

**RESEARCH REVIEW**

**AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR  
HUMANITIES RESEARCH**

ASH

AMSTERDAM SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

**UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM**

QANU  
Catharijnesingel 56  
PO Box 8035  
3503 RA Utrecht  
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0) 30 230 3100  
E-mail: [support@qanu.nl](mailto:support@qanu.nl)  
Internet: [www.qanu.nl](http://www.qanu.nl)

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# REPORT ON THE RESEARCH REVIEW OF THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

## 1. FOREWORD BY COMMITTEE CHAIR

De commissie die de opdracht kreeg het onderzoek van de Amsterdam School of Historical Studies (ASH) in al zijn facetten te evalueren, kon dat in ideale omstandigheden doen. Zij beschikte over de nodige documentatie en kon tijdens haar werkbezoek in december 2018 in een diepgaande discussie met de ASH onderzoekers treden. Zij waardeerde de correcte redactie van de documentatie en vooral ook de open en constructieve sfeer tijdens het werkbezoek.

Onderzoekers in de geesteswetenschappen wordt vaak aangepraat dat hun disciplines in een 'crisis' verkeren. Het onderzoek dat de commissie in Amsterdam leerde kennen en moest beoordelen, toont een realiteit die veel minder somber is. De commissie trof een krachtige, dynamische en optimistische onderzoeksgemeenschap aan. Tegelijk kon zij met deze gemeenschap tot een vruchtbare gedachtewisseling komen over aspecten van het onderzoek en de onderzoekscultuur die inderdaad zorgwekkend zijn op het niveau van de geesteswetenschappen als geheel: de moeilijkheid robuuste financiering te bekomen, de versnippering van de onderzoeksinspanningen, een publicatiecultuur die afwijkend is van de dominante biomedische wetenschappen en wetenschap & technologie, een geringer maatschappelijk prestige.

De commissie raakte onder de indruk van de sterkte van het in ASH verrichte onderzoek en is ervan overtuigd dat de reflexieve, kritische en niet-defensieve ingesteldheid van haar onderzoekers ten aanzien van de heersende wetenschapscultuur in en buiten de geesteswetenschappen een wissel op de toekomst is.

Prof. dr. Jo Tollebeek,  
Committee Chair



## 2. THE REVIEW COMMITTEE AND THE PROCEDURES

### **2.1. Scope of the review**

The review committee was asked to perform a review of the Amsterdam School of Historical Studies (ASH) at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The review was part of the assessment of the Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR). This assessment included the research units ARTES, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), Amsterdam School of Historical Studies (ASH) and Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM), as well as the national research schools Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis (NICA), the Research School for Media Studies (RMeS), the Onderzoekschool Literatuurwetenschap (OSL), and the Research Institute and Graduate school of Cultural History (Huizinga Institute). The assessment was performed by two committees in two separate site visits. ASH was assessed as part of Cluster II, which also included the Huizinga Institute, ARTES and AHM.

In accordance with the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2015 – 2021, amended version, for research reviews in the Netherlands, the committee was asked to assess the quality, the relevance to society and the viability of the scientific research of the research unit as well as the strategic targets and the extent to which the unit is equipped to achieve these targets. Furthermore, a qualitative review of the PhD training programme, research integrity policy and diversity was part of the committee's assignment. Finally, in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the committee was asked to discuss ASH's further profiling. Also, the committee was asked to assess the viability of the research: is the strategy of the school sufficiently solid? What further measures could be taken to ensure the strength and scope of the ASH-research?

### **2.2. Composition of the committee**

The composition of the committee was as follows:

- Prof. dr. Jo Tollebeek (KU Leuven)
- Prof. dr. Anne-Laure Van Bruaene (Ghent University)
- Dr. Gijs van der Ham (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)
- Prof. dr. Alun Jones (University College Dublin)
- Prof. dr. Johannes Paulmann (Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz)
- Prof. dr. Maria Patrizia Violi (University of Bologna)

The committee was supported by dr. Els Schröder, who acted as secretary on behalf of QANU.

### **2.3. Independence**

All members of the committee signed a statement of independence to guarantee an unbiased and independent assessment of the quality of ASH.

