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1. Introduction

The quality of academic research in the Netherlands is reviewed every three years, either in an external comparative review or an internal mid-term review. A national review committee presented its report on the comparative review of all Dutch faculties of law for the period 2002-2008 in 2010. A mid-term review for the period 2009-2011 consequently became due in 2012.

Despite the formal emphasis on the internal review, the Faculty Board of the VU University of Amsterdam's Faculty of Law decided to ask external experts to review the quality of the Faculty's research and seek their advice on the future direction of this research.

Review by Koers Committee in 2009

In 2009 the Koers committee assessed the quality of research conducted by university law faculties in the Netherlands in the years 2003 to 2009. The research conducted by the VU University of Amsterdam during this report was also included in this committee's report.

The Koers committee's report raised some concerns about the degree of cohesion in the university's research programmes in the form in which they existed at that time. It was positive about the recent appointments of young senior staff as these appointments offered the prospect of improvements, providing these younger staff were not over-burdened.

Assignment

The Board of the Faculty of Law established a committee for the 2009-2011 mid-term review in July 2012.

This committee was asked to assess the Faculty as a whole and also the separate research programmes, specifically the *Boundaries of Law* programme, which was established in 2010 by Prof. Wouter Werner to replace the *Principles of Law in an International Context* programme.

Mid-term review committee

The committee consisted of nine members:

Prof. J.E. Goldschmidt, chair, Professor in Human Rights Law, Utrecht University, Netherlands

Prof. W.H. van Boom, Professor of Private Law, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands and Professor of Law, Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

Prof. P.J.J. van Buuren, State Councillor, Judge in the Administrative Law Division, Honorary Professor of Administrative Law, University of Utrecht

Prof. K. Hailbronner, Emeritus Professor of Public International Law and European Law, University of Constance, Germany

Prof. P. de Hert, Professor, Free University of Brussels (VUB), Belgium

J. de Hullu, Justice, Supreme Court, Criminal Division, The Hague

Prof. G. Noll, Chair of International Law, Faculty of Law, Lund University, Sweden

Prof. P. Ponsaers, Professor Emeritus in Criminology and Sociology of Law, Ghent University, Belgium

Prof. P. Zumbansen, Canada Research Chair in Transnational Economic Governance and Legal Theory, York University - Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto, Canada

The committee was assisted by the secretary, J.M. van der Schuijt.

2. Working procedures

Framework

The committee decided from the start to follow the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 ('SEP'). This protocol is used for assessing research in the Netherlands and was developed by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in conjunction with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).¹

The SEP requires the Faculty to present a self-assessment report and a set of quantitative information on input and output. The assessment committee paid a site visit to the institute after receiving the self-assessment and the other information required. During the visit the committee met the relevant parties in the research, including the institute's management, the research leaders, some tenured and non-tenured staff and a selection of PhD students. The SEP also provides guidelines for the assessment committee's report and the criteria to be applied.

Intersections report

In early September 2012 the VU University's Faculty of Law published its own mid-term assessment of its research in the report entitled *Intersections*. This included a general section on research at the Faculty of Law, the policy and strategy for the forthcoming period and a SWOT analysis, followed by a similar description of the four individual research programmes. The required data on financing, input and publication, PhD results, societal and academic relevance and post-academic education were included in the annexes, together with a list of academic and professional publications. Three key publications were selected for each programme.

This *Intersections* report and the key publications constituted the basis for the committee's first round of written assessments.

Review procedure

All the committee members reviewed the Faculty as a whole and the programme (including the key publications) they were assigned to as an expert. They also reviewed another programme as a more distant reviewer on the basis of feedback forms derived from the SEP. In this way the committee sought to improve the consistency of the assessments and add value to the deliberations. The reviews were prepared by each member on feedback forms structured in accordance with the SEP.²

² See annexes 1 and 2.

