RESEARCH EVALUATION 2025

RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Radboud Universiteit

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Table of contents

1. Executive summary 4

1.1. Research quality, societal relevance and viability of the research centres 4

1.2. Management and viability of the Institute for Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies 6

2. Evaluation aims and method 9

2.1. Evaluation objectives and criteria 9

2.2. Composition of the assessment committee 10

2.3. Documentation 10

2.4. Working method 11

3. Mission, strategy, and organization 12

3.1. Introduction 12

3.2. Mission and strategy 12

3.3. Research organization and governance 12

4. Research quality, societal relevance and viability research centres 14

4.1. Center for Cognition, Culture, and Language 14

4.2. Center for Contemporary European Philosophy 16

4.3. Center for the History of Philosophy and Science 17

4.4. Center for Religion and Contemporary Society 19

4.5. Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity 21

4.6. Radboud Center for Philosophy and Society 23

5. Management and viability of PTR 26

5.1. Profile, management and organization 26

5.2. PhD policy and training 27

5.3. Open science and research integrity 29

5.4. Human resources policy and acedemic culture 30

6. Appendices 33

1. Executive summary

1.1. Research quality, societal relevance and viability of the research centres

Center for Cognition, Culture, and Language

The Center for Cognition, Culture, and Language (CCCL) is a leading European hub for research on language and mind, thriving at the intersection of philosophy, linguistics, AI, psychology, and psychiatry. Since the previous assessment, it has sharpened its focus through strategic hires and thematic coherence, achieving outstanding research quality reflected in high-impact publications and frequent invitations to major international conferences. While individual researchers enjoy very strong visibility, the committee recommends CCCL to strengthen its collective identity and formalize collaborations with other European universities to enhance recognition and funding prospects. The centre's societal relevance is evident in its public outreach and professional training for judges and psychiatrists. With its renewed focus and timely expertise, CCCL is very well-positioned for future challenges. The pursuit of external research funding should remain an active and ongoing priority for the centre. The committee recommends that CCCL expands its current 'top journal' strategy into a sustainable, long-term approach that includes open-access and widely accessible outlets.

Center for Contemporary European Philosophy

The committee regards the Center for Contemporary European Philosophy (CCEP) as an intellectually vibrant and internationally respected research environment. It commends the centre's high-quality scholarship in continental and post-Kantian philosophy and its strong publication record with reputable journals and presses. The committee values CCEP's distinctive existential and exegetical approach, which connects philosophical inquiry to urgent societal issues such as climate change, animal consciousness, religion, and intersectionality. It sees significant opportunities for this perspective to enrich other research domains, and recommends the centre taking an open posture towards areas of philosophy beyond its continental tradition. The committee considers the planned philosophy hub to be a promising initiative for strengthening societal impact, international visibility, and collaboration across the university. Overall, CCEP comes across as a distinctive, forward-looking centre with a strong potential for future development.

Center for the History of Philosophy and Science

The Center for the History of Philosophy and Science (CHPS) is an internationally renowned and cohesive research unit producing high-quality, wide-ranging work in Medieval and Early Modern philosophy and science. The committee praises the centre's impressive output both in a qualitative and in a quantitative sense, its international collaborations, and successful recruitment of outstanding early-career scholars with major grants. CHPS

shows strong societal engagement through podcasts, science fairs, collaborations with schools, and an active dialogue with non-specialist audiences. To secure its future, the committee advises CHPS addressing the impending retirements of senior professors through timely recruitment or promotion, and considering whether to replace staff within current research areas or move into new fields adjacent to existing strengths. The committee also recommends ensuring sufficient professorial capacity for PhD supervision and reviewing administrative workloads to preserve research time. All in all, CHPS is well positioned to sustain its high quality while evolving in response to new opportunities and developments.

Center for Religion and Contemporary Society

The committee praises the Center for Religion and Contemporary Society (CRCS) for its impressive and wide-ranging research on religion's political, social, and existential dimensions, grounded in empirically informed approaches and marked by strong societal relevance. It values the centre's ability to link contemporary issues to historical traditions, a strength that gives CRCS notable breadth but can also challenge its internal coherence. The committee supports merging the research departments within CRCS into one to reinforce cohesion and efficacy. It recommends reflecting on the balance between contemporary and historical expertise. CRCS's strong public engagement and its pioneering work in archiving religious data are major assets. However, its relatively large size and ageing staff render the centre vulnerable amid budget cuts, making strategic decisions essential to sustain its broad and multidisciplinary scope. These include deciding on future staffing and succession planning, balancing research and teaching responsibilities, and determining which areas of religion and spirituality to prioritize or expand. External visibility could be improved, possibly through a new name and clearer profile. The committee notes that CRCS's overlap with related centres, especially the Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity, calls for clearer delineation. The committee welcomes CRCS's ambition to create new pathways for the next generation of scholars in the study of religion.

Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity

The Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity (CTHS) is a strong and productive research unit, distinguished by its integration of textual, historical, and theological approaches, which it treats as complementary rather than separate fields. The committee praises the centre's high-quality scholarly output, international collaborations, and success in securing external funding. It sees a very healthy ratio of refereed outputs per staff member in CTHS. To enhance societal relevance, the committee recommends that CTHS make its engagement with contemporary issues more explicit and strengthen collaboration with other centres, notably the Centre for Religion and Contemporary Society. Contribution to outreach initiatives such as Radboud Reflects is encouraged. Looking ahead, the committee highlights the need to maintain internal coherence amid staffing challenges by fostering joint research activities, encouraging collective grant applications, and

developing shared long-term research themes across its complementary disciplines.

Radboud Center for Philosophy and Society

The Radboud Centre for Philosophy and Society (RCPS), founded in 2020, has quickly established itself as an ambitious and socially engaged centre addressing pressing contemporary issues through ethics and political philosophy. The committee commends RCPS's strong research quality, evidenced by internationally recognized expertise, a high number of major grant acquisitions, and successful collaborations with law, medicine, and social sciences. The centre's strategic focus on digitization, sustainability, and ethics positions it as an essential partner in critical debates. RCPS demonstrates exceptional societal relevance through engagement with grassroots initiatives, leadership of the Post-Covid Network Netherlands Ethics Platform, and active involvement with issues related to racism, political conflict, and disability activism. However, the committee sees the large cohort of junior assistant professors as a significant structural vulnerability regarding leadership continuity and research capacity, given limited and over-extended senior staff and upcoming retirements of key full professors. The current volatile political climate requires RCPS to maintain an independent, critical voice based on rigorous scholarship while managing the emotional toll of public engagement. To enhance future viability, the committee recommends strengthening external visibility, formalizing collaboration with CCEP, addressing staffing vulnerabilities through strategic recruitment and leadership development, and ensuring adequate support and protection for staff engaging with politically sensitive issues. Despite its challenges, RCPS is well-positioned for its next developmental phase, building on strong ethics research and philosophical scholarship addressing themes of increasing societal urgency.

1.2. Management and viability of the Institute for Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies

Profile, management and organization

The committee finds that PTR is very well positioned for the future and has made considerable progress since the previous assessment. The Institute's impressive research output, distinctive international visibility, and unique position as the only Dutch institute combining philosophy, theology, and religious studies in an integrated manner provide a strong competitive advantage. PTR's coordination of Radboud Reflects, expanded media presence, and engagement with contemporary challenges demonstrate a high-impact societal contribution, closely integrated with research expertise. The committee applauds PTR's strategic approach to growth, successful grant acquisition (ERC, NWO), and the management team's constructive attitude toward ongoing challenges. However, several areas require attention. The committee recommends balancing distinctive centre identities with overall institute coherence, improving centre branding and self-presentation, and developing clearer (and clearly internalized) messaging about each centre's focus. More fundamentally, PTR should foster a culture where centre members understand themselves as addressing shared research questions, creating stronger collective intellectual purpose without sacrificing individual

autonomy. The committee emphasizes the critical importance of protecting research time amid pressures from teaching, grant acquisition, and public engagement, and addressing unequal distribution of teaching loads across centres. The committee heard from the leadership that the faculty has criteria in place to ensure equal distribution, but also found that not all staff members were convinced of the fairness of its implementation. While institutional leadership shows awareness of work pressure concerns, the committee recommends strengthening commitments to safeguarding research time. This will ensure long-term sustainability of PTR's impressive productivity and staff wellbeing.