### **2.4. Data provided to the committee**

The committee received the self-evaluation report from the unit under review and some supporting material on research data management, its integrity policy, international benchmarking and available funding opportunities within the UvA.

It also received the following documents:

- the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP);
- the Terms of Reference (ToR);
- the Quality and Relevance in the Humanities (QRiH) manual;

### **2.5. Procedures followed by the committee**

Prior to the site visit, the committee members independently formulated a preliminary assessment of the units under review based on the written information that was provided by AIHR. This documentation also included quantitative data (see Appendix 2). The final review is based on both



the documentation provided by ASH and the information gathered during the interviews with management and representatives of the research unit during the site visit.

The site visit took place on 12-14 December 2018 in Amsterdam (see the schedule in Appendix 1). At the start of the visit, the committee was briefed by QANU about research reviews. It also discussed its preliminary assessments and decided upon a number of comments and questions. The committee agreed upon procedural matters and aspects of the review. After the interviews, the committee discussed its findings and comments in order to allow the chair to present the preliminary findings and to provide the secretary with argumentation to draft a first version of the review report.

The draft report by committee and secretary was presented to ASH for factual corrections and comments. In close consultation with the chair and other committee members, the comments were reviewed to draft the final report. The final report was presented to the Board of the UvA and to the management of ASH.



## 3. ASSESSMENT OF THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

### **3.1. Introduction**

The Amsterdam School of Historical Studies (ASH) was founded at the University of Amsterdam in September 2014 and evolved out of its predecessor, the Institute for Culture and History (ICG). It fosters the analysis of the past from antiquity to the present day, exploring historical topics in tandem with their contemporary implications. ASH researchers incorporate a variety of (inter)disciplinary perspectives, particularly those related to history, the history of art, literature and religious studies. The School encourages collaborations between scholars along thematic lines, according to geographical focus and in terms of period.

ASH is currently home to a community of 211 scholars (including PhD researchers and postdocs), comprising 77,2fte in total (2017). In addition, 16 special chairs are endowed at ASH. With its 107 members of academic staff and 104 PhD candidates, ASH is one of the larger units within the Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR). The School currently encompasses 18 research groups and 3 research centres: the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, the Amsterdam Centre for the Study of the Golden Age, and the Amsterdam Centre for Urban History.

ASH academic focus departs from the following general ambitions:

- To create a dynamic, stimulating, and inclusive research environment for high quality research activity.
- To maintain and strengthen high quality intellectual standards and publish academic work with top-ranking international and national publishers and in leading peer-reviewed academic journals and secure research grant income from national and international funding bodies.
- To encourage collaborations between the members through focused research centres and research groups.
- To facilitate and promote outreach of research.

### **3.2. Profile, strategy and management of the school**

#### *Profile and strategy*

According to the self-evaluation report, ASH academic focus departs from a broad definition of historical studies. ASH does not limit itself to a particular period, narrowly-defined discipline, or method, but has developed particular strengths in European history (from ancient to modern), urban history, and the Dutch Golden Age. In recent years, the history of medicine and public health has also achieved growing importance. These common interests have largely developed through bottom-up initiatives in ASH's autonomous research groups, albeit with a close eye to outside factors including the Dutch Nationale Wetenschapsagenda [National Research Agenda], EU calls, and guiding public issues.

ASH expects its members to deliver research output that conforms to the highest scholarly standards in their respective fields. It recognises that this output can take different forms, and it values the ways scholars with different qualities complement, inspire, and reinforce each other. ASH is also firmly rooted in contemporary society. Current political debate, societal challenges, and cultural developments inform its research agenda; by the same token, many ASH researchers themselves play active roles in public discussions through their publications, media appearances, public lectures, and contributions to museum exhibitions. Also, ASH scholars regularly collaborate with other academic and cultural institutions and take full advantage of being located in the heart of the City of Amsterdam. Amongst its collaborations, it includes organisations and institutions such as the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Huygens Institute for Dutch History, the Rijksmuseum, the National Maritime Museum and the Amsterdam Museum.