The chair and four committee members visited the university for deliberations and a site visit. These members also assessed the quality of the Faculty as a whole. They interviewed the Faculty Board, the programme managers, seven PhD students and six researchers.

SEP Protocol

After the site visit the committee concluded that the SEP structure was not always wholly appropriate for obtaining an accurate impression. In particular, the emphasis on scores and specific aspects could hinder a realistic assessment, while some criteria were also beyond the institution's influence (e.g. where resources are highly dependent on university and national budgets). Where relevant, therefore the committee presented its views in a different format.

The committee found it particularly difficult to apply the criteria to give 'scores' for the research and research programmes. As well as the risk of attaching too much weight or relevance to the scores, the more specific criteria distinguished in the SEP are interrelated and overlapping.

The committee decided not to award too detailed scores as it was satisfied that the quality of the research (and research programmes) of the VU University's Faculty of Law was generally excellent and leadership was highly qualified and committed, with only very marginal differences between programmes.

3. Faculty of Law

The assessment of the Faculty of Law's total research was based on the Faculty's own *Intersections* report, information provided by the Faculty Board and interviews with the members of the Board.

The *Intersections* report, which was published in September 2012 and in which the Faculty explained its high ambitions and structured its research more coherently, provided a good basis for the mid-term review. The chosen title reflected the ambitions to go beyond the boundaries between subdisciplines of law and other disciplines and to link the research to other institutions in the Netherlands and abroad.

There are now four research programmes at the Faculty; some of these are a continuation of existing programmes, whereas the *Balancing Public and Private Interests* programme merges two existing programmes and has been subdivided into four subprogrammes.

Two multidisciplinary national research institutes are based at the Faculty, and these provide a structure for broader cooperation. Cooperation with legal practice is provided for through the ZIFO Institute for Financial and Commercial Law, in which the Faculty works with lawyers from nearby law firms.

The Faculty has been relatively successful in obtaining external funding, particularly 'second stream' funding from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

In its own SWOT analysis the Faculty indicated low visibility and insufficiently explicit valorisation, together with the reduction in the budget from the national level and research support at a university level, as major weaknesses and threats.

Opportunities were identified in the reallocation of research time to encourage excellent researchers, in cooperation between research institutes and in increasing valorisation through cooperation with and the development of research Master's programmes.

The interview with the Faculty Board provided the committee with additional information on the organisation and management of research, the monitoring of PhD progress, the allocation of research time and the support given to grant applications. The relatively complex relationship between research programmes, institutes and the Faculty was also discussed.

Similar questions were discussed with the programme managers, as well as various more specific questions relating to the specific programmes. The interviews with PhD students focused on their supervision, links with the programme, employment opportunities and the teaching load. Similar issues were also discussed in the interviews with selected researchers.

General impression

The Faculty Board's general policy is a combination of a bottom-up and top-down approach. The Board of Research acts as an advisory board to the Faculty and provides a forum for annual programme reviews and debate on internationalisation and profiling. This approach creates conditions for a creative research climate combined with an awareness of the required output targets.

The committee was impressed in its meetings with Faculty members by the openness displayed by Faculty members, researchers and PhD students in talking about their work and their ideas for the Faculty's future development. It gained the impression that the open atmosphere and high levels of motivation within the Faculty and the structures established generally provided very good conditions for creative and high-quality, high-profile research.

However, the committee believed there was still room for improvement. In particular, some of the issues previously raised by the Koers committee still needed attention. These included research cohesion, visibility and specifically international visibility, and more particularly the external and international recognition of excellent researchers as representatives of the Faculty.

The committee noted that the programmes were still very broad and general, whereas a strong and more international profile will increasingly depend on programme specialisation and focus.

Moreover, much of the research was attributable to entities other than the programmes themselves, such as centres³ and institutes. The Faculty Board reaffirmed the committee's impression that the 'message' of primary affiliation that researchers communicated depended on the context: sometimes the affiliation with the VU was mentioned, whereas in other cases the centre or institute was mentioned.

