and open way.

#### *Productivity strategy*

In its self-evaluation report, ICOG clearly emphasises the importance of producing internationally peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters, setting as a benchmark two journal articles per year. At the same time, however, it became apparent in discussions with management and researchers during the site visit that ICOG also aims to create space for 'slow thinking.' The latter may lead to the publication of authored books or monographs, as well as encouraging a range of other research outputs that arise out of collaborations with societal stakeholders. Possible

tensions between these temporal rhythms warrant further consideration.

Similarly, the self-evaluation report sets out concrete ways to stimulate the productivity of researchers in ICOG, including by setting up individual publication and funding plans with a scope of 3-5 years in dialogue with staff. However, such are the teaching and administration pressures on actual research time, it is often very difficult to fulfil the commitment to a dedicated 40% research time allocation. The plan to offer sabbaticals on a regular basis is both welcome and may address some of the challenges engendered by these demands and constraints on actual research time. That said, the 3-5 year plan risks contributing to stress levels that could be counterproductive, especially if within this plan, there is an expectation that researchers are expected to regularly apply for external funding. This plan may also invite a certain conservatism in aspiration, prompting staff to play it safe in their formulation of projects.

In the SWOT analysis, uneven grant capture was identified as a threat. Over the final years of the reporting period, the contribution of research grants to ICOG's annual budget decreased to 8% in 2021, with 73% of annual income derived from direct funding. The interviews during the site visit indicated that there is pressure to apply for funding that may hinder the careful development of strategic research grant proposals for individual researchers, research groups and ICOG as a whole. Junior to intermediate staff all appear to be (increasingly) scrambling for the same, limited external resources, and interviewees signalled the need for more effective coordination in the application for grants. This might entail aligning colleagues' applications in sequence over time, for example, so as to limit direct competition with one another. A more strategic approach to grant application is something that the committee would fully support.

While the committee applauds ICOG for formally acknowledging the effort involved in applying for grants (e.g., by counting applications that receive good ratings as output), this could be taken one step further by also offering seed money for those

grant proposals requiring further refinement or pilot testing.

## **Societal relevance**

### *Impact strategy and goals*

In the self-evaluation report it is stated that producing excellent academic research generating both academic and societal impact is central to ICOG's mission. Raising awareness amongst researchers of the importance of contributing to society is identified as an important strategic goal. This is closely connected to ICOG's strategy for promoting Open Science, which centres on widely disseminating research results and involving stakeholders in projects from an early stage onwards.

While these stated intentions are highly commendable, the committee believes that the guiding strategy and corresponding objectives could be made more specific and concrete. It encourages ICOG to further elucidate how it aims to foster collaborative research practices that include societal partners and stakeholders.

Furthermore, it was not entirely clear what success looks like to ICOG in this regard: that is, precisely what it is that the institute and its researchers are aiming to achieve by contributing to policy-making, developing products for society or by contributing to public debate. How will such successes and their societal impact be assessed? In the committee's opinion, it would be beneficial for ICOG to devote further thought to developing mechanisms for measuring success, qualitatively and/or quantitatively. Moreover, the feedback loop, for example from researcher to their fellow citizens, should be closed so that results from one project can inform the design of successive projects.

### *Scale and relevance of contributions and partnerships*

The committee is impressed with what ICOG researchers achieve in terms of contributions to society, both in the region and elsewhere. The documentation provided numerous examples of books, source publications, catalogues, websites, films, exhibitions and lectures aimed at



professional and general audiences. Often it is the case that particular outputs have been made possible by the involvement of societal partners.

ICOG considers projects with societal partners and contract funding (which amounted to 19% of the annual budget in 2021) as major quality indicators for its societal relevance. Increasingly, ICOG researchers are aware of opportunities for bringing in external stakeholders and associated funding, and come up with projects of both academic value and high societal relevance. Interviews confirmed that there is no lack of enthusiasm amongst scholars and stakeholders involved in such projects, including those with the Athenaeum Bibliotheek Deventer, the Pre-University Academy, the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Biblionet, and the Grand Theatre Groningen. Moreover, the committee notes that all these projects have intrinsic societal relevance and the potential for making a profound impact.