PhD policy and training

The committee commends PTR for significant improvements in PhD monitoring and support since the previous evaluation. Key reforms include comprehensive PhD project agreements for internal candidates and project proposal planning forms for external ones, with clear mutual expectations and regular checkpoints. The dedicated graduate school coordinator (0.4 FTE) ensures consistency in monitoring and support, while the Graduate School for Humanities provides strong backing through confidential advisors, social activities, and COVID-19 contract extensions. PhD candidates are well-integrated in the centres, valued for bringing new expertise, and report high satisfaction levels with supervisors, training opportunities, and appropriate teaching loads. Candidates feel generally safe and know whom to approach for support. The committee advises continued support through facilitating cross-centre PhD co-supervision and expanding PhD roles within centres. External PhD candidates require particular attention, as there appears to be no limit on numbers and not all of them are sufficiently integrated, especially international candidates meeting supervisors only online. The committee recommends continuing the development of policies ensuring quality supervision for external PhD candidates, and advocating for university-level policy changes regarding associate professors' *ius promovendi*, which should focus on training rather than requiring two completed co-supervisorships.

Open science and research integrity

The committee commends PTR's strong commitment to open science and research integrity. PTR has achieved a noteworthy increase in open access publications from 47.1% in 2019 to 63.4% in 2024, supported by Radboud University's Data Repository and the faculty's research data management policy. This progress reflects effective implementation through targeted university funding, external open access venues, and Radboud University Press. PTR demonstrates leadership in research integrity through its Ethics Assessment Committee for the Humanities, established in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts, whose principles, protocols, and model documents have been adopted by other Dutch humanities faculties. Since 2021, mandatory plagiarism checks for all PhD dissertations further strengthen integrity standards. The committee particularly applauds PTR's infrastructure supporting accessible and sustainable databases, including the dedicated data steward who oversees research data management policy implementation and provides specialized support for handling personal and confidential data. The data steward role is crucial for PTR's open data policy, data security, and

institutional reputation, ensuring data integrity, reproducibility, and long-term accessibility while mitigating legal and ethical risks. The committee strongly recommends preserving this position even in times of budget cuts. Regarding PhD training, all candidates participate in a two-hour scientific integrity workshop and must submit data management plans. However, candidates with data-intensive projects report that the timing is premature for developing well-informed plans. The committee recommends offering a second, practice-focused workshop for candidates working on empirical, data-intensive projects, and considering opening this training to other staff and interested MA students to strengthen the culture of research integrity across PTR.

Human resources policy

At the time of the site visit, PTR was revising its promotion policy, partly to align with the national Recognition and Rewards framework, which values diverse academic contributions beyond publications, including teaching, mentoring, societal impact, and open science. The committee noted some uncertainty among staff about the criteria and implications of the new policy. It recommends finalizing and clearly communicating it without delay. As PTR transitions from a traditional promotion-based model to a staffing policy focused on institutional needs and budgetary alignment, the committee stresses the importance of transparent communication and warns against allowing the need to fill administrative positions to influence promotion decisions. Promotions should be based solely on academic, educational, or societal merit, not on practical or organizational considerations.

The committee observes that work pressure has risen due to budget cuts and increased teaching loads (at least for some staff), reducing time for research. It recommends board-level policies to counter this, such as a fair and transparent workload model, communicated clearly and sensitively to staff.

There has been significant progress in gender balance but persistent inequality at the full professor level. The committee recommends identifying and removing barriers to women's advancement, addressing institutional factors through reflection and policy, and offering targeted mentoring for junior and mid-career female academics.

The committee acknowledges the faculty's extensive efforts to improve social safety, but finds that its meaning and importance are not equally understood across staff. It recommends training based on concrete cases, clearer attention to social safety in annual appraisal interviews with staff, and making sure that all postdocs participate in onboarding and appraisal processes, even if this requires additional efforts to accommodate those unavailable at the standard moments.To ensure accountability, the committee advises establishing a central mechanism for registering reports or complaints to detect repeated or serious violations.

2. Evaluation aims and method

In 2025, the executive board of Radboud University commissioned an evaluation of the Research Institute of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies (PTR) as part of its regular six-year quality assurance cycle. Additionally, the evaluation included two national research schools coordinated by the faculty: OZSW, the Dutch Research School of Philosophy (OZSW), and the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER). The evaluation of PTR covered the 2019-2024 period.

2.1. Evaluation objectives and criteria

In accordance with the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027, the evaluation of PTR has the dual purpose of improving the quality and relevance of research, and providing accountability to the Executive Board, funding bodies, government, and society. The evaluation outcomes will guide the institute's quality assurance and strategic development in the coming period.

The research evaluation adhered to the aims and methods outlined in the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027. Under the terms of reference issued by the executive board of the university, the committee was tasked with evaluating the quality of research conducted by PTR and providing recommendations for its enhancement and strategic direction. The committee was instructed to base its written conclusions on qualitative considerations and arguments rather than numerical scores. Specifically, the committee was requested to evaluate the institute's performance based on the three main assessment criteria of the Strategy Evaluation Protocol:

1. research quality: evaluating the academic rigour and innovation of the research conducted at PTR,
2. societal relevance: examining the contribution of the research to societal challenges and its impact beyond academia,
3. viability: assessing the resilience and future potential of the research institute

Additionally, the evaluation was to include four supplementary aspects outlined in the protocol that are deemed essential in the current academic context and vital for the ongoing success of research initiatives:

- open science: evaluating the institute's commitment to transparency and accessibility in research practices,
- PhD policy and training: assessing the effectiveness of support systems for doctoral candidates,
- academic culture: examining the inclusivity and collaborative environment within the research community,
- human resources policy: evaluating policies related to staff development and diversity

The committee was also invited to address additional questions. They concerned PTR's profile and identity, its acquisition policy, and the execution of the Recognition and Rewards Policy. The committee was asked to assess both the institute as a whole and its six research centres, as well as the two national research schools NOSTER and OZSW.

2.2. Composition of the assessment committee

The board appointed an assessment committee (hereafter: 'committee') of seven external peers:

- Prof. Joel Anderson, professor of Moral Psychology and Social Philosophy, Utrecht University (chair);
- Dr. Hanne Jacobs, associate professor of Philosophy at Tilburg University;
- Prof. Justin Kroesen, professor in Material Culture of Christianity, University of Bergen;
- Dr. Kristina Liefke, *Juniorprofessor* of Philosophy of Information and Communication at Ruhr University Bochum;
- Prof. Catrin Williams, professor in New Testament Studies, University of Wales Trinity Saint David;
- Prof. Catherine Wilson, emerita professor of Early Modern Philosophy, University of York;
- Maarten Holtzapffel, MA, PhD candidate in Religious Studies, Utrecht University

Mariette Huisjes, MA, was appointed independent secretary to the committee.

2.3. Documentation

Prior to the site visit, the committee received the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027, the terms of reference for the evaluation, and PTR's self-evaluation report (2019-2024), including the information and appendices required by the protocol.

Additional documents, either requested by the committee or provided at the institute's own accord, included:

- an overview of research output per centre
- a presentation on Radboud University's open access policy
- some additional data on external PhD candidates
- an overview of promotion criteria for academic staff
- an overview of collaborations of the Center for Cognition, Culture, and Language
- the form used for the annual appraisal interviews with all staff members

2.4. Working method

Leading up to the site visit, the committee members were first requested to individually study the documentation provided by the research institute and formulate preliminary findings and questions. During an online kick-off meeting on 12 May 2025, the committee members were introduced to each other and to the evaluation procedure. Also, a practical working method was agreed upon. After this meeting, the committee sent a list of factual questions to PTR on all of the research units to be evaluated, with a few questions on NOSTER as well. These questions were duly answered.

Since the scope of the evaluation was broad and there was a full programme for the three days on which the committee visited Radboud University, additional online interviews with PhD candidates and senior researchers participating in the research schools were scheduled in advance of the site visit. They were held on 17 June 2025. The site visit to Radboud University took place from 24 until 26 June. On 24 June, the committee interviewed the leadership of both research schools; on the other days, interviews took place with the centres and the institute as a whole. The visit concluded with a plenary presentation by the chair on the committee's findings. The programme for the site visit is included in Appendix 1.

Following the site visit, the committee members provided written input for the evaluation report, which was compiled into an initial draft by the secretary. This draft was circulated among all committee members and then revised to incorporate their feedback. Subsequently, the report was submitted to PTR for factual corrections and comments. After incorporating these comments, in close consultation with the chair, the secretary finalized the report. The final version was presented to the executive board of Radboud University on 25 November 2025.

3. Mission, strategy, and organization

3.1. Introduction

The Institute for Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies (PTR) is unique in the Netherlands for situating three fields within a single research institute, which is at the same time an independent faculty. PTR is home to 122 researchers, currently totalling approximately 53 FTE in research time. Researchers are affiliated to one of six research centres which jointly form PTR:

- the Center for Cognition, Culture, and Language (CCCL),
- the Center for Contemporary European Philosophy (CCEP),
- the Center for the History of Philosophy and Science (CHPS),
- the Center for Religion and Contemporary Society (CRCS),
- the Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity (CTHS),
- the Radboud Center for Philosophy and Society (RCPS).