Although certain choices appear to have been made, the rationale behind them was not always clear. The Faculty does not participate, for example, in any of the existing national research schools, whereas some programme contents seem to have close links with existing schools (Ius Commune Research School and the School of Human Rights Research). These aspects made it more difficult to demonstrate a clear profile and ensure visibility of the Faculty's unique features.

The committee also noted that most of the external funding had been acquired by individual researchers at a national level. In future, however, international and particularly EU funding will become more important. Wouter Werner's COST Action is an example of a network that can be helpful in this context, but it is certainly not enough to equip the Faculty for the future and benefit from Horizon 2020. A stronger position in the international research funding market requires a different focus. In other words, a focus based on a common policy and specialised support structure, and including a strengthening of international cooperation and networks.

³ Another centre, the VU Centre for International Criminal Justice (CICJ), was recently established.

The committee felt that the challenges ahead may highlight the need for a more directive style from the Faculty Board and Director of Research. Given the threat of decreasing research funding, the Faculty will be forced to play more than merely a coordinating role. While continuing to follow the principles of academic freedom and a creative research climate, it is inevitable that some hard choices will have to be made. Recent steps, such as strengthening the Research Director's role in monitoring the progress of PhD researchers and the investments in HRM, will help support the necessary changes.

Quality

Applying the criteria of the SEP protocol,⁴ the overall assessment of the quality is positive.

As mentioned earlier, the organisation of the research, which is an issue closely related to that of leadership, seems to be a vulnerable aspect. Our impression was that some areas of the Faculty still had a tendency to 'do what we have always done' and allowed individual researchers to pursue established topics in which they had acquired high skills, but which did not necessarily reflect the Faculty's interest in accumulating the skills and limited resources in order to develop a research profile. PhD proposals, for example, seemed to be primarily inspired by the individual interest of albeit excellent candidates rather than by a policy on core research questions. The committee was not always able to identify a coherent idea of research behind the various PhD topics.

Even though 'intersections' is attractive in characterising the crosscutting elements of the joint programmes, the question also arises as to whether it offers sufficiently distinctive potential for the research as a whole. For example, issues of theory and methodology are concentrated in the *Boundaries of Law* programme only. The committee felt that methodological questions should also be integrated into the other programmes as elements of improved cross-programme cooperation, without necessarily giving rise to new institutional structures. The committee's general impression was that the available skills could be more efficiently used if there were more interchange and cooperation between the individual participants on the different programmes. This would also demand more of a leadership role from the Faculty Board (obviously in consultation with the Board of Research).

The quality of leadership is high, but the acceptance of a leadership *role* is crucial for the future. The committee found there to be mutual trust between the researchers and the programme managers and, more generally, a good atmosphere. These aspects create good conditions for responsive yet more determined management, which should obviously not become a straightjacket. There needs to be scope for individual initiative, but this needs to be WITHIN the general direction of the programmes.

⁴ See also the remark on the SEP scores above.

Productivity

Productivity is good, certainly in terms of quality. The introduction of quantitative standards has helped achieve stable output. The committee added that the quality of the key publications was generally very good.

Productivity in terms of PhD progress was found to be lower, even though increasing numbers of PhD students were completing their theses within the allotted time. Here, too, the committee recommended a more strategic approach by deciding where to publish, how to increase output in English, and how to increase the visibility of high-end PhD research.

Relevance

In general the committee was very positive about the relevance of the research as a whole, both societal and academic. Societal relevance was particularly evident and was also reflected in the fact that many Faculty members are on advisory boards, committees and so on.

Vitality and Feasibility

The Faculty has shown considerable vitality in restructuring its research, with various new programmes having been set up. The committee saw the tenure track system, whereby researchers with quantified output are rewarded, as positive.

In view of the uncertain financial outlook, however, it is even more crucial to make choices. In this respect the report and the policy of the Faculty remain somewhat vague.