For example, in a collaboration with Hanze University of Applied Sciences, the Grasp platform supports an artistic PhD project that links the biodiversity issue of decreasing insect populations to the visual arts. This project explores the highly interesting question of how artists relate to ecology and ecocriticism and what can be learned from such synergies. Another interesting example was given by the Pre-University Academy, which proved to be instrumental in showing future students how academic evidence is gathered and interpreted to produce critical analyses of information.

The committee wishes to encourage increasing the degree of co-creation within projects with societal stakeholders. On the basis of the documentation and interviews, it seems that projects and activities often come across as somewhat unidirectional, with societal stakeholders mostly being involved to contribute to the specific purposes of ICOG researchers, and not the other way around. The committee recommends (wherever possible) involving societal stakeholders from the start and making their specific questions and interests as prominent in project design as those of the researchers involved.

On a related note, the committee learned from its conversations with stakeholders that ICOG's website is currently the main tool for inviting societal parties to proactively initiate contacts with ICOG researchers. The committee would like ICOG to consider the scope for additional spaces and mechanisms to further identify and extend opportunities for engagement.

A further observation is that current activities seem mostly related to specific projects centred in and on the Groningen region. Although existing networks are solid and substantial, more might be done to expand the scope of their purview. Moreover, in some cases these networks are dependent on one person, such as a particular centre director or chair group holder. This person-centred approach might pose a risk in terms of sustainability.

A good next step would be for ICOG to conceive a joint narrative for the areas in which it would like to make an impact, perhaps also identifying opportunities for a joint approach across chair groups and centres. This would help to further elevate incidental and/or personal relations with stakeholders to the level of structural, long-term partnerships. As was suggested by societal partners, an advisory board composed of stakeholders could be a useful instrument in this respect, especially one operating at a strategic level. In this capacity, it could usefully advise on the aims and priorities for collaboration and co-creation projects.

#### *Outreach*

Participation in public debates and policymaking is a particular aspect of societal impact. Here, the committee was pleased to learn that staff members are well supported by safety measures, which is particularly important since engaging in (social) media often means encountering criticism or enduring *ad hominem* attacks. The committee compliments ICOG for embracing a national initiative of UNL, KNAW and NWO ('*Wetenschapsveilig*'), which includes a point of contact for reporting threats. The faculty furthermore appointed a science communication officer, who supports scholars in safe science communication.

The committee would like to specifically encourage PhD candidates and early-career scholars to develop outreach activities that go hand in hand with their projects and planning from an early stage. It would be very helpful if ICOG could back this up with bespoke training activities and support structures.

## **Viability**

To assess ICOG's viability, the committee has studied its SWOT analysis and strategy for the future in relation to the results that were achieved in the previous period. It observed that many positive initiatives were taken after the last research evaluation. The committee particularly commends ICOG for successfully renewing its governance structure, with distributed leadership implemented, and for stimulating collaboration between research centres, disciplines and research institutes within the humanities and beyond. Its committed, highly motivated staff may be ICOG's biggest strength. Despite being faced with challenges in terms of workload and career perspectives, staff have continued to produce high quality research output. As a result, ICOG remains a highly vital research institute.

### *Suitability of mission and strategic goals*

A central objective at the core of ICOG's proclaimed mission is the provision of robust responses to fundamental challenges in the interdisciplinary study of culture. In its structural embeddedness within UG and the Faculty of Arts, as well as in its internal set-up and organisation, ICOG has already cultivated an effective, progressive ethos. Its research centres have rightly sought to play leading roles in shaping the current and future direction of humanities research within their chosen foci. Strategic aims have placed due emphasis on encouraging collaborative research across established fields and disciplines, both within ICOG and at the interfaculty level.

Specific projects detailed in the report, like those presented during the site visit, vividly and convincingly demonstrated substantive research potential and quality in terms of outputs and grant attraction, as well as impact and resonance within the scientific community. The interdisciplinary, collaborative research fostered and supported at

the institute opens up possibilities for 'blue sky' thinking, encouraging innovation and experimentation in partnership with a host of partners and stakeholders. As mentioned, the latter could be further expanded and improved by devising a more emphatically co-creative approach to societal impact. This would especially entail that potential stakeholders are involved from an early stage on.