The committee considers ASH very attractive as a research school. The range of topics studied at ASH is impressive. This creates a very dynamic school with a wide chronological, geographical, and disciplinary scope. In the committee's view, ASH is a very strong school with great potential. ASH also appears to have the means and the capacities to reach its ambitious aims. Nevertheless, the committee considers ASH's current profile slightly diffuse and too general. It misses a clear mission statement that explicitly communicates the intellectual profile of ASH. According to the committee, ASH should claim its own ground vis à vis other schools of history in the Netherlands and abroad by defining its own unique intellectual footprint. This intellectual footprint does not need to limit ASH's thematic scope, as the committee is enthusiastic about its broad range and aims, but could be formulated along conceptual or methodological lines while also indicating particular research lines and strengths of the School's research programme. The committee also thinks a more coherent valorisation strategy could strengthen ASH's profiling in both national and international terms, especially as the School is already acutely aware of the inherent advantages of its location and strong local connections to the City of Amsterdam and local and national institutions and organisations based in its vicinity.

#### *Organisation of research*

In line with its profile, research at ASH is wide-ranging. This proliferation of research initiatives is a direct consequence of the School's strategy. ASH promotes an open, bottom-up approach in order to enable curiosity-driven, innovative and topical research. Its research centres and members within research groups work relatively autonomously. As a result, initiatives are always first discussed within these units and are widely supported by participants before feeding into the School's research profile. This structure allows for innovative and creative research that is widely supported by ASH staff members and also creates healthy research dynamics, based on trust.

ASH's three centres are more established research units in which members of several groups participate. Both groups and centres are responsible for organising seminar series, reading groups and conferences, preparing grant proposals, and fostering regular exchanges between PhD candidates and more senior staff members. Much of ASH's annual operational budget is used to support these activities. To further the development of shared foci, increase visibility, and connect different groups, ASH circulates a twice-monthly electronic newsletter, organises joint trainings and meetings, and awards annual prizes for the best PhD theses and valorisation projects.

The committee notes that this structure seems to work well for ASH and its broad range of research interests. It would advise, however, to clarify further the profile of the research centres and research groups within ASH and to connect these to measurable goals and targets. Scaling down on the number of research groups should hereby be considered. The committee also noted that currently, there is an imbalance between the research centres and some research groups that needs to be addressed and reflected on. The distinction between groups and centres is not always clear. It is recommended to transcend the thematic approach of the research centres by highlighting distinct conceptual and/or methodological choices underlying their research. These could then also sustain and represent the School's profile within the national and international academic landscape.

#### *Organisational framework*

ASH is firmly embedded within the organisational framework of the University of Amsterdam Faculty of Humanities, from which it receives an annual budget. From 2014 onwards, the Research School has been one of five research schools organised under the umbrella of the faculty-wide Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR). The other four schools are: the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), the Amsterdam School for Regional, Transnational and European Studies (ARTES), the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM), and the Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication (ACLIC). Within the AIHR framework, ASH develops shared policies with the other research schools in the areas of funding and support for grant applications, assessment of research output, appointments and career development, and doctoral policies (recruitment, funding, supervision and training of PhD students).

During the site visit, the committee discussed the added value of AIHR, an extra management layer adding to the complexity of the organisational structure with representatives from AIHR and all five research schools (ARTES, AHM, ARTES, ASCA and ACLC). It found out that as an administrative body located between faculty and research schools, AIHR effectively acts as a go-between. AIHR influences the research schools' strategy so that it aligns with faculty- and university-wide ambitions. It helps the schools to formulate goals that align with the National Research Agenda, both in terms of themes and public engagement. Additionally, the AIHR umbrella allows for a more effective organisation, in particular with respect to organisational support. As a result, financial cuts on the total amount of support staff were adequately compensated by a more effective organisation. This limited the negative effect of financial cuts for research staff and research allowances.

Conversely, AIHR is able to defend the interest of the research schools in a faculty-wide setting. In conversation with representatives of ARTES, AHM and ASH and AIHR, the committee was told that the AIHR Research Council plays an active role in protecting the research time (40%) allocated to AIHR scholars. In a time of cuts, the Research Council managed to protect the total amount of research time (100 FTE) available for the schools, which is commendable in the committee's view. AIHR also facilitated that the research schools and their demands have gained influence in the hiring process of new faculty. Previously, teaching duties were the faculty's first priority and the research perspective was less dominant in the process; now, a research perspective has been added to the process. Due to AIHR, the recurrent problem of friction between teaching obligations and research opportunities has been resolved (as far as possible) in a more structural manner and through AIHR, the research schools are now able to influence hiring strategies more effectively in the period under consideration.