Development of a Research Master will be a necessary condition for applying for PhD funding at a national level in the future. External funding at an international level, however, requires more: a solid and visible research track record of successful cooperation and high-profile projects. Maintaining such an international research profile will demand a clear policy with well-defined research goals.

Overall assessment

	5	4	3	2	1
Quality					
Research	x				
Leadership		x			
Reputation		x			
Organisation			x		
Resources			x		
PhD training		x			
Productivity					
Strategy		x			
Output	x				
Relevance					
Societal relevance	x				
Vitality and Visibility					
Strategy		x			
SWOT analysis		x			
Robustness and stability		x			
Continuity			x		

The Programmes - some general remarks

The average quality of the programmes is comparable. There are no substantive measurable differences between the programmes, but the various programmes obviously have different strengths and weaknesses. These can be summarized as follows.

Balancing Public and Private Interests

Weakness: not enough cohesion in the programme as a whole: more collaborative research is needed.

Strength: high relevance of research.

Boundaries of Law

Weakness: lack of international research projects: COST can provide good start. International cooperation will also offer opportunities to include some of the developing themes in the international debate.

Strength: solid quality of research.

Empirical and normative studies

Weakness: risk of lack of cohesion and fragmentation through the subprogrammes.

Strength: high relevance of research, in particular societal; the academic relevance can be made more substantive through joint research, i.e. research into fundamental questions overlapping the different research lines.

Migration Law

Weakness: The committee saw the fact that this programme depended very much on the two top researchers, and the rather isolated position of the programme, as a threat. The latter aspect may also be a barrier to adopting more innovative approaches. The programme is somewhat too strongly focused on subjects that have already been discussed extensively rather than on new problems and issues of migration control. Such themes can be explored in conjunction with other programmes, such as Boundaries of Law, or Balancing Public and Private Interests. The scope of this programme is also narrower than that of the others, and this makes it more difficult to compare it with programmes covering broader disciplinary fields.

Strength: high quality and visibility of research, high relevance.

4. Balancing Public and Private Interests

Programme managers: Prof. C.E.C. Jansen, Prof. F.J. van Ommeren

General comments

This is the Faculty's largest programme and reflects the same strengths and weaknesses as those applying to the Faculty as a whole. The quality of the researchers and the key publications is high, while the programme leaders have a good academic reputation and are acknowledged as such by participants. On the other hand, however, the struggle for coherence remains visible. The link with the core themes of the programme is not easy to identify in the case of some publications.

The programme has been rearranged into five smaller research programmes under the common denominator. The restructuring into smaller units was seen by the committee as a good way of strengthening coherence and cooperation, but at the same time it also raised the question of the integration of the sub-themes. Whether the restructuring will result in a more coherent programme or simply in five new and more or less independent programmes remains to be seen. Generally speaking, the programme reflects the tensions between the need for more focus and coherence on the one hand and the desire for academic freedom on the other.

A stronger common theoretical and methodological reflection is recommended. The questions to be addressed by the programme concern issues such as effectiveness and balancing. Such questions need indicators and methodological frameworks, and these go beyond the more legal angle currently being taken as the starting point. The committee suggested that senior researchers should produce some key publications on precisely these topics, thus building up a collective source of reference material.

Quality: 4.5

In general the programme's theme is highly interesting and relevant. The quality of the key publications is high. Although key researchers have a solid reputation, stronger cooperation could increase the quality. This demands high leadership qualities and also the willingness of excellent individual researchers to engage with *common* interests to the same extent as with their *individual* interests. In other words, leadership is the result of the reciprocal commitment of the academic directors and also the staff being directed. Our impression is that this aspect is underdeveloped. Maintaining a clear focus demands more than a collection of bright individuals.

