



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

**POSITION OF THE BOARD OF THE ROYAL NETHERLANDS
ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES (KNAW) REGARDING THE
2018 SEP EVALUATION OF THE NIOD INSTITUTE FOR WAR,
HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES (NIOD)**

It is a pleasure for the board and management of the KNAW to respond to the report of the assessment committee that visited NIOD in April 2018. The board would like to thank the members of the committee for their extensive work and helpful suggestions. In formulating its position with regard to the report, the board also took into account the responses of NIOD's management and scientific advisory board.

While the 2012 review covered both NIOD's research and collections, the 2018 committee focused solely on research. The board corroborates this focus but also wishes to emphasize that NIOD's research and collections can never be fully separated, and that this notion is reflected in the assessment report. The committee assessed the quality of NIOD's three research programmes as 'very good', the relevance to society of the institute as 'excellent', and its viability as 'good'. The assessment encompasses a time frame in which a new director took office and NIOD underwent significant organisational changes. The board thus qualifies the evaluation scores provided by the committee as a fair and constructive assessment. It is confident that the committee's recommendations will help NIOD improve both quality and viability as well as maintain its relevance to society. This position paper follows the structure of the assessment report. It responds to (1) the committee's observations regarding the main evaluation criteria and (2) to the recommendations offered by the committee.

1. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Research quality

According to the committee, NIOD's research is very good, with some unevenness in focus, ambition and international visibility between the programmes. It particularly appreciated Genocide Studies for operating as a group and their conceptual-theoretical work. Such an approach would enable all of NIOD's research to become internationally leading, especially when it develops a publication policy for e.g. publication venues and languages. The committee noted that NIOD's standing can also be improved by more ambitious second stream funding plans. The KNAW board takes the committee's valuation of Genocide Studies as a confirmation that the 2010 merger with the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies was a strong strategic decision. It agrees with the committee that collaboration and common theory building should be the norm for all research groups. Compared to case-by-case analyses, concepts and theories have more potential for broader international impact. The board asks the management to explicitly take this into account when monitoring the success of the new research structure.

The KNAW board suggests that NIOD's impact can be improved by strategically choosing where and in what form to publish, taking into account that scientific impact and societal impact require different publication forms. This could entail submitting an English article in addition to a book published in Dutch. Such efforts can further increase NIOD's international reputation.

Notwithstanding low success rates and the importance of third stream funds, the KNAW boards concurs with the committee that NIOD could aim for more second stream funding. It encourages the management to continue the steps already taken to improve NIOD's grant writing activities, including contracting IXA. The board suggests making acquisition potential into a criterion for hiring new scientific personnel and for appraising current personnel. It advises the institute to examine the opportunities offered by the National Research Agenda. NIOD's research fits very well, not only with several of the 25 'routes' - such as Living History and Between Conflict and Cooperation - but also with the general goal of the National Research Agenda: connecting science and society. NIOD should make optimal use of this opportunity and encourage its researchers to embrace the National Research Agenda.

Relevance to society

The committee considered the outstanding societal relevance of all of NIOD's research one of its distinguishing features. The committee also observed that NIOD has a highly dynamic and innovative interaction with the public, which could be made more explicit by the institute.

The board is pleased with the committee's finding that NIOD's work, in addition to being exceptionally relevant to society, also stands at the forefront of developments in citizen science. By articulating NIOD's experience with e.g. crowdsourced projects, this model can be used as an example for participatory humanities research more generally. The board therefore invites the institute to work out its interactive citizen science approach and to share this with the other KNAW humanities institutes, among others.

Viability

According to the committee, NIOD's added value as a separate institute is beyond doubt. However, an imbalance between structural and temporal funds and a growing financial claim posed by services and collections makes NIOD's outlook precarious, requiring a more pro-active strategy and a vision on the relation between research and collections. The committee also confirmed that NIOD is somewhat behind when it comes to digitisation.

The board appreciates that the committee underlined NIOD's added value and applauds the positive energy and further professionalisation realised by the current director. These reorganisations warrant confidence for stepping up the institute's strategy efforts. The board agrees with the committee that one of the primary components of 'thinking the future' is the relation between research and collections. As the management points out, these tensions are not new and tend to be mild, especially given the fact that knowledge and expertise with regard to a particular period and region have proven to be translatable to other times and places. The board invites the management to make this translatability explicit in the new strategy: explain when and how it is possible but also what the limits to translation are so that this can inform both research and collection choices in the future.

With regard to digitisation, the board encourages the management to continue seeking collaboration with other KNAW institutes, as the committee suggests. The board especially sees opportunities for cooperation between NIOD and the recently formed Humanities Cluster. These three institutes have specifically joined forces to become leading, not only in the field of Dutch culture and history, but also in the field of digital humanities. The board maintains that further collaboration with the Humanities Cluster will benefit NIOD's collections, infrastructure and research.

Even though the assessment committee concluded that age distribution within the staff has improved during the evaluation period, the board underscores that this (and staff diversity in general) remains an important theme in the upcoming years. The board will take a constructive position in working with NIOD towards timely succession of retiring staff.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

After a period of organisational and financial difficulties, followed by the appointment of a new director and substantial efforts to restructure the institute, the KNAW board holds that NIOD is now optimally positioned to take the next strategic steps. The committee offered six recommendations for improving NIOD's viability. The board observes a clear hierarchy between these recommendations and suggests to implement these as follows:

- The main recommendation concerns the development of a research strategy that aims to optimally capitalise on the unique character of the institute. As further recommendations specify, the strategy should explicitly address, among others:
 - a plan for increasing second stream earning capacity;
 - a vision on the relation between research and collections;
 - the cooperation with the KNAW Humanities Cluster, most notably regarding digital humanities;
 - a further development of the Societal Research Programme.
- The board advises to use two of the committee's other recommendations as ways to translate the new strategy to concrete goals on both institute, programme and individual researcher level:
 - targets and key performance indicators, only if it is realistic and feasible to formulate these, and well-balanced with non-metric indicators of research quality;
 - feedback procedures for non-peer reviewed research output and grant applications.
- Three final suggestions should be realised as HRM preconditions for implementing these strategic goals:
 - annual performance appraisal and career planning for researchers;
 - procedures for supervision and training of PhD students;
 - a diversity policy for all levels of the organisation including the scientific advisory board.

The board maintains that all of these recommendations are helpful and will enable NIOD to realise its full ambition and potential, especially when it seeks further collaboration with the other KNAW humanities institutes. In the vision of the board, it is vital that these cooperate, not only to reinforce their own research and services, but to advance the humanities in the Netherlands and internationally.

Amsterdam, July 2018