The committee concluded that AIHR provides useful support to the research schools under its umbrella, including ASH. It awards extra scholarships to talented scholars in order to complete grant applications or build their CV. AIHR has a grant team, which assists designated scholars in writing funding applications, and allows for researchers to be relieved from teaching duties while writing an application. Furthermore, AIHR has the resources to appoint five researchers each year who have been awarded a substantial grant. It also assists heads of departments in making HR decisions. The committee saw that this umbrella structure is effective. It is pleased to see that the more top-down strategic agenda stimulated by AIHR complements and gives direction to the various research schools' bottom-up approach. This more centralised direction is considered important by the committee for the creation of a clear stand-out identity for the individual research schools.

#### *ASH management and community building*

The School's daily management is headed by ASH's Director. The Director is a member of the AIHR Research Council chaired by AIHR's Director, which discusses the implementation of faculty policies in the research schools. The Director is responsible for the quality of research, its overall coherence and output and the implementation of Faculty policy. More specifically, the Director monitors the activities of the different research groups, considers funding applications, advises about vacancies and promotions, sits on all the School's appointment panels and reviews the progress of PhD projects. In operational matters, the ASH Director is assisted by the School's Coordinator and Office Manager, and is advised by the ASH Advisory Board. The Board convenes at least twice a year and consists of senior ASH academics and representatives of the PhD community. The 3 research centres and 18 research groups each have a dedicated Coordinator, who reports back on matters concerning their centre or group to the School's Director and the Advisory Board.

The committee considers ASH's organisation at first glance complex and relatively loosely structured. Based on discussions during the site visit, it concluded that this is partly due to the fact that ASH itself is the result of the clustering of various research groups that each used to have their own identity. Research centres and groups still have a large autonomy, but the committee verified that a degree of coherence is guaranteed through the School's governance structure. The managerial governance adapts to the various needs and demands within such a large research school, but may benefit from a slightly more directive, agenda-setting approach in terms of the profiling of the School,



as discussed above. Nevertheless, the committee also acknowledges that staff members were positive of this structure; they praised the School's management and appreciated the centres that, where necessary, offered clear chronological, geographical, and thematic remits. Staff members praised its Director's enthusiasm and openness to ideas and valued their academic freedom and influence on setting the School's research agenda.

Although ASH is a newly established research school, the committee met a dedicated community of researchers, who welcomed the committee in a positive atmosphere. This community feel is probably largely fuelled by the fact that ASH, albeit young as a research school, is clearly defined in its historical scope and its incorporation of relatively large, longer existing research centres. A clear positive is, according to the committee, ASH's attractiveness for PhD candidates who flock to ASH from wide and far and all clearly benefit from the broad scope and open structure of the School, which fosters initiatives and provides an interesting playground for young scholars to develop and formulate research ideas and opportunities.

### **3.3. Profiling of the school and viability of research**

The committee was asked to specifically assess ASH's profiling and the viability of its research. Its views on these aspects have been stated above as well as in the section below on research quality, social relevance and viability. In brief, the committee considers ASH's as a research school attractive and dynamic, with an impressive and promising range of research strands and a wide chronological, geographical, and disciplinary scope. However, the committee thinks that ASH could benefit from a more strategically defined mission statement that explicitly communicates the intellectual profile of ASH and clearly defines the School's unique intellectual footprint, perhaps along conceptual or methodological rather than thematic lines and acknowledging its particular strengths and/or aims. This is especially needed for those groups of scholars that currently give the School its interdisciplinary breadth; the committee noted that in particular the art historians at ASH seemed to be less structurally embedded in its vision and mission. The committee also thinks that a more coherent valorisation strategy could strengthen ASH's profiling in both national and international terms, especially as the School is already acutely aware of the inherent advantages of its location and strong local connections to the City of Amsterdam and local and national institutions and organisations based in its vicinity. This would make its research, as well as historical research on a (inter)national level, viable for the future.