Over the past six years, PTR has grown considerably. This increase was partly due to grant acquisitions, which led to a noticeable rise in the number of PhD candidates on staff (from 18 in 2019 to 35 in 2024), and partly to new funding allocated by the executive board of Radboud University and the government, which is reflected in the increased number of assistant professors (from 18 in 2019 to 26 in 2024). However, budget cuts are now reversing this trend, with a hiring freeze currently in place.

3.2. Mission and strategy

PTR's mission is: 'to engage with philosophy, religion, and theology as historical phenomena, as contemporary practices, and as normative frameworks'. From this standpoint, PTR aims to 'contextualize, analyze, and critique transformative cultural phenomena and meaning-making practices and ideas, in new and innovative ways, against the background of pressing social and political issues'.

For the period under review, PTR had identified a number of strategic aims:

- strengthen coherence and collaboration within and between the research centres;
- develop a clearer vision of the research agenda and themes;
- hone the publication strategy;
- improve the grant acquisition strategy;
- improve the training and supervision of PhD candidates, and the monitoring system;
- promote research integrity and open science;
- create an open, safe, inclusive and more diverse academic environment and culture.

3.3. Research organization and governance

Within PTR, the centres function as independent units, with their own mission and vision, and serve as spaces in which researchers meet, share ideas,

collaborate, and concretize their impact. Some research lines transcend centre boundaries. Collaboration takes place among researchers affiliated with different centres, although to widely varying degrees. Each centre has a research coordinator (0.05 FTE), who organizes research and management meetings and additionally oversees the content and direction of the centre's research. The Research Management Team meets eight times a year, and is comprised of the coordinators of the six centres, a PhD representative, the research policy officer, the grant advisor and the faculty's research director. The Research Management Team advises the Faculty Board on research-related issues and decisions. Every two weeks, the research director takes part in a meeting with the dean of the faculty (who is also responsible for research), the vice dean for education, the managing director, the director of education, and the student assessor.

4. Research quality, societal relevance and viability of the research centres

4.1. Center for Cognition, Culture, and Language

General findings

The Center for Cognition, Culture and Language (CCCL) currently focuses its research on analytic philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and cognition, and epistemology and philosophy of the human sciences. The committee found that CCCL is a thriving centre at the interface of philosophy, linguistics, AI, psychology, and psychiatry. It combines a focus on top-level publications with high-impact research. Since the 2019 assessment, the centre has sharpened its research focus through the identification of shared research themes and a series of strategic personnel choices. The result is that CCCL is now one of the leading centres on 'language & mind' in Europe. This is partly due to its unique interdisciplinary focus, which is a significant strength. The committee therefore recommends CCCL to preserve and expand its unique interdisciplinary profile.

Research quality

The centre maintains the excellent research quality that was commended during the 2019 assessment and has even expanded upon it. This was facilitated by the hire of two full professors and three assistant professors. The CCCL's excellent research is indicated by numerous publications in high-impact journals across a range of disciplines. These include journals in philosophy (e.g. *Erkenntnis, Synthese, Mind & Language,* and *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*), linguistics (e.g. *Semantics and Pragmatics, Journal of Pragmatics,* and *Glossa Psycholinguistics*), as well as in psychology and neuroscience (e.g. *Frontiers in Psychology, Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, and *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*).

The centre's top-tier research is also apparent from the established venues of its members' conference talks, including Semantics and Linguistic Theory, Sinn und Bedeutung, the Amsterdam Colloquium, Experiments in Linguistic Meaning, and the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. CCCL members are frequently invited as speakers in colloquia, workshops, or conferences at other European universities. This reflects their high international standing. These forms of international networking are currently largely informal. In the interest of future-readiness, the committee advises CCCL to cast some of them into a more formal structure, for example as research networks or bilateral projects. Notably, while its individual researchers are internationally very visible, CCCL as a research centre is still not very well-known. The committee advises CCCL to take measures to remedy this situation and improve its visibility as a centre. One could for instance think of renaming and branding. A recognizable identity as a centre will facilitate collaborations and networking, and makes it easier to attract funding and talent, independently of the reputation of individual researchers.

Societal relevance

CCCL demonstrates strong societal relevance. It does so through a diversity of channels. Examples of such channels are books, articles, and lectures for a wider audience, such as the 2023 monograph *Bewust-zijn* and the 2025 podcast *Experiences of Neurodiversity*. CCCL also shares its expertise through its contributions to the university's public programme Radboud Reflects and the Dutch network for psychiatry and philosophy that it runs. Another strong indication of societal relevance consists of the professional training programmes for judges and psychiatrists that the centre organizes. The impact of these publications, lectures and network activities is enhanced by the fact that many of them are in Dutch. The more theoretical research in CCCL on language, science, and AI provides important foundational work that is vital to the success of these applications and their societal relevance, both in the Netherlands and globally.

Future-readiness

Previously, the centre consisted of two departments: that of Philosophy of Mind and Language and that of Textual Sources of Judaism and Christianity. Both departments at the time shared an interest in cognitive linguistics, communication, and the interdependence of cognition and culture. With the retirement of the latter department's chair, it was decided that CCCL should narrow its focus to analytic philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and cognition, and epistemology and philosophy of the human sciences. The committee finds that this sharpened research focus is very timely and a move in the right direction. The new hires have added relevant topical emphases, such as the link between language and AI and between philosophy of mind and neurodiversity and mental health. Together, these developments have resulted in a robust centre that is ready to face future developments and challenges.

In the self-evaluation report, CCCL acknowledges its recent reduced activity in grant acquisition. It attributes this reduction mostly to a lack of available matching. Nonetheless, the centre's members have recently been successful in acquiring several smaller grants. Shortly after the committee's site visit, the centre acquired a grant in the NWO's Open Competition. The committee takes these successes as indications that applying for third-party funding is an effort that should be actively, and continuously, pursued in the future.

At present, the majority of researchers in CCCL pursue a 'top journal'-publication strategy. Many of the journals cited in the self-evaluation report are published by for-profit publishers like Springer, Elsevier, and Wiley-Blackwell. However, the combination of the recent budget cuts for publication editing and the high cost of open access publishing will likely force the centre to rethink its publication strategy. The committee encourages the centre to develop a diversified, sustainable publication strategy for the long term that includes a larger number of (Diamond) Open Access journals, other alternative outlets, and publication through Radboud University Press.

4.2. Center for Contemporary European Philosophy

General findings

The Center for Contemporary European Philosophy (CCEP) directs its research toward contemporary continental philosophy. The focus on systematic and ontological approaches fosters critical engagement with the history of philosophy, cultural productions, literature, art, and the sciences, while additionally exploring and proposing alternative worldviews as responses to contemporary crises.

Research quality

The committee found that CCEP has generated internationally recognized and high-level scholarship in the areas of continental philosophy, more broadly post-Kantian European philosophy, but also critical and postcolonial theory. Together, the members of this centre have produced an impressive number of refereed articles, monographs, and book-chapters during the period under consideration. Journals in which members publish include several ranked in the first and second quartile (*Theory, Culture, and Society*; *Postcolonial Studies*), as well as established continentally oriented journals such as *Alter*, *Epoché*, *Research in Phenomenology, Journal of Nietzsche Studies, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale,* and *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*. Presses publishing monographs produced in this centre include Vrin, Routledge, Edinburgh University Press, SUNY, and Bloomsbury, which have a strong international reputation in the research areas of CCEP. This level of published research and the additional number of edited refereed books and journal issues, as well as international conference organization (Conference in Continental Philosophy, Collegium Phaenomenologicum, International Symposium Phaenomenologicum) are strong indicators of a vibrant and viable research culture.

Looking toward the future, the committee considers it important that CCEP continues to publish in highly ranked and established journals alongside writing monographs. Such journals more readily allow for open access publishing, broad dissemination to a wider audience, and enhance the visibility of the centre and its members, which in turn facilitates grant acquisition. In the period 2019-2024, a number of grant applications were submitted of which several were successful (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, NWO Open Access Books grant, Comenius Senior). The self-evaluation mentions a possible tension between the center's research emphasis and the priorities of grant agencies. This tension was also alluded to during the site visit. The committee is of the opinion that the opportunity to submit to individual grant schemes (e.g., NWO, ERC) should not be forfeited, in addition to applying for collaborative grants. Both funding sources remain attractive for CCEP, as the rich philosophical traditions it draws on may introduce novel and unexpected perspectives. They are also attractive in light of the clear scientific and societal relevance of several of the thematic foci, such as the philosophical aspects of climate change, animal imagination, testimony, and desire.

Societal relevance

The societal impact of the centre is established nationally by publications in Dutch in widely read and accessible philosophy journals and magazines, such

as *Filosofie Magazine* and *Trouw*, as well as public lectures. During the site visit, it plans were mentioned to develop a continental philosophy hub that disseminates and showcases the research of this centre with an eye towards international visibility and societal relevance. The committee finds this a promising strategy both with respect to further ensuring societal impact, and to strengthening collaborations with other centres and faculties, such as the Centre for Philosophy and Society and the Faculty of the Arts at Radboud University in a broader sense.

