

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Professor dr. J.G. Geurts – Rector Magnificus
Via: rectormagnificus@vu.nl

June 10, 2024

Your Ref: Research audit Amsterdam Movement Sciences (AMS)

Dear rector magnificus, Dear Jeroen,

In February this year Amsterdam Movement Sciences Research Institute was visited by an international audit committee. Please find enclosed the advisory report by the audit committee and the written administrative response to the conclusions and recommendations made by the audit committee.

In line with the 'handbook on research evaluations VU 2020-2027', we kindly ask you to submit the combined institute's and faculty's response letter, which already has been approved by both the faculty board of FGB, as well as the board of AMS, together with the attached final report to the University Monitoring Committee (UTC) for advice.

We would like to discuss the report and the institute's response in more detail with you on a suitable date, also to see if any additional agreements need to be made. We will publish the report after the Executive Board has determined its position and the UTC has given its advice, together with a summary of the self-assessment and the Executive Board's position via the university's webpage used for this purpose.

Kind regards,

Maurits van Tulder

Saskia Peerdeman

Professor dr. Maurits van Tulder
Dean, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences

Professor dr. Saskia Peerdeman,
Dean VUmc (sm.peerdeman@amsterdamumc.nl)


Also on behalf of:

www.amsterdamumc.org/ams

Amsterdam Movement Sciences Research Institute

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Professor dr. Richard T. Jaspers
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Professor dr. Hans Tol
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Cc:

- Elga de Vries, holder of the research portfolio at Amsterdam UMC, he.devries@amsterdamumc.nl
- Richard de Waard, Policy advisor VU Amsterdam, r.dewaard@vu.nl

Enclosures:

- Advisory report by the audit committee
- Administrative response to the AMS research audit 2017 – 2022
- Summary of AMS research institute audit report 2017 - 2022
- Factsheet of AMS research institute 2017 – 2022.

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Administrative response to the AMS research audit 2017 – 2022

At first, we would like to express our appreciation of the committee's work related to the research audit. The committee had the complex task of delving into the interdisciplinary research at AMS. As far as we can see, they have successfully grasped both the opportunities and challenges AMS faces in this process. The two days during the audit were seen as very fruitful and an excellent time to exchange thoughts and get new ideas from independent parties.

We are delighted to see that the committee is impressed by the research carried out at AMS, and we take this opportunity to recap some of the conclusions in the audit report. The audit committee stated that:

'...the research quality of AMS is outstanding without any doubt. ... The committee was impressed by the research facilities the researchers have at their disposal, and AMS is well equipped to realize its research ambitions... The committee was impressed by the many links that AMS has with society, it has relevant networks in place with societal stakeholders...the research of AMS has an outstanding societal relevance,.. AMS is in a very good position to further connect its research and networks to aim for impact on public policies and the stakeholders relevant to these... AMS is very well equipped for the future. ...the committee considers open science to be a particularly strong characteristic of AMS. The committee is impressed by the overall research quality and societal relevance of the Amsterdam Movement Sciences institute...AMS is a breeding ground for talented young researchers, supporting them to grow.'

The committee's advice can be found below in italics. We have chosen to address the main advice the committee offered the institute, the institute's reaction follows the committee's advice. Minor suggestions from the committee have been incorporated in the advice's summary.

The committee's advice

- Consider the development of an implementation centre devoted to connecting knowledge on human movement to impact on health systems policies and initiative. This centre could formulate and execute the AMS impact strategy, engage in stakeholder dialogues on movement and health, formulate policy briefs for local, national and international policy makers and proactively contribute to societal discussions.*

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- *Keep focusing on the role of AMS as a platform for internal collaboration and use the implementation centre as the main external brand. This centre should complement existing networks within AMS, which are and remain important.*
- *Foster the strong embedding in the Amsterdam region but pursue national and international collaboration where this can be of added value.*
- *Expand the board of directors with a second co-director with a public health systems background and ensure that the leadership of AMS has sufficient time to pursue the AMS strategy.*
- *Keep investing in attracting clinicians to AMS, and expand this network beyond the hospitals to include general practitioners, who are the main players in the treatment and prevention of movement conditions and diseases.*
- *Ensure that the strong collaboration on the senior level within AMS trickles down to the junior level, especially in collaboration between research programmes.*

AMS response

AMS has set a number of grand challenges for the next six years, in which healthy longevity and exercise is strongly featured. The importance of exercise, not as an end term but as a starting point, a determinant to maintain a good quality of life throughout the whole lifespan, in health, disease and injury, will be a major feature in all AMS research programs. As a research institute on Movement Science, research on (improving) performance will continue to be an important part of the research and we will use the existing AMS expertise on the movement apparatus for this.

In the upcoming years, AMS aims to formulate the impact strategy based on public policies and frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (Good Health and Wellbeing – SDG3), the WHO resolution on strengthening rehabilitation in the health system, and the Dutch ‘Nationaal Preventieakkoord’. To the aim of realizing the AMS impact strategy in the coming years, AMS has taken note and will discuss the advice of the committee to steer its resources wisely in areas where the largest impact can be made, this in close agreement with the knowledge centers and to determine which stakeholders are most relevant to achieve its goals during the upcoming strategic meeting.

AMS has taken notice of the advice to proceed with one specialized implementation centre (in addition to the current knowledge centers) to disperse research results to the general public. In line with this, the institute will discuss with, and consider the structure of the current knowledge centers and how to best organize these to obtain maximum results in outreach activities. Whether this will

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be through one overarching knowledge center (or implementation center as suggested by the committee), or using the current thematic knowledge centers, will be discussed and incorporated in future strategic planning. AMS underscores the importance of reaching out to the various target audiences. The knowledge centers (either a new overarching or the current ones) are excellent in realizing these goals and will aid AMS in bringing movement and physical exercise as a means to improve health in society.

Expanding the directorate with a third director with a public health systems background is a possibility that will be discussed with the board of directors and AMS stakeholders. A closer collaboration with APH is one of the opportunities that may arise as a consequence.

AMS will continue to connect researchers within VU Amsterdam and Amsterdam UMC to enable these to expand their networks and engage in more interdisciplinary research. We acknowledge the importance of including clinicians in the research, both as identifiers and initiators of research questions arising from the clinic, as well as implementors of new research practices in the patient population. The AMS Board of Directors and Management Team AMS will discuss the strategy of including more clinicians in the management teams. In line with the background of our current directors, we might aim for striving for a comparable distribution among our programs: one program director with an accent on (basic) science and one (program deputy director) with a clinical position, or vice versa.

AMS sees it as one of its main tasks to reach out to junior and early career researchers (ECR) and offer them an interdisciplinary research network. Encouraging senior staff to open their networks to the younger generation of researchers is an important tool in this work. The further inclusion of younger researchers will be included in future strategy meetings. Moreover, we will discuss with the PhD and ECR committee how this can be improved upon, and how we can collaborate with the excellent ECR and PhD networks of both VU Amsterdam and Amsterdam UMC. A potential outcome of these strategic discussions might be the development of an AMS talent identification and development plan.

In line with existing plans, AMS aims to organize a biannual (once every two years) national meeting for researchers and performance, (para) medical and exercise professionals. The aim of the meetings will be to discuss the positive effect of sports and exercise on a healthy life, and a good quality of life, as well as the physical and mental burden of sports (e.g. sudden cardiac death and injuries).

The strategy for how to approach the various suggestions offered by the committee, will be decided in a discussion with our stakeholders and has yet to take place.

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