### **3.4. Research quality**

The research of ASH can be qualified as excellent. The research groups and, in particular, two of three research centres (Golden Age and Urban History) enjoy a very high reputation. Some of the research here is truly world-leading in its scope, breadth, productivity and innovative force within the (sub)discipline. The committee noted that the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies is less visible in the research landscape. This is a clear area for further improvement in the coming years.

ASH is staffed by a strong and diverse group of dynamic scholars who are leading in a wide range of international subfields. This becomes particularly clear from the wide publication output, especially in the number of scientific monographs. ASH scholars publish with leading publication houses (e.g. Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press and Brill). Also, their monographs are favourably reviewed by the leading international journals and some of them have been awarded prestigious prizes, for example the Gerald Strauss Prize, or have been shortlisted for Book of the Year by the *Times Literary Supplement*. In its output, ASH also contributes to the preservation of the diversity of the Humanities by publishing in a wide variety of languages (English, Dutch, German, French). In the same vein, ASH has an excellent portfolio of 'hybrid' publications with a high societal impact and/or relevance (e.g. exhibition catalogues). These examples indicate a reflective and self-confident publication culture that clearly sets targets and supports its scholars to obtain these targets.

Another clear indicator of ASH's excellence is its researchers' success in securing important grant income. Several researchers have secured large, highly competitive research grants. In the period

under consideration, scholars secured 3 VENI grants, 3 VIDI grants, 2 Aspasia grants for female researchers, 1 Rubicon and 4 NWO-funded PhD grants. ASH members were also awarded 2 Niels Stensen grants and secured EU-funding, including 1 ERC Consolidator grant and 1 Marie Curie IF grant. It is also collaborator and recipient of funding under the Horizon2020-scheme. The ASH staff is the recipient of a high number of national and international fellowships and one honorary doctorate at the University of Göteborg. It also secured no less than 5 NIAS Fellowships with the KNAW, which is commendable. The staff is represented in many advisory boards of excellent standing and reputation (e.g. National Research Agenda, ERC) and editorial boards (e.g. *Low Countries Historical Review*, *Urban History*, *History of Humanities*, and board member for Brill-series). Without any doubt the research is robust.

The committee concludes that ASH is an excellent research school, in which researchers are involved in outstanding and ground-breaking research. Some groups and centres, in particular those with expertise on Dutch Golden Age and urban history, are without a doubt world-leading in the way they define the (sub)field and spur on new lines of inquiry. ASH's research culture is next to dynamic also reflective and benefits from a clear publication strategy. Publication targets are also met. Its publication record is impressive, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The committee appreciates the diversity of the School's output, which also shows an excellent portfolio of 'hybrid' products and publications in a myriad of languages. Another indicator of ASH's research strength is that ASH researchers secured many highly competitive grants and also occupy leadership positions at strategic places within the academic community, such as in grant application boards and editorial boards. The reputation of ASH staff is acknowledged with prestigious fellowships and honours. According to the committee, a similar research output and strong international representation can be expected in the years to come.

### **3.5. Relevance to society**

Research at ASH is reflective of and embedded within society. Its research addresses societal questions, by placing current issues in a historical context and by reflecting on these using a variety of approaches from different angles and perspectives. In doing so, ASH also has direct influence. This is reflected in its involvement in agenda setting and public engagement in debates, including contributions to the Dutch National Research Agenda and EU calls. The School's valorisation output is extremely varied, including books for a wider audience, articles in the established press, e.g. in *NRC Handelsblad*, *de Volkskrant*, and *De Groene Amsterdammer*. In addition, ASH researchers appeared in television and radio broadcasts, wrote for blogs and websites, gave lectures on public platforms and were involved in educational programmes.

Special acknowledgement is reserved for ASH's active involvement with cultural institutions. Members of the school were engaged in the creation of several exhibitions (for the Rijksmuseum, the Museum Prinsenhof Delft, the Frans Hals Museum, the National Maritime Museum, the Courtauld Gallery) and its publications, as mentioned above, also resulted in many products aimed at a large audience, with the clear example of extensive contributions to exhibition catalogues. In this respect, ASH strongly benefits from its central location in Amsterdam and has taken advantage from this unique position by creating meaningful partnerships with heritage and research institutions. This has led most prominently to 16 special professorships, most of which are endowed by external organisations (e.g. by Huygens ING, NEHA, KITLV, NIOD and the Van Gogh Museum), and a number of matching funds for PhD projects.

