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**Statement Executive Board
regarding the research review of LEARN!**

DATE	OUR REFERENCE	
July 2023	RdW/ys/2023/0663	
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Subject: statement Executive Board regarding the research review of LEARN!

The Executive Board of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has recently received the final report of the research evaluation of the research institute LEARN! covering the period 2016-2021. This assessment was conducted in the context of the current Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP). A self-evaluation report written by the research unit, together with interviews by an international peer review committee carried out on 21 November 2022, formed the basis of this assessment.

After consideration of the report, the Executive Board appreciates the careful assessment by the committee and is very pleased with the conclusion that LEARN! has real added value as it functions as a bridge between faculties and disciplines and allows its members to collaborate beyond their own faculties. This is a great example of recognition of the interdisciplinary research performed at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Moreover the Executive Board is proud to learn that the committee is very positive about the scientific quality and especially about the societal relevance of LEARN! research. All this is achieved in a stimulating, informal academic culture with strong open science practices. According to the committee the institute is very well positioned for the future.

Recommendations were also made by the committee, they can be found in the published report. Among these are:

- Reformulate aims and strategy to pinpoint focus areas in research and societal collaboration.
- Support LEARN! as a whole by providing it with extra resources from the participating faculties. Appoint a policy officer dedicated to LEARN! stakeholder collaborations such as academic workshops and seminars.
- Improve collaboration *between* research programmes through more systematic steering and stimulation, for instance through shared grant writing sessions.
- Stimulate diversity and inclusion by hosting events with speakers and participants of diverse backgrounds, when possible in English.
- Start monitoring success and progress of LEARN! PhD candidates. Proactively encourage PhD candidates to become active members of LEARN! and grant them additional time for coordinating tasks in the PhD community.

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- Compensate and stimulate members who are active and involved in LEARN!. They should be able to have more funding for small grants, to present at international conferences, to access relevant research data, etc..

The report and recommendations have been discussed in a meeting of the Executive Board with the board and director of LEARN! on 8 June 2023. Among the subjects discussed were the strategy and the possibility of gradually working towards more focus. The board of LEARN! takes the recommendations and conclusions of the committee to heart and will make improvements where necessary. The Executive Board will continue to support LEARN! in further enhancing the quality and relevance of the research.

Finally, the Board of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam wishes to express its gratitude to the international committee for the considerable time and effort invested in the assessment and to all the people involved at LEARN! for the diligent preparation of this evaluation.

Yours sincerely,
On behalf of the Executive Board



prof. dr. J.J.G. Geurts,
rector magnificus