Future-readiness

The centre has a strong and international reputation and contributes to the two-year research master's programme specializing in metaphysics and philosophical anthropology, which consistently attracts numerous students from the Netherlands and abroad. CCEP has its own characteristic philosophical approach: most researchers work in the tradition of continental, European philosophy. The committee was struck by the centre's sense of facing threats from a 'pushback against the continental approach in many universities worldwide', and is somewhat concerned about the risks associated with a defensive posture. In part, this is because it has the potential to undermine CCEP's opportunities to collaborate more broadly on philosophical topics and themes that the centre shares with other research centres in and beyond PTR. The self-presentation of the centre primarily in terms of continental philosophy may also fail to cover the variety of research produced by CCEP, such as research on post-Kantian German philosophy and post-colonial philosophy. The annual 'Current Research at the CCEP' colloquium, where researchers, students, and colleagues from other centres in the PTR institute meet, seems a good opportunity to articulate the vision that unites this centre, while also showing how its unique approach is bound to enrich other research and society. With its more existential and exegetical approach, the centre is in a unique position to connect philosophical research to pressing societal concerns, such as climate, animal consciousness, religion, and intersectionality.

4.3. Center for the History of Philosophy and Science

General findings

The Center for the History of Philosophy and Science (CHPS) concentrates on Medieval and Early Modern philosophy, with considerable attention paid to pre-1800 science and medicine. There is original research ongoing in Scholasticism and Neo-Scholasticism, Arabic philosophy, Renaissance philosophy, Galileo and Leibniz studies, and the histories of physics, atomism, and materialism. This is combined with a strong secondary specialization in phenomenology and biopolitics. Internally, the centre appears highly cohesive.

Research quality

In its areas of expertise, CHPS has an international reputation and strong ties to the wider research community through conferences, workshops, and co-

publications. There are long-standing collaborations with scholars in the USA, France, Romania, and Canada, as well as frequent visits from guest philosophers and historians. Joint degrees are offered in collaboration with 13 universities across 9 countries.

The research record of CHPS is strong in quality and quantity, and for a relatively small senior faculty, especially impressive. Since 2019, the centre lists an impressive number of single-authored, edited, or co-edited books as well as chapters (with Brill, Routledge, Oxford, De Gruyter, and others), and numerous articles in refereed journals, including such selective venues as *Ambix*, *History of European Ideas*, *Revistai di Philosophia*, *Annals of Science*, *Early Science and Medicine*, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, Grazer Philosophische Studien, Journal of the History of Biology, Mnemosyne,* and *Vivarium*. Publications are in English, Dutch, German, and Italian.

Hiring of the younger generation has brought in top-notch scholars with two ERC starting grants and an early career award from the Dutch Royal Academy (KNAW).

Societal relevance

History of science is a topic in demand for podcasts, science fairs, and primary and secondary school programmes. The centre has acquitted itself well in this regard. CHPS members are frequently invited to share their expertise with a diverse range of non-specialist audiences, and to participate in discussions with scientists on historical developments. During the period under review, CHPS members took part in a wide range of outreach activities, from collaborations with primary and secondary schools to contributions to newspapers, the recording of podcasts, and participation in science festivals, winter schools, summer schools, and masterclasses.

Future-readiness

CHPS unquestionably has an outstanding research record and international reputation. Looking toward the future, the committee offers the following recommendations to cultivate resilience and the ability to seize emerging opportunities.

First, the two senior professors in the centre face retirement in the next decade. The middle generation of post-PhD researchers is highly talented and visible, but promotion, retention, and replacement will be essential to sustaining the centre's vitality in the long run. CHPS and the university need to keep an eye on external recruitment prospects and consider whether replacing staff within current research areas is a priority or moving into new fields adjacent to existing strengths. This will depend on the quality and availability of potential candidates. The committee encourages openness in this regard, along with a continued focus on excellence in teaching, administration, and research.

Second, the committee found that for part of the period the number of PhD candidates was relatively high, given the number of full professors available for supervision, although one associate professor has since been granted *ius*

promovendi. To ensure high-quality supervision, for future PhDs, consideration should be given to additional professorial-level appointments, alongside a review of the *ius promovendi* regulations.

Third, despite a strong publication record, the committee heard concerns that the number of administrative roles taken on by senior members of CHPS reduces the time available for research. This can be understood as indicating that even if they may have taken on these roles willingly and gladly (and provided valuable service), they have experienced stress in combining adminstrative duties with research. The committee recommends reviewing the extent of release from other duties these positions provide, allowing senior members to allocate their time most effectively.

4.4. Center for Religion and Contemporary Society

General findings

The mission of the Center for Religion and Contemporary Society (CRCS) is to develop empirically-informed insights into contemporary religions and spirituality, while simultaneously considering the historical roots and foundations of, in particular, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, but also of new spiritual movements and indigenous religious heritage. CRCS sees a growing relevance of religion in addressing the political, societal, and existential dimensions of today's global challenges. Thus, CRCS combines breadth and depth, covering religion in political, social, and existential domains.

Research quality

The committee found the research output by CRCS to be impressive, with a substantial number of Q1 and Q2 publications in high-quality peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes and monographs. CRCS's triple, mostly empirical research focus on religion's political, social and existential dimensions is very comprehensive. Research areas that have particularly contributed to the centre's profile and output include spiritual care with its focus on existential meaning ('zingeving') and oriental Christianity in Western Europe. A specific strength is that CRCS identifies the role of religion and spirituality in contemporary society, including in sometimes surprising contexts (such as cemeteries, migrant food, and re-used monasteries), and in the light of historical developments. As a result, CRCS's research scope is very wide, both historical and contemporary, empirical and conceptual, Western and global, involving a range of approaches and disciplines. In addition, the self-evaluation report identifies the 'problems of our time and their unforeseeable futures' as a focus to be reinforced. While this deserves applause, it also raises questions about internal coherence.

In recent years, the departments within the centre have increasingly grown together, now leaving Comparative religious studies, Empirical and practical religious studies, and Islam studies. Given upcoming staff reductions, the committee recommends merging these remaining departments into one, in line with the other research centres. Moreover, regular cross-departmental

meetings where research is presented and discussed have already contributed to a sense of shared identity across CRCS.

In the past years, the balance between contemporary topics and religious traditions and texts within the centre has gradually shifted in favour of the former, which puts a certain pressure on CRCS's historical expertise. The committee acknowledges this shift and recommends that CRCS reflect on the implications for its profile and expertise, particularly in relation to historical scholarship in ancient religions.

Societal relevance

The triple focus within CRCS on political, social and existential dimensions of religion and spirituality in relation to today's global challenges ensures a high level of societal relevance. Entangled religions are identified in many sectors of contemporary society, ranging from death to heritage, ecology, etc. This wide range of research encompasses numerous topics of strong public interest, providing excellent opportunities for media engagement. Members of CRCS have contributed regularly to public debates in the Netherlands and internationally, concerning topics such as leaving religion, euthanasia, conflicts and geopolitics, racism and islamophobia, and religion and public law. In addition, several members of CRCS have won prestigious prizes, awards, and other recognitions in recent years. The aim, stated in the self-evaluation report, to increase the number of popular publications with societal impact may further reinforce this trend, even though the objective is not yet reflected in the centre's recent output.

Ambitions for societal impact should never go at the expense of the scholarly output. Academic and popular publications produced at CRCS often go hand in hand, as fundamental research has an impact on societal sectors including health care, civil society, public policy and education. A particular strength of CRCS is its long-standing and ground-breaking role in archiving and disclosing research data on religion and spirituality in Dutch tradition and society. This is a good example of academically rigorous research deeply embedded in society.

Future-readiness

In the interview during the site visit, CRCS emerged as a robust research centre with a highly motivated staff committed to curiosity-driven research. The centre's viability is reinforced by its many interdisciplinary cooperations within RU and beyond, with museums, heritage actors, schools, and media. However, the overall research output (scientific and professional publications, lectures) has gone down during the period 2019-2024. Staff members did express their concern about the balance between research and teaching; a proposed reduction of the teaching load still waits to take effect.

As CRCS is by far the largest of all research centres within PTR (currently with eight full professors), its ageing staff makes it vulnerable, especially in view of current and future budget cuts. Ensuring the wide scope of topics and multidisciplinary approaches in the future will require several strategic choices (e.g., regarding the focus on historical and/or contemporary developments).

Although staff members seem to have a clear sense of CRCS's shared identity, there is room for improvement regarding the centre's external branding and name recognition. Merging the research departments into one would reinforce this identity, and a new name for the centre is recommended.

Given the focus on contemporary society and religious traditions, the boundary with other centres − particularly the Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity − may require some further definition. In the self-evaluation report, the ambition is expressed to find new avenues for the upcoming generation in the study of religion in the future. The committee is excited to see how this will be realized.

