

Summary UMCG- concern evaluation, including special aspects

General - With “Healthy Ageing (or More Healthy Years)” UMCG has chosen an important overarching research theme, which ties together the research of its five research Institutes. The three research pillars are linked to UMCG’s strategic priorities.

The committee believes that, taken together, the pillars provide the basis for a continuum of preclinical, population, and clinical work. Moreover, the planned advancement in data science/AI/machine learning in the form of DASH serves all research pillars.

Research Quality - The three research pillars build on the UMCG’s clinical strengths, are appropriately linked to the UMCG’s strategic priorities and driven by the ambition to promote societal relevance. In particular, the collaboration of UMCG with FSE (e.g. between GUIDE and GRIP), or in the context of HTRIC, is of great added value as are the cohorts and data research.

- Develop the full potential for genuine interdisciplinary research, through adjusting or reforming existing organizational mechanisms.
- Ensure good management and access to technologies and central services.
- Include and embed diversity as a driver to promote better problem-solving and decision-making in research.

Societal relevance - The UMCG’s mission, vision and strategy are clearly societally relevant and geared towards societal impact. The Outreach and Societal Impact Support (OASIS) Project, now the Impact team, provides expert support. The network of regional partners, involvement in the Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health (AJSPH), and priority given to stakeholder involvement all generate important impact. Although applied research is carried out, the number of patents and spinoffs is relatively low.

- Develop a clear vision for societal impact that can be operationalized, and formalize knowledge exchange, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- Fuel the talent pipeline for impact awareness by developing training and career development for PhD students and ECRs.
- Continue reforming the promotion system so that societal impact is rewarded.

Viability - UMCG’s overarching theme of Healthy Ageing and the research foci established in 2018 are sustainable and relevant for the near future, while the vision on preclinical and clinical research collaboration is persuasive and valuable. Research support at all levels is of very high quality and a great asset to the faculty - the research professionals that develop it are of an exceptionally high standard and should be nurtured. At the same time, the potential for genuine interdisciplinary research remains underdeveloped and should be improved through organizational mechanisms.

- Simplify the organization (regarding both structures and procedures) and work towards a functional integration of central services so that they are more visible.
- Develop central policies to fully integrate clinicians in the research environment.
- Develop a comprehensive policy for obtaining collaborative and personal grants.
- Organize a long-term risk analysis of the COVID pandemic.

Special aspects - The committee welcomes the diversification of promotion profiles (e.g. the Talent Track and the Regular Academic Track) and of research impact and career profiles (Research, Education, Health Care and Society & Valorization). The dedicated talent track for physician-scientists is impressive and provides a crucial continuum from preclinical research to application. The GSMS has developed a well-functioning system to support and train PhD students, however additional mechanisms should be installed to decrease their work-stress.

- In the domain of PhD training and support, further empowering the Graduate School, improving supervision via formal, mandatory training, improving the work environment for PhD students through mentorship, installing supervisory team meetings and communicating conflict-resolution procedures more clearly are recommended..
- In the domain of other special aspects, informing researchers on public-private partnerships and developing citizen science initiatives, structurally ensuring academic integrity (e.g. mandatory training, documentation and communication of cases, establishing a network of trust persons), and redefining and supporting diversity in more broad terms are advised.