



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

## GAP ANALYSIS

*Application for HR Excellence in Research Award*

### **Institution**

Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (KNAW)  
Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences  
[www.knaw.nl](http://www.knaw.nl)

### **Contact**

Mr B. Engelen, M.A.  
Telephone: 020 551 0723  
E-mail: [bart.engelen@knaw.nl](mailto:bart.engelen@knaw.nl)

### **Postal address**

KNAW  
Postbus 19121  
1000 GC Amsterdam

### **Visiting address**

Het Trippenhuis  
Kloveniersburgwal 29  
1011 JV Amsterdam

### **Submission Date**

12-11-2018

### **Date endorsement Charter and Code**

05-12-2018

## **1. Brief profile of institution**

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) was founded in 1808 as an advisory body to the Dutch Government, a role that it continues to play today. The oldest pillar of the Academy is the learned society, which unites the best scientists and scholars from every conceivable discipline. The

Amsterdam, 12 November 2018



society advises the Dutch Government on policy, integrity and quality issues related to science and research. It also organises a wide range of activities intended to promote knowledge-sharing and knowledge generation. Please note that members of the learned society are not employees of the KNAW. Many hold high-ranking positions at Dutch universities or The Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO).

The Academy is responsible for fifteen research institutes. Per 2017 it employs c. 1120 staff, most of them (973 persons) working at the institutes. Out of these, c. 520 researchers make up the science staff proper, ranging from PhD level to seniors, PIs, and institute directors. The science support staff, ranging from laboratory staff to IT-developers and collection managers, number ca. 310.

The Academy Institutes are active in the humanities, the social sciences, and the life sciences; one works at the interface of science and government policy. Together, the Academy Institutes investigate a wide variety of subjects, ranging from the history of the Second World War to stem cells, from the phenomenon of sleep to the Frisian language, from the dynamics of the Great Tit population to medieval manuscripts. Academy Institutes have a mondial outreach and play a leading role in Dutch research. They serve as national centres of expertise, manage unique infrastructures and provide access to world-famous collections.

The Academy's research institutes and its learned society are supported by the Academy Bureau, which has a staff of ca. 110. The Academy Bureau is located in the historical Trippenhuis Building in the centre of Amsterdam.

## 2. Gap Analysis: the process

### *Organization*

The gap analysis was carried out in 2017-2018 on mandate of the KNAW Board and commissioned by the General Head of HRM.

The Steering Committee supervising the process consisted of the following persons:

- Mrs. M. Zaanen, LL. M., Director-General of the KNAW
- Mr. Ph.J. van der Heijden, Ph.D., director of the KNAW Knowledge Transfer Organization
- Prof. F. van Vree, director of the KNAW NIOD Institute War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies
- Mr. B. Engelen, M.A., senior staff member of the central KNAW HR Department.

For maximum objectivity, the operational aspects of the assessment were entrusted to an external bureau, Waarsenburg Advies, in the person of its director, Mr D.J. Waarsenburg, Ph.D.

### *First phase: Assessment of the general framework of national laws and regulations, sectoral agreements and internal HR policy*

The analysis has started with a thorough desk inventory and analysis of the present situation, by comparing the 40 principles of the Charter & Code with relevant laws and national regulations, with sectoral agreements applicable to employers of the academic community, and with current KNAW HRM policy. In general, The Netherlands feature a high-quality framework of laws, rules and sectoral agreements for researchers and their employers, corresponding very well with the intentions and requirements of the EU HR4 Strategy.

In addition, KNAW as the employer of scientific staff - national and international - KNAW has its own customized range of procedures, tools, formats and policy lines. At the operational level, these are



assembled in the Handboek P&O (HRM Handbook), online available to all staff via the intranet. The Handbook is currently undergoing a revision in accordance the latest developments.

At the managerial level, the KNAW course and vision on HRM-related matters are laid down in a four-year policy and action plan. Currently running is the “P&O [= HRM] Agenda 2016-2020” that addresses strategic goals both at an organizational level and regarding career- and vitality-supporting facilities for employees. The range of the latter, operated by the KNAW Career Centre, was thoroughly revised and expanded with new facilities at the start of 2018 in order to meet new demands of staff members.