Productivity: 4

Productivity is fine, both in qualitative and in quantitative terms. However, there may be a certain imbalance between individual researchers' output. Whereas some researchers seem to focus on high-profile international

publications, others are content to concentrate on practice-oriented outlets. Here, a more focused publication strategy could further enhance the quality. The committee observed a rather diffuse profile of both scientific and professional contributions. The committee also found some inconsistencies in labelling some Dutch publications as refereed or non-refereed (e.g., WPNR was considered both refereed and non-refereed).

The committee also noted that this programme had chosen not to showcase any PhD theses as core publications. Although this was a legitimate decision, programme leaders should consider what they could do to ensure that PhD theses are considered as core publications in the future.

Relevance : 5

Great relevance, both academic and societal, was also seen in the cooperation with legal practice and involvement in post-academic teaching. The scope of relevance is broad, even beyond the subject of the programme itself. One of the key publications (Zijlstra) is a manual, which fills a gap in the subfield of legal science.

Vitality and Feasibility: 4

As mentioned above, the challenge in terms of vitality lies in the cohesion, also given the programme's large number of FTEs. The programme needs to convincingly show that it can be more than the sum of its (very good) individual research and research projects. The SWOT analysis reflected a certain aversion towards programming (threats): "Legal research is assessed by parameters that are not suited to the discipline" and "Academic freedom is curbed by a growing need for measurements and by programming". Although the committee understands the context of this aversion, opportunities for future academic research will have to be developed in the present research environment.

Conclusions and recommendations

General assessment: 4.5

The components of this programme range from good to excellent. However, the configuration of the component parts and focus on particular goals could be further improved on. Although much has been done to improve coherence, such efforts need active support at all levels and may also benefit from some crosscutting projects that transcend the boundaries of the themes so as to improve coherence and sustain the development of a common methodology.

5. Boundaries of Law

Programme manager: Prof. W.G. Werner

General comments

This is a very strong programme, with relevance both beyond its own borders and those of the Netherlands. The international profile can be strengthened through the COST network, which also provides an opportunity for cooperation in international projects. The organisation of PhD schools strengthens both the cohesion and international profile. The group is aware that the interdisciplinary and pluralistic nature can easily turn from an advantage into a weakness.

Quality: 5

The quality of the researchers and the publications is high. Themes and approaches are innovative. Topic approaches are seen as promising. Although the focus on specific issues is positive, it entails the risk that other topics which fall within the broader description will be omitted, such as the role of NGOs and actors in the field of transnational private regulatory governance. More joint productions developed from a common methodology can also strengthen the internal and external visibility.

Productivity: 4.5

High degree of productivity and promising PhD research. The only issue is that the publications are not all in the core of the research area, and still very much reflect the individual specialisations.

Relevance: 5

Highly relevant, both academically and societally. However, the VU is not the only institution engaging in the transnational and interdisciplinary approach, and so must continue to invest in ensuring strong institutional incorporation of this area into its research and also into the teaching programme (the relevance applies not only to this programme, but also to others such as *Migration Law*).

Vitality and Feasibility: 4

Vitality would seem good, taking into account the above remarks and also given that the responses to the Koers report seem to have been adequate. The risks are the broad approach and the fact that international cooperation is mostly European cooperation. This is a too narrow approach, given the scope of the research. The possibility of closer cooperation with institutions or research schools with a more global network could be considered.

Conclusions and recommendations

General assessment: 4.5

This programme is very promising and has high potential, both in its approach and in its subjects. It could also be of relevance to the other programmes and serve as a kind of innovative, agenda-setting centre. This will demand joint efforts.

6. Empirical and Normative Studies

Programme manager: Prof. W. Huisman

General comments

As mentioned by the Koers committee at the time of the previous review, the quality is positive. The cooperation with the NSCR and the Phoolan Devi Institute, both of which have a good reputation, is well recognized and is used to full advantage. The research lines are clearly distinguished, but there could also be more synergy between them. The programme contains three solid research lines: "decision-making in the criminal justice system", "life course and criminal careers" and "organised and organisational crime". In general these different lines have been set up by outstanding researchers performing at a high level. Nevertheless, there could be more internal synergy between these research lines, which largely seem loose lines within a single programme. The programme leader seems eager to identify new topics.