### *Resources*

Many of the challenges that ICOG will need to address in the coming period have to do with resources. For instance: the committee duly recognises that collaborative approaches can produce energising effects on the development of 'cutting-edge' projects (with particular benefits for early career researchers and PhD candidates). Nonetheless, the workload in supervision and coordination, as well as administrative complexity in a highly decentralised structure of autonomous centres, places a heavy burden on the research and teaching staff involved in ICOG. The committee heard first-hand experiences of how capacities can be overstretched in order to maintain the high standards and expectations of the centre's general mission and strategic objectives - often without adequate compensation in terms of time being offered. In order to maximise its potential beyond research outputs and PhD completion rates, ICOG needs to consult widely about how best to address workload issues. Some measures (e.g., sabbaticals) are already in the purview of the faculty, but the committee believes more needs to be done to diversify options open to staff to rebalance workloads.

The site visit also indicated that ICOG lacks a clear plan for lessening the burden that participation in externally funded projects places on researchers in terms of administration and coordination (mentioned as 'threats' in the SWOT analysis). The funding officer at the faculty level is considered helpful, but there is just one person, which does not seem sufficient given the goals of ICOG. Furthermore, the current top-down chair group structure relies upon a small number of senior staff to operate, placing upon their shoulders highly pressurised leadership responsibilities. In addition to having to bear such intense burdens, they must

cope with the corresponding administrative impact on their own personal productivity as researchers. Meanwhile, junior and mid-career researchers face challenges in taking next career steps.

## Conclusion and recommendations

To close, the committee reaffirms its confidence in ICOG, recognising the overarching commitment to excellence informing what is a truly impressive range of initiatives and activities. There is every indication an international profile is rapidly being consolidated, one evidenced by the remarkable achievements secured to date in advancing the study of culture in and across interwoven disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts. The members of staff the committee met and interviewed were enthusiastic about their engagement, excited by the prospect of developing research and teaching interests, and alert to their responsibilities to one another, their students, and wider society.

In continuing to build an open and inclusive academic culture, principles of fairness and equity invite a careful consideration of how current policies are being operationalised, and how they may benefit from recalibration in future. Amongst the examples illuminated above, the committee draws particular attention to three concerns: 1) the need to redouble efforts to further improve diversity (class, gender, ethnicity, and so forth) for both staff and student recruitment and progression profiles; 2) the need to reassess the relationship between teaching-only staff and staff with combined teaching and research roles with an eye to engagement and professional development; and 3) the need to attend to variations in the material support and resources (including for career preparation within and outside academia) for PhD candidates with different contractual arrangements.

The committee also encourages a re-examination of institutional assumptions about the relative work-life balance prefigured in its policy norms, standards and expectations. Many staff appear to be working under considerable pressure, some struggling to meet agreed publishing and grant capture targets within set timeframes (typically 3-

5-year plans). Further coaching and mentoring support would be beneficial, but there is good reason to revisit workload calculations (and relative flexibility in their adaptation) and, in more structural terms, chair group centred oversight and decision-making. Listening to first-hand accounts, it became apparent to the committee that the implementation of policy is sometimes experienced by individuals in ways that risk feeling contrary to their well-being and resilience. The introduction of sabbaticals is a welcome step, with several staff expressing the hope further, related measures will follow in due course.

Lastly, the committee acknowledges the efforts underway to identify and develop opportunities for engagement between staff and PhD candidates, on the one hand, and external stakeholders, on the other. Innovative examples of good practice impressed members of the committee, who also heard directly from stakeholders prepared to share their experience of interactions, as well as suggestions regarding how synergies can be further enhanced to mutual advantage. Important in this respect was ensuring open dialogue in forging collaborations, with stakeholders treated as equal partners, and as such afforded sufficient scope to negotiate engagement priorities, shared investment in generating outcomes, and agreed measures of impact and influence. ICOG is particularly well-placed to make the most of such opportunities, with considerable benefits to be gained for enhancing the quality of impact-driven research and teaching, possibilities for professional development (for staff and PhD candidates), and extending the university's civic mission, not least to tackle social inequalities.