4.5. Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity

General findings

The Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity (CTHS) was founded in 2020 in response to recommendations made by the previous assessment committee. The discrete section Textual Sources of Judaism and Christianity was then merged with the Center for Catholic Studies to create one centre. CTHS brings together biblical scholars, historians of Christianity, and systematic theologians in a single research group. Where other research centres approach textual and historical studies as distinct from the study of theology, ethics and spirituality, CTHS views them as complementary disciplines. It explores 'religion and theology as historical phenomena, as contemporary practices, and as normative frameworks', as stated in the mission statement.

Research Quality

Since its inception in 2020, CTHS has developed a strong and diverse record of research in the fields of biblical studies, the history of Christianity, and systematic theology. Its strategy of prioritizing the publication of high-quality research outputs in first-class monograph series and top-tier international journals has paid dividends during the period under review. Several book-length studies, together with a large number of peer-reviewed articles, reveal the strong research performance per staff member. Researchers within the centre also maintain strong visibility as editors of and contributors to edited volumes and handbooks, many of which are published by leading university presses and other publishers, such as Bloomsbury T&T Clark, Brill, Cambridge University Press, de Gruyter, and Oxford University Press.

Researchers in CTHS make a significant contribution to international scholarly networks through their membership of editorial boards and steering committees of research units in various subject associations. The international standing of their research is heightened through collaboration with leading biblical scholars, theologians and historians, including the organization of major conferences, such as those on religious interaction in late antiquity, and the high-profile Radboud Prestige Lectures. There have also been notable examples of external grant capture in recent years, among which are NWO

funding for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, the ERC-funded project on oriental Christians in Europe, and also awards from other external sources such as the Templeton Foundation and the Getty Research Institute Scholars Program.

Societal Relevance

CTHS demonstrates the societal relevance of its research in various ways, especially through critical contributions to debates on LGBTQ+ identities and the Christian tradition, to the dialogue between faith and science, to investigations relating to public theology and feminist theology, and through engagement with greening initiatives in Dutch parishes and monasteries. The visibility of its research-driven societal impact has, moreover, been strengthened by nationally significant projects such as the publication of the intellectual biography of Titus Brandsma and the edition of his collected works.

The committee encourages CTHS to build on its attempts at aligning its research with societal matters. It could do so by identifying ways in which scholarly activities and initiatives organized by CTHS researchers – including individual research outputs as well as symposia and conferences – can be demonstrated more explicitly to relate to contemporary issues and challenges. In the committee's view, the centre's overall strategic plan for promoting the societal impact of its research could be significantly enhanced through collaboration with researchers from other centres, especially the Centre for Religion and Contemporary Society, and also by securing a wider representation of research-centred contributions from CTHS staff to outreach programmes such as Radboud Reflects.

Future-Readiness

Researchers within CTHS are well positioned for the future, given the growing interest in religion, culture, and identity in response to recent political and cultural shifts in the Netherlands and beyond. At the same time, the centre is experiencing a number of challenges. Some members are currently on extended leave and there are hiring freezes in certain subject areas, such as the history of Christianity. Such factors will inevitably have a detrimental effect on the internal coherence and balance of CTHS as it seeks to maintain a vibrant research culture and adequate capacity for PhD supervision.

In light of these challenges, the committee recommends that CTHS build on existing synergies but also develop new strategies for enabling its researchers to strengthen their coherence as a group. This could, for instance, be done through the organization of collective research days. Researchers within CTHS should be stimulated to exchange ideas and plan collaborative projects and grant applications that address the issues and challenges they have identified in their individual research agendas. In the past, researchers have primarily focused on themes of mutual interest – grounded in questions of identity formation and continuity – through their single-authored books and articles. Besides this, CTHS could develop the longer-term plan of collectively exploring the shared research questions of contemporary relevance that they

are seeking to investigate as a group of researchers belonging to complementary disciplines.

4.6. Radboud Center for Philosophy and Society

General findings

The Radboud Centre for Philosophy and Society (RCPS) was founded in 2020 in response to the 2019 assessment, which highlighted the need for a proactive research programme uniting ethics and political philosophy. The committee found that RCPS has established itself quickly as an ambitious and socially engaged centre that addresses pressing contemporary issues from a strong basis in ethics and political philosophy. The centre demonstrates strong research quality with internationally recognized expertise on its specific themes, major grant acquisitions including ERC, ZonMW and Vici grants, and established collaborations with law, medicine, and social sciences. Since its foundation, RCPS has strategically and successfully focused on building internal cohesion during a period of growth and transition – key for a new centre. The centre's openness to Continental approaches (with opportunities for collaboration with CCEP) and especially its multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approach position it as an essential partner in critical debates across the university and beyond.

Research quality

The centre maintains excellent research quality, as evidenced by strong output in peer-reviewed journals and publications with leading publishers. Around the time RCPS was founded, the recruitment of three professors significantly enhanced the centre's capacity to achieve its mission. Its three research lines focus on interconnected contemporary issues: ethics and political philosophy grounded in empirical ethics and continental political philosophy; digitization and its consequences for social values; and sustainability and environment, addressing unsustainable development and our relationship to future generations and non-human life.

The centre fulfils its mission through contributions to both the field of philosophy via high-quality peer-reviewed publications and to public debates surrounding pressing societal issues. The committee particularly commends the centre's strategic focus on digitization, which is a very pressing current issue and crucial for the centre's positioning.

However, the committee notes a significant structural concern: a large cohort of relatively junior assistant professors with few associate professors creates vulnerability in leadership continuity and limits senior mentorship opportunities. Concerns about clear, consistently applied criteria for promotion as well as opportunities for leadership development (noted elsewhere in this report) deserve special attention going forward, as does the issues of how these are perceived by assistant professors within the centre. The retirement of two full professors in the first research line and departure of one associate professor without certainty of replacement threatens the centre's research capacity and thematic coverage in critical areas. The recent

recruitment of an assistant professor in continental political philosophy is welcome in this regard, but the committee questions whether this alone will be sufficient to address the gap left by the retirement of senior scholars. This is especially the case given the heavy demands placed on RCPS for teaching on popular topics and for societal impact, often with added difficulties associated with public engagement in an increasingly polarized political culture.

Societal relevance

RCPS has demonstrated exceptional societal relevance, for example through its engagement with grassroots initiatives, leadership of the Post-Covid Network Netherlands Ethics Platform, and active engagement with issues and activism related to racism, political conflict, digitization, and disability activism. The centre's engagement with a wide variety of social, political, and cultural actors reflects its commitment to philosophy that is both rigorous and socially impactful. The centre's varied thematic foci – violence, democracy, digitization, and sustainability – directly address issues of increasing urgency and social and political attention, ensuring the centre's continued relevance.

However, the current volatile political climate introduces increased risks, particularly of potential (and perhaps unwarranted) perceptions by public and students of a biased agenda. In discussions of politicized topics, it is vitally important – for its viability and effective impact – that RCPS preserves an independent and critical voice, based on rigorous scholarship and research integrity. RCPS has shown innovative ideas on how to address these challenges in colloquium discussions. The committee recommends that RCPS take on a leading role in fostering sustained and open discussion of these issues, with vital support from the Faculty of PTR.

Relatedly, the point raised in the self-evaluation report about the emotional toll of being in the public eye is important. Strong social engagement creates risk of emotional burdens for staff members, and it is vitally important that the institute leadership works with key players inside Radboud University and beyond to ensure adequate support and protections for independent scholarships in all areas of research, but especially in those that engage societal issues.

Future-readiness

RCPS's strong viability lies in building on very strong ethics research and philosophical scholarship and in addressing core themes that have increasing societal urgency and attention. The centre's ambition to strengthen external visibility through events, workshops, and conferences is timely and necessary. Since 2024/25, RCPS has invited external speakers, hosted a Post-Viral Ethics workshop, and planned additional workshops for 2025/26. The development of a blog section for the RCPS website, where members will write monthly posts on specific research themes, is a positive initiative that will highlight the talents of junior members and help establish their position in academic and societal debates.

Whilst the centre's individual members' expertise is well-recognized, broader recognition of RCPS by peers and societal stakeholders remains modest, partly

as a strategic choice to focus on building internal cohesiveness as a relatively new centre. The committee encourages RCPS to realize its ambitions for enhancing its visibility and profile, both nationally and internationally. In its view, ongoing efforts to further enhance external visibility and strategic positioning will be pivotal for the centre's future. RCPS' ambition to deepen reflection on continental philosophical traditions through cooperation with the Centre for Continental European Philosophy (CCEP) and to foster more frequent formal and informal research meetings is welcome, and related plans should be made concrete.