The committee considers ASH relevance to society robust and its impact very good. Its outreach activities are embedded within the City of Amsterdam and its local institutions, yet branches out. The committee noted, however, that many of the realisations are more incidental than structural and depend upon single – and often personal – initiatives or invitation. The committee is of the strong view that ASH is in the ideal position to develop a more coherent valorisation strategy which will help to identify new opportunities, better support one-off initiatives and, if possible, develop them into more structural collaborations – also outside of Amsterdam – which will add to the School's further relevance to society.



### **3.6. Viability**

According to the committee, the viability of ASH and its research is evident. ASH is a thriving and very robust research community that has been successfully embedded within the new faculty structure and also secured sufficient grants and funding to maintain its high-level research in times of financial pressures. The School comprises three large research centres and many smaller research groups. As an overarching structure, ASH would benefit from a clearer vision about its added value and from a stronger external profile, especially where its interdisciplinary nature (e.g. the role of art history) is concerned. More long-term planning (about the future of research centres and renewal or downsizing of research groups) is desired to maintain its current attractiveness for obtaining international and external funding.

Notwithstanding these observations, the committee also witnessed the way in which ASH's architecture is flexible, encourages bottom-up initiatives and guarantees a large autonomy of researchers. Staff members indicated that their academic freedom and the dynamic and flexible structure created such an inspiring and attractive research environment that it also fuelled their loyalty. Many indicated that they wished to stay on at ASH, in spite of the limited options for advancement and promotion due to the financial limitations of the faculty and lack of vacancies. The committee appreciates and values this encountered loyalty, but also considers the underlying structural issues a potential threat to ASH's viability in the long term. Structural financial support is needed to guarantee ASH's current excellent, in some areas even world-leading, position. At the level of AIHR, it is important to take measures to protect the allotted research time of the staff and to envisage a more ambitious sabbatical scheme to secure and maintain ASH's excellent research activities.

### **3.7. PhD programmes**

According to the self-evaluation report, ASH has a population of 104 PhD candidates with 107 member of scientific staff in December 2017. Of these PhD researchers, 58 are self-funded PhD students and 46 are employed by the Faculty. The committee considers these numbers impressive and further proof of the attractiveness, high standing and international reputation of ASH.

Directly funded PhD students are hired upon application by their project, and are supervised by two supervisors. At the start of their PhD trajectory, they set a time table with aims and goals. The PhD candidates, their supervisors and the ASH director agree upon an individual Training and Supervision Plan, which is signed by all. The first year of the PhD trajectory is dedicated to writing a pilot study, which is assessed by the supervisor and the ASH Director and an external reader. A negative assessment can result in termination of the PhD contract. After the first year, annual reviews are held with ASH's director to monitor progress and signal problems. Internal PhD students also appreciate the fact they are given an annual research fee of €1200 to cover costs of conferences and travel.

More and more directly funded PhD candidates are now hired within the context of larger nationally or European-funded projects. The committee learnt during the site visit that this created some challenges for the PhD candidates involved. Sometimes, these projects only allow for 3 years of research, are only 0.8 FTE or involve additional project work, which is not compensated with additional research time. The committee learnt that this issue was now being addressed with new PhD researchers, but understands that this setup created tensions and problems for those involved. Just as non-funded PhD researchers, PhD candidates funded on project basis have full access to ASH's activities and facilities and are encouraged to participate in and organise events.

Whereas PhD candidates used to have an appointment of 4 years 0,8fte, with the possibility to have an extension of 0,2 FTE for teaching in the second and third year, the standard is now 4 years 1,0 FTE. Teaching is done within their appointment. PhD candidates are in general not allowed to teach during their first and fourth year of their appointment so that teaching will not stand in the way of getting started with or finishing the dissertation. The topic of teaching in the second and/or third year is discussed during the yearly progress meetings with the supervisors and the research director.