#### *Second phase: Stakeholder Consultation*

Top-ranking researchers are the Academy’s most valuable asset, and so it is only natural that KNAW has taken due care to involve them as widely as possible in the stakeholder-consultation.

Four consecutive steps were followed:

### **1 Employee Satisfaction Survey 2017**

The Employee Satisfaction Survey is regularly conducted by an external bureau commissioned by KNAW, with ever new attention points. In March 2017, the entire workforce of KNAW was questioned on a wide range of topics such as:

- Vitality (energy during work, initiative towards work, recovery after work);
- Satisfaction (with the job, with working at the institute, with working at KNAW);
- Engagement (pleasure at work, involvement with the institute);
- Task requirements (work rate and quantity, changes in work, organization of work),
- Resources (variety in work, learning opportunities, independence in work, task clarity, feedback, relationship with direct supervisor(s), inspiration from direct supervisor(s), communication, participation, relationship with colleagues);
- Organization (clarity of organizational objectives, efficiency, quality, cooperation with internal and external partners);
- Working conditions (career opportunities, career development, remuneration);
- Perceived undesirable behaviour at the workplace (e.g. by colleagues, members of the organization or others; consequences of such behaviour on engagement and satisfaction).

Since the results of the Employee Satisfaction Survey can be filtered according to employee profile (such as researchers or science-support staff), it provides very precise information on how KNAW employees experience their work conditions and supplies both the institutes and the mother organization with a continuous stream of feedback on existing or emerging needs.

### **2 Live interviews with researchers (and science support staff)**

In order to match and test these results more precisely with the criteria of the Charter & Code, in the first quarter of 2018 a series of live interviews has been conducted with a representative choice of researchers and science support staff from six KNAW institutes. The interviewees represented the various phases of the academic career path (PhD, postdoc, senior, PI, professor) and so covered both individuals with temporary and permanent contracts. The interviews were conducted on the basis of anonymity for the interviewees so as to secure maximum freedom of expression for possible critical observations regarding KNAW as an employer. The six Academy Institutes involved were:

- International Institute for Social History (IISG)  
(<https://socialhistory.org/en>)
- Huygens Instituut voor Dutch History (Huygens ING)  
(<https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/?lang=en>)
- Meertens Instituut for Research and Documentation of Dutch Language and Culture (MI)  
(<https://www.meertens.knaw.nl/cms/en/>)



- Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience (NIN)  
(<https://nin.nl/>)
- Hubrecht Instituut for Developmental Biology and Stem Cell Research  
(<https://www.hubrecht.eu/>)
- Westerdijk Fungal and Biodiversity Institute  
(<http://www.westerdijkinstituut.nl/>)

### **3 Interviews with HR-responsibles of the institutes**

In addition to the researchers, the (near-)full range of HR managers of the KNAW institutes was interviewed:<sup>1</sup>

- Mrs. D. Bisselink, HR Team leader at Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience (NIN)
- Mrs. M. Cornelissen, Head of HR at KNAW Humanities Center (HuC)
- Mr. C. Klein, HR Consultant for the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast and Caribbean Studies (KITLV)
- Mrs. H. Labots, HR Advisor at Rathenau Instituut and Digital Archiving Network Services (DANS)
- Mr. J.W. Peet, Head of HRM at Hubrecht and Westerdijk Institutes
- Mrs. M. Schenkel, Head of HR and General Affairs at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies
- Mrs. C. Vogelzang, Senior HRM Advisor at Fryske Akademy

### **4 Feedback of the results to the full body of KNAW researchers and science support staff**

In the fourth phase of the stakeholder consultation, the combined outcomes of these interviews were presented to the full KNAW science and science support staff for feedback or additions. In this way, a maximum of involvement, transparency and democracy has been pursued. A fair number of reactions was received, in the main endorsing the presented outcomes as 'valuable and recognizable'.

In general, the outcome of this four-step stakeholder consultation was quite in line with those of the 2017 Employee Satisfaction Survey, but more detailed on specific issues and with some valuable new suggestions to KNAW. The results match very well the developments already foreseen in the current HR Agenda 2016-2020.

## **3. Outcome of the Gap Analysis mapped on the Charter and Code table**

See separate document.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of the consultation, the HR Manager of the Netherlands Institute of Ecology was not available.