Quality: 4.5

High quality, which is also reflected in the obtaining of research funds. Excellent publications relating to the core of the programme, also in highly ranked refereed journals and book chapters, could help increase the visibility of this quality. The strategy of encouraging joint publications could increase progress in the core areas.

Productivity 4.5

High productivity.

Relevance: 5

High societal relevance is shown by the results being discussed in parliament and the collaboration with stakeholders in structuring research questions. Academic relevance is clear, but could be more 'substantive'.

Vitality and Feasibility: 4

Good, but some risk factors. Possible fragmentation leading to three subprogrammes is a real risk. The strategy for the future is strongly linked to the development of existing themes. It is not clear whether this is the most productive direction. Some new themes, to be identified by the programme participants, could be added to the existing programmes, and it appears that this is also the intention. Another aspect to address is the very limited number of international PhD projects, while the criminology teaching load is lastly such that it could easily absorb all the research time.

Conclusions and recommendations

General assessment: 4.5

The SWOT analysis reflects the overall position of the programme. The fact that the weaknesses have been identified is positive, and there would seem to be sufficient opportunities to overcome these weaknesses. The common methodology may also be helpful in overcoming the threats. A more proactive and explicit PhD policy could be helpful.

7. Migration Law

Programme manager: Prof. T.P. Spijkerboer

General comments

This programme and its participants have a very solid position, both nationally and internationally, as the Koers committee also mentioned. This is also the result of the senior researchers' reputation. This strong position also demands maintenance. By way of example, aspects of sovereignty in European and International Law also require attention, whereas some research projects suggested in the *Intersections* report relate to subjects in which there is already a high degree of specialisation and expertise. The research topics specified have been explored in recent years and are in the mainstream of migration law research in Europe.

Research topics in which the programme has invested should, however, be expanded and developed in order to take account of new issues in international migration management (e.g. interrelationship of economic migration movements, international regimes of migration management, and the control or inability to control migration). This could be done in cooperation with the other programmes, specifically *Boundaries of Law* or *Balancing Public and Private Interests*. The current focus of the programme is also somewhat too strongly related to subjects that have already been researched extensively rather than to new problems and issues of migration control, particularly in connection with other programmes. The programme should develop a stronger research profile over the coming years. This should include cooperation and interchange with the other programmes and define the programme's proposed place in the European migration law research environment, as well as its potential participation in EU research programmes on migration and refugee law.

Quality: 4.5

Solid level of quality, in particular from senior researchers, but also good PhD research. There is little information on how PhD training is carried out. Is there, for example, any form of participation in joint programmes of a similar nature (such as human rights, migration and asylum)? Quality would be increased by expanding the theoretical and empirical range, which could also be done in closer cooperation with other programmes, specifically *Boundaries of Law*.

Productivity: 4.5

Productivity is high despite the decrease in the number of scientific publications per FTE. There seems, however, to be a certain restriction in the choice of journals for publications as journals operating from a Dutch base are overrepresented. A publication strategy focusing on more prestigious journals should be considered. This will also demand investments in time. Keeping a

balance between scientific and professional publications, such as annotations, will be a challenge.

Relevance: 5

The number of annotations is only one indication of societal relevance. The output is frequently used in policy and legal practice. The programme's productivity in training practitioners is impressive, particularly given the high research output.

Vitality and Feasibility: 5

Given the quality and the continuing need for answers in this rapidly developing field of law, the prospects are positive, unless the funding strategy proves to be ineffective (see also the recommendation below).

Conclusions and recommendations

General assessment: 4.5

This programme has a clear focus and reputation, but is also very much identified with the work of its leaders. The risk is that its excellence will become increasingly dependent on its top researchers rather than on its research as a whole.