In aiming to assist with strategic planning consistent with ICOG's upward trajectory, the committee offers the following specific recommendations for consideration:

- In response to signals that chair groups each have their own specific academic culture and working methods, the committee advises to make the evaluation mechanisms of chair groups more explicit and transparent. To avoid arbitrariness, it would be a good idea to

- have inter-chair agreements about standard procedures, minimum requirements, etc.
- The committee identified some tension between ICOG's strategy to firmly focus on research excellence in HR policies, and the principles underlying the national programme for recognising and rewarding not just research, but also teaching, management and outreach skills. The faculty and ICOG are urged to further refine and implement such principles.
  - In its current activities with respect to diversity and inclusion, the Faculty of Arts seems to mainly interpret diversity in the (narrow) sense of nationality and gender. While good progress is being made in the staffing profile, the committee encourages the faculty to accelerate policy making.
  - The committee encourages ICOG to commit itself to strengthening the synergy between teaching-only staff and staff with combined teaching and research appointments. Vital here is an open and inclusive academic culture
  - Concerning grant applications, the committee suggests implementing a higher degree of strategic planning for ICOG's chair groups, subject foci, and individual staff members. Seed money could be made available for staff to further develop promising proposals.
  - While existing support structures are of high quality, they will have to be scaled up to better ensure researchers have a reasonable amount of actual research time. The committee particularly advocates for more assisted support for researchers in the management of grants (applications and administration) and collaborations.
  - Now that steps have been taken to speed up the progress of PhD candidates, the committee considers it highly important that ICOG and GSH closely monitors whether these measures achieve their ambitions, without affecting the work-life balance or personal wellbeing of PhD candidates. If necessary, additional measures should be considered.
- The committee considers it highly important that PhD candidates be placed on an equitable basis with one another. Currently, material conditions vary within ICOG and GSH, with implications for gaining experience, support and career development. ICOG and GSH are strongly urged to play a mitigating role. Now that the UG's experiment with scholarship PhD candidates has come to an end, the faculty should also consider developing strategies for securing sufficient positions and options for PhD financing in coming years, beyond the (limited) option of interfaculty or 'sandwich' projects.
  - The committee recommends that ICOG further considers the quality indicators chosen in its self-evaluation report. It would also be useful to specify what is meant by qualifications such as 'excellent' or 'cutting-edge' research. Similarly, the value of research-led teaching can be better reflected in such indicators.
  - ICOG's strategy, objectives and monitoring mechanisms with respect to societal relevance, particularly those involving external stakeholders in research projects, should be made more specific and concrete. The committee encourages ICOG to think more strategically about the type of projects it would like to aim for, thus building a structural and sustainable network of partnerships.
  - Finally, the committee encourages ICOG to revisit its policies on ensuring a reasonable work-life balance for all staff members. Good practices for personal well-being introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic need to be maintained and, where appropriate, further extended. More can be done to support career and professional development, both in terms of coaching and mentorship, as well as imaginative uses of resources to inspire creative, experimental thinking beyond traditional boundaries.

# Appendices

# 1. Biographies of committee members

**Stuart Allan (chair)** is professor of Journalism and Communication in the School of Journalism, Media and Culture at Cardiff University, UK. He was Head of School from 2015-2021, and has served in a range of other university roles. He is currently the research lead on an AHRC-funded workstrand examining public service broadcasting. Stuart has authored and edited numerous books, the most recent of which is the second edition of *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism* (Routledge, 2023). His research has also appeared in a wide range of peer-reviewed journal articles and contributions to edited collections, and has been translated into several languages. Research grants have been awarded from several national research councils. He was the editor of the 'Issues in Cultural and Media Studies' book series for Open University Press, with 40+ books published, and an area editor for the *International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Wiley-Blackwell). He co-founded the journal *Journalism Education*, and currently serves on the editorial boards of several leading peer-reviewed journals. Ongoing writing projects include a co-authored book about news and visibility for Oxford University Press, as well as an alternative history of war photography for Routledge. Stuart has been a visiting professor at several universities around the world, including his current visiting role as Distinguished Professor at the Communication University of China in Beijing.

**Iris Denis** is PhD candidate in medieval history at Radboud University Nijmegen (the Netherlands), specialising in Latin literature, medieval reception and manuscript studies. She completed a bachelor's degree in Classics and an RMA in Literary studies at Radboud University Nijmegen, and worked as a research assistant at the same university before starting her PhD in 2020. Her research, conducted as part of the ERC-funded project PASSIM (Patristic Sermons in the Middle Ages), explores the transmission and reception of pseudo-epigraphic patristic sermons in early medieval manuscripts.