In addition to the wider concerns about budget cuts, there are particular concerns about the especially high *de facto* burdens – including the heavy responsibility in education and societal impact – may strain the ability of the centre's staff to ensure time for the fundamental research on which those other activities build. These external pressures, combined with the internal vulnerability created by the junior staffing profile and upcoming retirements, make strategic planning for leadership development and succession particularly urgent. The challenges mentioned in connections with societal relevance above deserve special attention in this connection.

Despite being in a relatively early phase of its development, RCPS has consolidated itself and is well-positioned to make the transition to its next phase. This transition will require careful attention to leadership development, strategic recruitment, external visibility, and sustainable work practices that protect staff wellbeing whilst maintaining the centre's strong societal engagement.

5. Management and viability of PTR

5.1. Profile, management and organization

In the committee's view, PTR continues to be very well positioned for the future and has made considerable strides in strengthening its foundation since the previous assessment. The impressive breadth, quality, and quantity of research production, combined with PTR's distinctive international visibility and impact, demonstrate that the institute is punching well above its weight on the global stage. PTR's unique position as the only Dutch institute combining philosophy, theology, and religious studies in such an integrated manner provides a distinctive competitive advantage that has been leveraged effectively to build strong national and international networks. The institute's continuing coordination of Radboud Reflects, alongside its expanded public engagement through media presence and focus on contemporary challenges such as digitization and civil discourse, shows that PTR has successfully maintained and deepened its high-impact contribution to society while keeping this work closely integrated with the research expertise of (most of) its centers.

The committee is impressed by PTR's strategic approach to growth and opportunity. The success in securing major grants from funding bodies such as ERC and NWO reflects not only the quality of the research but also a maturing institutional capacity, strengthened through the strategic hire of a dedicated grant advisor. The management team's candid awareness of challenges facing the institute, combined with their open and constructive attitude, gives the committee confidence in PTR's capacity for continued development. The significant steps taken during the review period toward greater cohesion and coherence within the institute – including the reorganization through splitting two centres and the introduction of cross-center joint PhD supervision – indicate that PTR is actively evolving into a more fit-for-purpose structure, while recognizing this as an ongoing process requiring continued attention.

Nevertheless, the committee finds that several areas merit careful consideration and further development to ensure PTR's long-term viability. The development of distinctive identities for research centers, while serving certain organizational purposes, needs to be balanced against the increasing importance of the institute's overall coherence. The committee encourages PTR to examine more closely what the centres share, in addition to what distinguishes them, and to consider whether a clearer one-to-one correspondence between centres and departments might strengthen both identity and operational effectiveness. Related to this, the committee strongly believes that the current self-presentation and branding of the centers needs improvement. Moreover, this seems to be widely acknowledged within the centres. The reliance on acronyms and the lack of immediately clear communication about each centre's focus may obscure rather than illuminate PTR's strengths. Developing a clearer strategy that reflects the strengthened

coherence of the centres would better serve the institute's visibility and impact. One related recommendation regards the collaboration with Radboud Reflects, which would benefit from closer lines of communication between the programme makers at Radboud Reflects and the coordinators of the research centers, so that the development of research strategies in the centre is in conversation with the planning done within Radboud Reflects.

More fundamentally, the committee recommends that PTR work toward developing a culture in which members of each centre understand themselves to be addressing a shared set of research questions. While bottom-up initiatives and individual research profiles remain important, a stronger sense of collective intellectual purpose within centres would enhance collaboration and create synergies that benefit both the quality of research and the efficiency of operations. This does not require uniformity, but rather a clearer articulation of the common ground and shared scholarly conversations that unite researchers within each center. The committee encourages the institute's leadership to continue proactively facilitating the ongoing, dynamic development of the identities of the centres, promoting a shared, collaborative research culture and being attentive to the autonomy of the researcher and the distinctive dynamics of the centres.

A worry to mention − sparked also by some remarks from Radboud University's Rector during the site visit – is that PTR's success in the domain of societal impact might lead some to mistakenly conclude that this deserves to be the core business of the institute. The committee is strongly of the opinion that the societal impact of all the centres of PTR should be founded in fundamental research and scholarship.

During the site visit, the committee became aware that there are some discussions about whether it would be beneficial to integrate PTR into a larger Faculty of Humanities. The committee takes no position on this matter, as it was not part of the terms of reference, or the self-evaluation. It is worth emphasizing however, that given how well PTR currently functions as a research institute, it is not clear that there is any necessity to instigate such a move.

5.2. PhD policy and training

Monitoring of PhD trajectories

In the previous evaluation report, the monitoring of PhD candidates was one of the main concerns raised by the committee. In the past few years, PTR has taken important steps to ensure greater success in the completion of PhD trajectories. The institute has implemented comprehensive reforms, including a new PhD project agreement for internal PhD students and a project proposal planning form for external candidates, with the section 'Clarifying Mutual Expectations' standing out as particularly important. Internal PhD candidates are now supported through a monitoring system with checkpoints at 7, 14, 24, and 36 months, while external candidates follow a defined six-year timeline to ensure timely completion. The new structured PhD project agreements anchor clear, shared expectations, and the fixed checkpoints help

to keep progress consistently on track. Overall, onboarding, support, and monitoring have improved significantly since the previous assessment.

While PhDs are generally satisfied with the new PhD project agreement, they report that the go/no-go moment creates unnecessary anxiety. Further clarification of the 'expectations' section in the agreement could help address this issue. Nevertheless, to make such clarity a consistent part of the institute's culture, leadership should actively encourage supervisors to communicate expectations more clearly and consistently across centres.

Training and support of PhD candidates

The Graduate School for Humanities provides strong support through dedicated coordinators (0.4 FTE), confidential advisors, and social activities for both internal and external PhD candidates.

The interviews during the site visit taught the committee that the satisfaction level is high regarding the PTR's PhD policy and training. PhD candidates praise the new PhD project agreement, the dedicated coordinators of the graduate school and PhD supervisors. Regarding the issue of social safety, in their discussions with the committee, PhD candidates reported feeling generally safe as young researchers within PTR, and that they know to whom they should turn if anything happens. This is emphasized during the onboarding of new PhD researchers. PhD candidates who completed the UTQ (BKO) training found it useful and greatly appreciated the opportunity. The institute appears to have appropriate measures in place to ensure a reasonable teaching load for PhD candidates.

External PhD candidates

The training and support external PhD candidates is a concern to the committee. First of all, it seems that there is no limit to the number of external PhD candidates that supervisors can take on. In addition, external PhD candidates who do not live in the Netherlands only meet with their supervisor online. In general, it seems that there are no regularly scheduled meetings with external PhD candidates and since that they are not well-integrated in the centres. This makes external PhD's particularly vulnerable. Although there has been some improvement since the previous evaluation, especially by the implementation of the new project proposal planning form, the committee encourages PTR to consider limiting the number of external PhD candidates that can be supervised in such a way that external PhD candidates feel well supported and that sufficient quality of their research can be ensured.

To help address the need for strengthening supervision for (external) PhD candidates, the committee recommends a modification of the policy regarding awarding associate professors *ius promovendi*, at the university level. The current policy of requiring two completed co-supervisorships creates unnecessary barriers. It could better be replaced by policies that focus on training and preparation for supervision.

PhD candidates as an asset to the centres

From the interviews the committee conducted with the different research centres, it learned that PhD candidates are particularly valued for bringing in new expertise. In addition, senior researchers pointed out the opportunities for cross-centre collaboration when co-supervising a PhD. To capitalize on this, the committee advises the institute to strengthen opportunities for cross-centre collaboration by encouraging the co-supervision of PhD projects by staff from different centres. It also recommends expanding the role of PhD candidates within the centres, for example by giving them responsibility for the 'work in progress' seminar, as already practiced in some centres.

5.3. Open science and research integrity

Open science.

PTR's research strategy emphasizes open science, as reflected in the free accessibility of publications ('open access') and data ('open data'). This strategy is supported by Radboud University's own accessible and sustainable database, the Radboud Data Repository, and is implemented through the faculty's Research Data Management policy. Through a combination of targeted university funding, publication in external open access venues and via the open-access Radboud University Press, PTR has achieved a noteworthy and timely increase in open access publications from 47.1% in 2019 to 63.4% in 2024. The committee strongly supports PTR's ambition to continue refining open science practices with a critical eye on developments in digitization and Big Data. The committee also recommends further increasing the percentage of open access articles and monographs by publishing them with Radboud University Press.

Research Integrity

To evaluate the ethical risks of empirical research involving humans, PTR has established the Ethics Assessment Committee for the Humanities, established in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts at Radboud University. The principles, protocols, and model documents provided by this committee have been adopted by other Dutch humanities faculties. This demonstrates PTR's leadership in research integrity standards. Since 2021, PTR has implemented mandatory plagiarism checks for all PhD dissertations.