Opportunities for interdisciplinary research and cooperation with other programmes should be considered more actively. The programme could improve its ability to secure external funding, but a stricter policy may be required to maintain this potential in the future, including in respect of grants that are less person-related.

The programme is recommended to adopt a more strategic attitude to its choice of publication channels, and also to publish more in other internationally prestigious journals.

The plan to set up a Master's programme closely connected to the research programme deserves strong support as it may reduce the reliance on other forms of external funding. There is an obvious risk that teaching will absorb the research capacity, and it may be helpful to explore new areas of research within the scope of the programme.

8. Summary and recommendations

Conclusions

- The committee concluded that the Faculty has a young, enthusiastic and inspired group of researchers and produces research of high quality and potential.
- The programmes managers' leadership seems to be acknowledged by all involved.
- However, the general structure of research is still based on informal procedures that can work well in a harmonious research environment. These days, however, policies of a more directive nature are required to achieve and maintain excellence and visibility.
- Output is good in terms of quality and productivity, but some programmes seem to depend on the top researchers.
- A more explicit and directive policy on publication could increase international productivity, and specifically secure visibility in prestigious journals.
- There is an increasing awareness of the programme structure among researchers, but not all the PhD projects seem closely connected to the core of the programmes. There may be good reasons for this, but these are not specified.
- The new structure of supervision and coaching for PhD students was felt to be adequate by those interviewed, but seemed a bit chaotic to the committee: too many people have a role and responsibilities may easily remain too diffuse.
- The Faculty's research is the result of the work of highly qualified and recognized researchers, and this is also reflected in individual researchers' success in acquiring external funding.
- The character of the programmes varies considerably. There is no definition of what exactly a programme is. Some programmes focus on a common methodology or approach elaborated in a limited number of themes, while others focus on themes and do not always have a coherent methodological approach.
- On the other hand some programmes are also embedded in larger entities, such as NSCR, or involve cooperation with external partners. The reasons for opting for one or other specific construction are not always very explicit. Nor are the reasons for an implicit choice NOT to participate in related relevant structures such as research schools (e.g. the School of Human Rights Research seems to be relevant for both *Migration Law* and *Boundaries of Law*, and may also offer useful opportunities for PhD training and further international cooperation).
- In some cases consideration could be given to establishing a centre instead of a programme: e.g. the visibility of *Migration Law* may increase if the research were to be done in a Centre for Migration Law.
- There seems to be little or no attention for crosscutting projects between the programmes, while some very specific and visible cooperation may increase the visibility and reputation of the research of the Faculty as a whole. The committee noted that there were certainly opportunities for such

cooperation; for example, the methodological aspects of *Boundaries of Law* can be applied outside this programme, while *Migration Law* is also closely related to some themes in the *Boundaries* programme.

- The committee missed a certain 'sense of urgency' to deal with the above issues. The national and international policy trends of specialisation and internationalisation demand a more directive policy and management structure so as to ensure solid PhD policies and training, as well as tenders for international funding and so on.
- This is particularly relevant when seeking to acquire funding: the Faculty seems to be most successful in obtaining funding for excellent researchers (NWO) and less well-equipped to obtain funding from international (EU) programmes.

The Committee therefore recommends:

- Development of a shared mission at a Faculty level.
- Clear management responsibility at the Faculty Board level for implementation of this mission and the shared priorities.
- A strong focus on internationalisation and international cooperation, including a specialised support structure at a Faculty level.
- Exploration of the opportunities to set up a facility at a university level to provide further support for excellent research groups and further improve the track record in obtaining international funding.
- Support by the Faculty for coordinating programme research.
- More cooperation with relevant partners in PhD training.
- Strong profiling of the programmes and common approaches.
- Clear choices for strategic partners at a national and international level.
- Continuation of the HR policy to allocate research time to successful researchers.
- Monitoring the impact that the teaching load has on research.
- Explicit publication strategy (ideally directed towards achieving greater visibility in prestigious international journals).