**Sandra Kisters** has been head of Collections and research at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen since 2015. Recently, her position was changed into Director of Collections and research, with a stronger focus on research. Next to the realisation of Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, Kisters in the past few years has focussed on digital online collection catalogues including those on surrealism, Piranesi and Italian drawings. Previously, Kisters taught art history at respectively VU University Amsterdam, Radboud University Nijmegen and Utrecht University. Her dissertation and subsequent publication *The Lure of the Biographical. On the (Self-)Representation of Modern Artists* received the AICA Award in 2018 and the Karel van Mander prize in 2020. Currently, Kisters is stimulating research into post-colonialism and the importance of women collectors within the context of the museum's collection.

**Peter Schneck** is professor and Chair of American Literature and Culture at Osnabrück University, and currently the director of the Institute for English and American Studies. After studying American Studies, Media and Communication Studies at the Free University Berlin and Yale University, he received his Ph.D. at the FU Berlin. Between 1997 and 2006 he taught at the Amerika-Institut / LMU Munich where he concluded his postdoctoral thesis (Habilitation). Publications include *The U.S. and the Questions of Rights* (Heidelberg 2020; co-ed); *Rhetoric and Evidence: Legal Conflict and Literary Representation in American Culture* (Berlin, 2011); as well as articles on cognitive poetics, literature and visual art, media history, cultural studies, and law and literature. Since 2019, he has been leading a research group at Osnabrück University on the formation of literary property within the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 1385) "Law and Literature," hosted by the WWU Münster and funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Since 2016 he has been a member of the German Research Foundation's national review board for literary studies.

**Maria Stern** holds a BA from Cornell University (USA) and a PhD from the University of Gothenburg (Sweden), where she is professor in Peace and Development Studies, with a focus on International Relations. Maria's academic work focuses on the question of violence in relation to security, warring, militarism, development, peace, identity and belonging, coloniality, gender, and sex. In her work she employs a feminist lens that seeks to recognize intersecting relations of power, and that is attuned to the politics of methodology. She has published books, edited volumes, and academic articles in a variety of high-ranking international and peer-reviewed journals and publishing houses. She received the 'best book' award (2013-2015) and the 'Distinguished Scholar' award (2021) from the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section of the International Studies Association. She served as editor/associate editor at *Security Dialogue* for many years, and as a member of the Research Board at the Swedish International Development

Cooperation Agency. She currently sits on the board of several high ranking international and peer-reviewed academic journals, and international and Swedish research consortia.

**Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz** is associate professor of medieval history at the University of Amsterdam. Previously she engaged in research, teaching and education at Leiden University, University of Groningen, University of Oslo/ Centre for Viking and Nordic Medieval Studies, École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris) and Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań). Her research interests include diverse approaches to conflict in historical and social sciences; trust; the Hanse; premodern northern Europe; premodern pragmatic literacy; and premodern food history.

## 2. Schedule of the site visit

<b>November 15</b>	
18.00 hrs dinner for committee members	
<b>November 16</b>	
9.00 hrs	First meeting committee, preparations
11.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with management ICOG/Faculty <i>on site</i>
12.00 hrs	Lunch
13.30 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with junior researchers ICOG <i>on site</i>
14.30 hrs	Break
15.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with PhD candidates ICOG <i>on site</i>
16.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with management and researchers OIKOS <i>on site</i>
<b>November 17</b>	
9.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with stakeholders ICOG <i>on site</i>
10.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with senior researchers ICOG <i>on site</i>
11.00 hrs	Interactive tour buildings: showcasing interesting projects and facilities
12.30 hrs	Lunch
14.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with PhD candidates OIKOS <i>on site</i>
15.00 hrs	Wrap up ICOG/OIKOS and writing session for committee
<b>November 18</b>	
9.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with management & researchers OSL <i>hybrid</i>
10.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with PhD candidates OSL <i>online</i>
11.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with management & researchers RMeS <i>hybrid</i>
12.00 hrs	Lunch
13.00 hrs (45 min)	Meeting with PhD candidates RMeS <i>online</i>
14.00 hrs	Additional requests or meetings, wrap up RMeS/OSL
16.00 hrs	Presentation of findings by committee and drinks