PTR strives to enhance the accessibility and sustainability of its databases, and encourages researchers to publish relevant data via the Radboud Data Repository. The repository complements Radboud's Open Access strategy and ensures data integrity by making data and resources findable, citable, and securely archived, even when public sharing is not permitted. In addition, researchers can receive training in and assistance with research data management. They are provided by a dedicated data steward, who also oversees the implementation of the faculty's research data management policy. There is specialized support for handling personal and confidential data. The committee applauds these measures. It strongly recommends preserving the position of the data steward, even in times of severe budget cuts. The data steward is crucial for the university's open data policy, to avoid security issues. This in turn protects PTR's reputation, preventing errors and duplication of

research, and safeguarding compliance with funders' and regulators' requirements. Responsible and sustainable handling of research output ensures data integrity, reproducibility, and long-term accessibility, all of which strengthens the quality and credibility of PTR's research. It also mitigates legal and ethical risks and supports compliance with funder requirements

To familiarize incoming PhD candidates with requirements and support concerning research data management, PTR offers training on scientific integrity, as part of the PhD candidates' induction programme. At present, all PhD candidates participate in this two-hour workshop. Subsequently, all PhD candidates are required to submit a data management plan. However, candidates with data-intensive projects have reported that, at the time of the workshop, their projects were not sufficiently advanced to complete a well-developed data management plan. To solve this challenge, the committee advises the institute to offer a second, more practice-focused, workshop for this group of candidates, who work on empirical, data-intensive projects. It further support's a proposal made during the committee's interviews with PhD researchers, namely, opening this training up to other staff and interested MA students, as a way of further strengthening a culture of well-informed research integrity.

5.4. Human resources policy and acedemic culture

Promotion policy

At the time of the site visit, PTR was in the process of renewing its promotion policy, to align it with the national Recognition and Rewards programme that promotes recognition and reward for diverse academic contributions beyond traditional publications, for instance, to teaching, mentoring, societal impact, and open science. PTR also aims to move away from the classical promotion policy ('bevorderingsbeleid'), which focuses on advancing individual staff members within existing positions or ranks, typically based on performance, seniority, or achievements, and shift to a staffing principle ('formatiebeleid'). The new policy emphasizes aligning staffing and positions with the institution's strategic needs and budget, ensuring that roles are filled according to the organizational structure rather than automatic promotion pathways.

The committee is of the opinion that, in making this shift, it will be crucial to communicate the new policy clearly to staff. During the interviews, the committee detected some lack of clarity among staff regarding criteria for promotion and the impact of the new policy. It therefore recommends hastening the finalization and communication of the new promotion policy.

Furthermore, the committee cautions against using the need to fulfil administrative roles as the main criterion for making career transitions, which is clearly not the intention behind the broadening of criteria for promotion championed by the national initiative Recognition and Rewards (*Erkennen en Waarderen)*. Promotions should be based solely on academic, educational, or societal merit, not on practical or organizational considerations.

Pressure on research time

The committee found that work pressure has increased (and is anticipated to increase in the future) due to budget cuts or uneven teaching load distribution, and that other tasks may cut into research time. It recommends that policies to mitigate this shrinking of research time be made at the level of the board. A fair, realistic, and transparent calculation of non-research-related activities such as teaching and committee work would be an essential aspect of such a policy. These measures should then be communicated to staff members with clarity and sensitivity.

The committee highlights the critical importance of protecting time for research and the development of research profiles. While the institute's success in grant acquisition and public engagement is commendable, there is a risk that these activities, alongside teaching and administrative responsibilities, may place unsustainable pressure on researchers' time for fundamental scholarly work. In this regard, concerns about inequality in the distribution of the *de facto* teaching load across centres also deserve close attention. While the institute's leadership is to be commended for taking seriously concerns about work pressure and well-being, it was clear from the interviews that some of the reassurances − especially line-managers being understanding that time pressures can lead to lower research output − seemed to miss the central point that scholars are deeply concerned about having enough time to sustain their research activities. The committee recommends that the PTR leadership clarify and strengthen institutional commitments to safeguarding research time, ensuring that the impressive productivity documented for the period under review can be sustained over the long term, without compromising the well-being of staff or the quality of scholarship that forms the foundation of all other achievements.

Gender balance

The gender balance in the faculty has markedly improved during the period under review: from 66 male versus 32 female members of staff in 2019 to 68 male versus 60 female members of staff in 2024. However, there is still a gender gap at the level of full professor: 17 male versus 10 female. The committee therefore concludes that the individual and institutional obstacles for women to climb the hierarchical ladder at PTR need to be identified and removed. On the institutional level, the issue − like other issues regarding work-related pressure or the impact of societal reception of one's research − could become a topic of reflection in the research practice within PTR, as exemplified by the Radboud Center of Philosophy and Society. On an individual level, junior and mid-career female staff could be mentored by a female full professor, even from a neighbouring or related discipline if necessary.

Social safety

After some incidents in the past, the faculty has taken a broad array of measures to improve social safety, such as the institution of an Advisory Committee of Social Safety and Inclusion, the offering of leadership training and e-learning courses to promote social safety, the appointment of a confidential contact person, and the establishment of an open door policy.

However, in spite of all these measures, during the interviews it appeared that what social safety amounts to and requires, and why it is important, were not equally clear to or deemed important by all members of staff.

PhD candidates for instance alleged that while there is a presentation about what social unsafety entails in their onboarding programme, there is still some unclarity about what social safety actually means in practice. Social unsafety is complex and often a subjective experience. While guidelines are helpful and seem to be in place, this cannot be a substitute for a culture with structural support and regular and open conversations about a wide range of matters related to safety and inclusion, connected to concrete and familiar contexts. As a key aspect of ensuring social safety, it is particularly important that the Graduate School continue to ensure regular checkpoints, including a talk with the Graduate Coordinator without the supervisors.

Considering this, the committee recommends using example-based training to clarify what social safety is and requires. In addition, new ways to reach members of staff that may be reluctant to engage with this important topic should be considered. The self-evaluation document states that the annual appraisal review is a moment for each staff member to address social safety, which the committee commends. However, the form used to structure the appraisal interviews only includes a broad category in which this could be discussed: 'work atmosphere, work pressure and well-being, work-life balance, cooperation, codetermination, working conditions, leadership, leave, etc.' The committee suggests that social safety be more explicitly highlighted on the annual review form.

The committee found that not all post-docs within PTR take part in the onboarding sessions and the annual appraisals procedure. The committee's recommendation is to include them in these sessions and procedures, even if this requires additional efforts to accommodate those unavailable at the standard moments. Inclusion ensures that post-docs are fully informed about institutional practices and expectations. Annual appraisals provide crucial feedback that supports career progression and research quality.

Finally, given that there are opportunities to address social safety at different levels (annual review, faculty contact person, university confidential advisor) the committee recommends that a mechanism is developed to ensure that reports or complaints on certain individuals are centrally registered, so that cases of repeat or serious violations do not go unnoticed.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Programme for the site visit

Tuesday June 17

Location: Online

9.00 – 9.15 Preparatory meeting (committee only)

Research School NOSTER

9.15 – 9.45 Interview with PhD candidates
9.45 – 10.05 Interview with senior researchers
10.05 – 10.15 Recap by committee
10.15 – 10.25 Break

Research school OZSW

10.25 – 10.55 Interview with PhD candidates
10.55 – 11.15 Interview with senior researchers
11.15 – 11.25 Recap by committee

Tuesday, June 24

Location: Hotel Van der Valk, Nijmegen-Lent

14.15 – 15.00 Welcome and introduction by the dean & introduction by director of research and research office
15.00 – 16.30 Preparation of site visit (committee only)
16.30 – 17.10 Interview with Research School NOSTER
17.10 – 17.30 Closed session committee
17.30 – 18.10 Interview with Research School OZSW
18.10 – 18.30 Closed session committee

Wednesday, June 25

Location: Radboud University campus

9.00 Welcome by the rector magnificus in the presence of the director of research and the heads/research coordinators of the research centers
9.15 – 9.30 Closed session committee

9.30 – 10.10	Interview with Center for Cognition, Culture and Language (CCCL)
10.10 – 10.30	Closed session committee
10.30 – 11.10	Interview with Center for Contemporary European Philosophy (CCEP)
11.10 – 11.30	Closed session committee
11.30 – 12.10	Interview with Center for the History of Philosophy and Science (CHPS)
12.10 – 12.30	Closed session committee
12.30 – 13.30	LUNCH (committee only)
13.30 – 14.10	Interview with Center for Religion and Contemporary Society (CRCS)
14.10 – 14.30	Closed session committee
14.30 – 15.10	Interview with Center for Textual, Historical, and Systematic Studies of Judaism and Christianity (CTHS)
15.10 – 15.30	Closed session committee. Coffee/ tea break
15.30 – 16.10	Interview with Radboud Center for Philosophy and Society (RCPS)
16.10 – 16.30	Closed session committee
16.30	Break (coffee/tea etc.)
16.45 – 17.15	Interview with Radboud Reflects
17.15 – 17.35	Closed session committee