Annex 1

Mid-term review Faculty of Law, VU University Amsterdam Feedback form institute

Please fill out a feedback form for the research programme that is assigned to you personally. In the feedback form please give a grade from 5-1. The Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015, the protocol for research assessment in The Netherlands, gives the following descriptions:

5. Excellent

Research is world leading. Researchers are working at the forefront of their field internationally and their research has an important and substantial impact in the field.

4. Very good

Research is internationally competitive and makes a significant contribution to the field. Research is considered nationally leading.

3. Good

Work is competitive at the national level and makes a valuable contribution in the international field. Research is considered internationally visible.

2. Satisfactory

Work adds to our understanding and is solid, but not exciting. Research is nationally visible.

1. Unsatisfactory

Work is neither solid nor exciting, flawed in the scientific and or technical approach, repetitions of other work, etc.

For disciplines that operate primarily in a national context, such as Dutch language, or Dutch law, the relevance of international competitiveness is transferred to relevance on a national level. For these disciplines, research should receive the qualification 'excellent' when it is regarded the top group in the country.

FEEDBACK FORM

Institute: Faculty of Law, VU University Amsterdam

Reviewer:

Please fill out a feedback form for the programme that is assigned to you personally. In the feedback form please give a grade from 5-1:

5. Excellent
4. Very good
3. Good
2. Satisfactory
1. Unsatisfactory

How do you evaluate the research group / programme with respect to:	5	4	3	2	1
Quality					
Quality and scientific relevance of the research					
Leadership					
Academic reputation					
Organisation					
Resources					
PhD training					
Productivity					
Productivity strategy					
Productivity					
Relevance					
Societal relevance					
Vitality and Feasibility					
Strategy					
SWOT-analysis					
Robustness and stability					
Continuity					

Clarifications

Please explain the grades by giving well-argued feedback below.

Quality

Productivity

Relevance

Vitality and Feasibility

Annex 2

Mid-term review Faculty of Law, VU University Amsterdam Feedback form programmes

Please fill out a feedback form for the research programme that is assigned to you personally. In the feedback form please give a grade from 5-1. The Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015, the protocol for research assessment in The Netherlands, gives the following descriptions:

5. Excellent

Research is world leading. Researchers are working at the forefront of their field internationally and their research has an important and substantial impact in the field.

4. Very good

Research is internationally competitive and makes a significant contribution to the field. Research is considered nationally leading.

3. Good

Work is competitive at the national level and makes a valuable contribution in the international field. Research is considered internationally visible.

2. Satisfactory

Work adds to our understanding and is solid, but not exciting. Research is nationally visible.

1. Unsatisfactory

Work is neither solid nor exciting, flawed in the scientific and or technical approach, repetitions of other work, etc.

For disciplines that operate primarily in a national context, such as Dutch language, or Dutch law, the relevance of international competitiveness is transferred to relevance on a national level. For these disciplines, research should receive the qualification 'excellent' when it is regarded the top group in the country.

FEEDBACK FORM

Research programme: Reviewer:

Please fill out a feedback form for the programme that is assigned to you personally. In the feedback form please give a grade from 5-1:

5. Excellent
4. Very good
3. Good
2. Satisfactory
1. Unsatisfactory

How do you evaluate the research group / programme with respect to:	5	4	3	2	1
Quality					
Quality and scientific relevance of the research					
Leadership					
Academic reputation					
Organisation					
Resources					
PhD training					
Productivity					
Productivity strategy					
Productivity					
Relevance					
Societal relevance					
Vitality and Feasibility					
Strategy					
SWOT-analysis					
Robustness and stability					
Continuity					

Clarifications

Please explain the grades by giving well-argued feedback below.

Quality

Productivity

Relevance

Vitality and Feasibility

Feedback form key publications

Title key publication:

	5	4	3	2	1
Contribution to the development of the specialism					
Originality					
Research method					
Does the publication touches the essence of the programme?					
Overall assessment					

Clarification: