

The Executive Board of TUU expresses its gratitude for the independent external evaluation of the institution's research strategy and output.

In April 2024, an external committee delivered an evaluation report on the research strategy and output of Theologische Universiteit Utrecht (TUU). In light of the collaboration with Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn (TUA) within our research group (BEST), we have elected, in conjunction with TUA, to publish our commendations for this report subsequent to the delivery of TUA's evaluation report.

General Remarks

The Executive Board of TUU is gratified by the evaluation report and its conclusions. This evaluation serves to confirm our strategy of enhancing the standing of our research within the academic field of theology. We have sought to achieve this through a process of expansion in terms of both scope and focus, as well as through the forging of international collaborations and the adoption of more sophisticated methodologies.

The committee's assessment is aligned with our recognition of the positive impact of our relocation to Utrecht. It is our intention to have all our facilities fully operational in Utrecht by the commencement of the forthcoming academic year. We concur with the committee's assertion regarding the necessity of establishing our academic library in Utrecht at the earliest possible juncture. The library is regarded as a valuable asset and a distinctive feature of the university, and its continued operation is essential.

We are gratified by the committee's favorable observations regarding the traditional craftsmanship evident in our academic work. We invest a great deal of effort into the craftsmanship of our academic work, and we will continue to do so. Theology is a discipline in its own right, with a relevance to society that is both intrinsic and instrumental. However, the strength and future of this field of study are contingent upon a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the underlying craft.

Furthermore, the committee's commendation of the ongoing discourse on the identity of TUU, both internally and externally, is a welcome development. In a new setting, with a rich and varied academic tradition, it is crucial for TUU to reflect on its own position within this context. We are convinced of the continued relevance of theology in academia and for society. To demonstrate this adequately, we will continue to organize conversations on these topics in publications, conversations, and debate.



Finally, we are gratified by the committee's acknowledgment of our intention to collaborate. In this way, we encourage our faculty and students to take advantage of the wealth of academic resources available in Utrecht. Concurrently, TUU is capable of making contributions and additions to the academic community. We are confident that our identity as a Reformed university will not be compromised by such collaboration; rather, it will gain in scope and profile. In this way, we are of service to the academic community, the Church, and society at large.

The committee offered constructive criticism regarding the facilities available to doctoral students. We acknowledge these concerns and have already taken action to address them. With regard to the appointment of female professors, our institution has an active preference policy for female candidates in the selection process for upcoming academic positions.

Additionally, the committee has identified certain shortcomings associated with the size of our university. The relatively modest size of the student and academic workforce is perceived as a potential vulnerability. We concur with this assessment. Consequently, we have relocated to Utrecht with the objective of fostering a more expansive focus, expertise, and cooperation. Nevertheless, we are cognizant of our role in the academic community. It is important to note that this relocation does not eliminate our vulnerability, particularly in light of the Dutch government's objective to reduce expenditure on higher education.

BEST (Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology)

The committee's remarks on the methodological efforts made by BEST to clarify their interdisciplinary approach to Biblical studies and systematic theology are duly acknowledged with appreciation. Methodological clarification was one of the recommendations set forth in the previous evaluation report. It is encouraging to observe that the committee has taken note of the advancements made in this regard.

The report indicates that BEST is concentrating on themes that are perceived by the committee to be especially pertinent to the church. It is evident that there is a need for fundamental theological reflection on questions pertaining to the nature of God and the authority of Scripture. The examination of these themes is of relevance to the Church, although not exclusively so. It is of great significance to acknowledge the role of the church in the research conducted by BEST. The relationship between Reformed theology and TUU and the church is of great significance. Consequently, we place a high value on our connection with the church and are committed to strengthening this relationship and providing service to the church. Moreover, the connections that BEST's theological themes make to societal issues are evident, for example, in the reflection on (informal) care.



CCMW (Centre for Church and Mission in the West)

The report offers a favorable assessment of CCMW's distinctive character at the national and international levels, its programmatic focus, and the value added by the reciprocity between theoretical and empirical research. This line of research will continue, for example, in the establishment of a new center of expertise on church renewal. Expertisecentrum Kerkvernieuwing Kerk2030.

NRI (Neocalvinist Research Institute)

The committee commends the NRI for its robust profile, interdisciplinary character, and societal relevance. This serves to confirm our policy of recognising the significant influence of neo-Calvinism on the university as a whole. This tradition serves as our distinctive identifier within the Dutch academic context, and on a global scale, we are readily identifiable as a center of expertise, both in terms of our personnel and the resources we offer in the form of online sources. We concur with the observations pertaining to the status of EO-I within the NRI framework. We have already taken steps to address this matter by integrating EO-I within the CCMW.

In conclusion, the committee recommends that the TUU's distinctive contributions be more highly valued. The research quality of the TUU is commendable, the researchers are a dedicated and enthusiastic team, and the institution's national and international collaborations are noteworthy. We view this as a testament to the excellence of our researchers and staff.

The committee has provided us with a number of suggestions for improvement, including enhancing our external communication, providing more guidance for our PhD students, and fostering greater interdisciplinary collaboration within TUU and with other academic institutions. Additionally, they have recommended that we continue to develop a strong relationship between theoretical and empirical research, with the aim of advancing academia, the church, and society. We are grateful for these suggestions and have already taken action on several of them.