Thursday, June 26

Location: Radboud University campus

8.45	Closed session/preparation committee
9.00 – 9.30	Interview with Assistant and Associate Professors
9.30	Closed session committee. Coffee/ tea break
9.50 – 10.20	Interview with Postdocs
10.20	Closed session committee
10.40 – 11.10	Interview with PhD candidates
11.10	Closed session committee. Coffee/tea break
11.30 – 12.00	Interview with Graduate School of the Humanities (GSH)
12.00	Closed session committee
12.20 – 13.00	Meeting with the board of the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, the director of research and the grant advisor
13.00	Closed session committee
13.20 – 14.15	LUNCH (committee only)
14.15 – 16.30	Committee meeting to discuss results and preparation of site visit report
16.30	Presentation of preliminary findings, Erasmus building 15th floor
+/- 16.45	Informal gathering and drinks
+/- 17.30	End of program

Appendix 2. Quantitative data

Total scientific staff per appointment type, measured in quantity and FTE

	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE
Full professors	23	8,53	25	8,85	28	10,53	26	11,03	25	10,54	27	9,73
Associate professors	15	4,99	15	4,79	17	5,12	16	5,51	18	6,65	17	5,64
Assistant professors	18	4,59	15	4,49	22	5,66	25	8,64	22	8,34	26	9,34
Researchers/postdocs	21	6,54	22	10,38	20	11,62	20	10,59	22	13,1	17	8,68
PhDs	16	6,71	17	9,69	19	12,82	21	13,21	27	16,66	31	17,94
PhD teachers	2	0,34	2	1	3	1,45	4	1,91	4	2	4	2
Total	**95**	**31,7**	**96**	**39,2**	**109**	**47,2**	**112**	**50,89**	**118**	**57,29**	**122**	**53,33**

Overview scientific staff all centres, measured in quantity and FTE

	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE	#	FTE
CCCL	11	3,82	8	3,25	10	3,65	11	4,8	13	6,35	14	5,72
CCEP	11	3,29	11	3,65	12	4,45	12,5	4,34	9,5	3,97	10,5	4,11
CHPS	13	4,13	12	4,41	14	5,31	14,5	6,11	21,5	8,35	20,5	10,57
CRCS	31	9,73	32	13,33	37	16,45	35	17,42	35	17,99	38	15,92
CTHS	13	5,63	14	7,08	18	7,63	17	6,69	16	6,9	14	4,95
RCPS	16	5,1	19	7,48	18	9,71	22	11,53	22	13,23	24	11,56
Total	**95**	**31,7**	**96**	**39,2**	**109**	**47,2**	**112**	**50,89**	**117**	**56,79**	**121**	**52,83**

** 1 independent full professor (0,5fte) for 2023-2024*

Funding

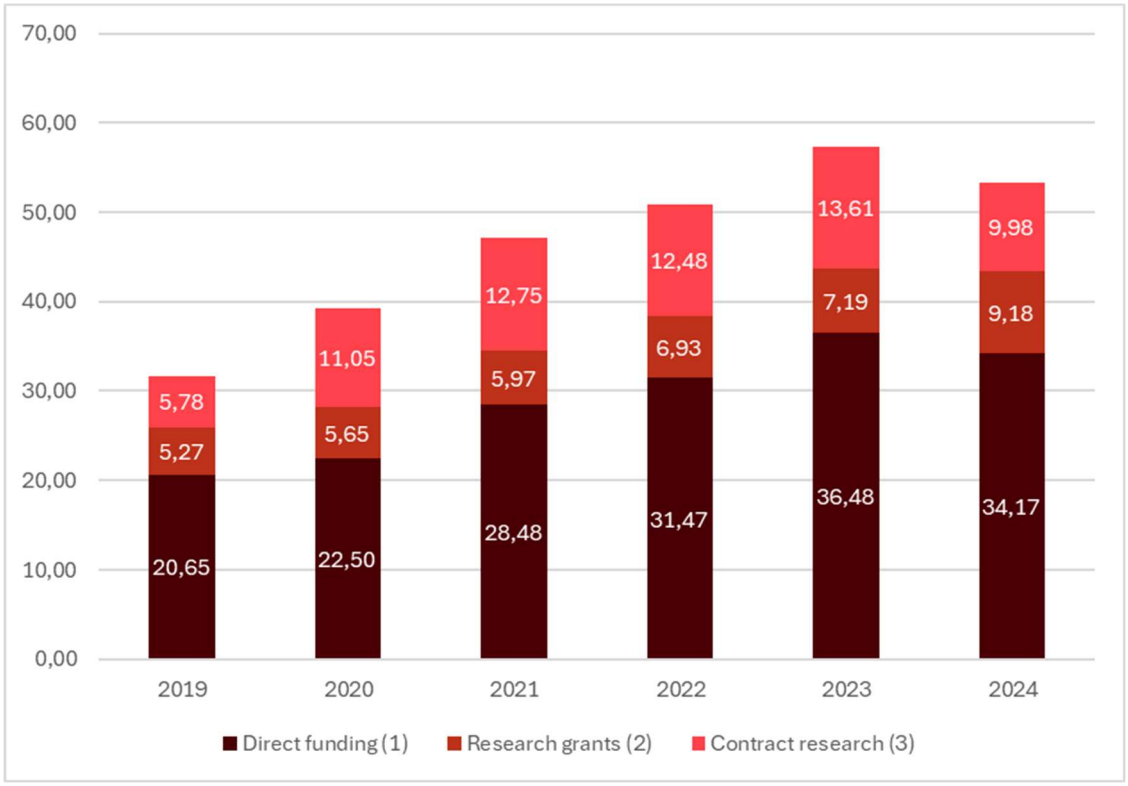
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
Funding:	**FTE**	**%**	**FTE**	**%**	**FTE**	**%**	**FTE**	**%**	**FTE**	**%**	**FTE**	**%**
Direct funding (1)	20,65	65,2%	22,50	57,4%	28,48	60,3%	31,47	61,9%	36,48	63,7%	34,17	64,1%
Research grants (2)	5,27	16,6%	5,65	14,4%	5,97	12,7%	6,93	13,6%	7,19	12,5%	9,18	17,2%
Contract research (3)	5,78	18,2%	11,05	28,2%	12,75	27,0%	12,48	24,5%	13,61	23,8%	9,98	18,7%
Total funding	**31,70**		**39,20**		**47,20**		**50,89**		**57,29**		**53,33**	
Expenditure (x1,000 €):	**€**	**%**	**€**	**%**	**€**	**%**	**€**	**%**	**€**	**%**	**€**	**%**
Personnel costs	3,444	93%	4,047	95%	4,426	94%	5,167	93%	5,806	95%	5,617	95%
Material costs	242	7%	195	5%	280	6%	360	7%	300	5%	265	5%
Total expenditure	**3,686**		**4,242**		**4,706**		**5,527**		**6,106**		**5,882**	

Note 1: Direct funding (core funding / lump-sum budget).

Note 2: Research grants obtained in Dutch national scientific competition (i.e. grants from NWO and KNAW).

Note 3: Research contracts for specific research projects obtained from external organisations such as industry, government ministries, European organisations, and charitable organisations.

Funding per source, per year, in FTE



Success rate of internally funded PhDs*

Starting year	Enrolment			Total	Graduated in year 4 or earlier		Graduated in year 5 or earlier		Graduated in year 6 or earlier		Graduated in year 7 or earlier		Not yet finished***		Discontinued		Total graduated	
	Male	Female	Non-binary		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2016	4	0	0	4	2	50%	2	50%	2	50%	3	75%	0	0%	1	25%	3	75%
2017	1	0	0	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
2018	1	1	0	2	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%
2019	4	2	0	6	0	0%	2	33,3%	4	66,7%	-	-	2	33,3%	0	0%	4	66,7%
2020	3	2	0	5	0	0%	1	20%	-	-	-	-	4	80%	0	0%	1	20%
2021	0	1	0	1	0	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Total**	**13**	**6**	**0**	**19**	**2**	**10,5%**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**8**	**42,1%**	**2**	**10,5%**	**9**	**47.4%**
2022	3	2	0	5														
2023	3	4	0	7														
2024	4	1	2	7														

* A dissertation is formally considered completed when it has been successfully defended. On average, there is a lapse **of 5 months (144 days**) between the approval of the thesis by the Dissertation Examination Board and the public defence and award ceremony for all PhDs reported in this evaluation period.

** The total success rates for year 5 and later cannot yet be calculated, as this period has not yet passed for all cohorts. The success rates based on the earlier cohorts are, respectively:

- Graduated in year 5 or earlier: 28,8% (5/18);
- Graduated in year 6 or earlier: 53,8% (7/13);
- Graduated in year 7 or earlier: 57,1% (4/7).

*** At the time of writing this report (Spring 2025), three more PhD dissertations have been approved (1 male and 2 female candidates, all started in 2020).