If PhD candidates are willing to teach, the department will take into account their particular field and expertise in order to ensure that whatever they will teach is in line with their research, so that teaching reinforces rather than hampers their own research. The PhD supervisor(s) will be informed of the particular courses and teaching load and the research director has to give consent. As a rule, PhD candidates will only teach courses that are part of the fixed curriculum of a bachelor degree and will be guided by experienced lecturers. PhD researchers that teach are supported and encouraged to qualify for a Teaching Qualification ('BKO').

Currently, half of ASH's PhD candidates are self-funded. Their admission and trajectory is arranged in a less formal manner than that of internal PhD students. They usually apply directly to ASH. The director of the Research School assesses the quality and feasibility of the proposal and accepts or rejects the proposal, if necessary after consultation with the prospective supervisor. Prospective supervisors usually meet up with the PhD student before embarking on the project, but this is no formalised rule. External PhD candidates also write a pilot study at the start of their project, and can also be told to stop the project when it does not meet the standard. The pilot is either assessed at the end of the first year, or at a time previously agreed upon by PhD student and his or her supervisor. Self-funded PhD students also get a basic allowance for travel and conference attendance (with a maximum of €3000) and are enrolled by the Faculty in national research schools of their choice; the membership fee (€500) to the national research school of choice is deducted from the received allowance. They also receive desk space and have access to the same research facilities as directly funded PhD researchers. Self-funded PhD researchers also have the possibility to apply for a finishing scholarship of 0.5fte for one year to complete their thesis. This initiative is appreciated by the committee.

Despite the diverse funding systems (internal, external, self-funded), the committee was informed during the site visit that there is a strong community spirit among students. Students identify with and are loyal to the School and consider it a safe environment. The committee is pleased about ASH's inclusion of self-funded PhD candidates as members of its research community. The committee learned during the site visit that supervisors receive 300 hours of supervision per PhD candidate. In the case of internal PhD projects, half of this amount is received at the start of the trajectory and the other half after its completion. In the case of self-funded PhD candidates, the 300 hours are only received if and when the candidate finishes his or her thesis. This means that supervisors have to invest in self-funded candidates without being guaranteed a reward for their effort. This policy should be reconsidered, since the risk of taking on a self-funded PhD candidate should not lie with the supervisors alone.

Supervision can vary greatly between projects, but monthly contact between the candidate and the supervisors is a requirement and part of the Training and Supervision Plan. Supervision is evaluated annually. In case of problems, PhD candidates would approach the School's director for help and support, although nobody had any experience in doing so. The AIHR and ASH have procedures for mental support or conflict mediation, but these could be communicated better to both students and staff. PhD candidates mentioned that their fellow scholars at the School and supervisor also regularly checked whether they were doing and feeling well. This is considered an indicator of community spirit by the committee and also suggests the existence of a safe work environment for young scholars.

The training programme followed by PhD candidates is offered by the faculty's Graduate School of Humanities (GSH). Here, academic skills courses are offered on such topics as academic writing, presentation skills or building a career. The PhD candidates appreciated the fact that they met other PhD researchers in these courses, beyond their disciplinary scope and beyond the remit of the Research School. It helped them to learn as well from the practices within other schools and groups. For more content-oriented courses, PhD candidates can turn to a national research school. Most ASH doctoral candidates are based within those devoted to Cultural History, Political History, Classical Studies or Medieval Studies. In addition, ASH itself periodically schedules its own PhD Clinics, overseen by its Director, members of its Advisory Board, and other experienced faculty. To date, sessions have been devoted to tactics for developing effective and well-presented CVs, gaining



international experience and publication strategies. PhD candidates felt well-prepared and trained by the various bodies. The committee concludes that doctoral training, despite this complexity for outsiders, is functioning well and is able to offer tailor-made programmes.

ASH is demonstrably highly successful in attracting PhD students and even managed to raise its total numbers of PhD candidates over the period under consideration, despite financial cuts. This is commendable, according to the committee. Its success in terms of graduation rates is, however, less impressive. ASH is aware of its low completion rates for PhD candidates and has taken measures to tackle these issues by, amongst others, formalised procedures for supervision, a system of co-supervisors and pilot studies, measures to reduce teaching loads and some financial support for self-funded students. Current PhD candidates reflected with appreciation on these measures. The reaction by the School to these low completion rates seems apt by the committee. Nevertheless, the committee also realises that many of these young scholars are now employed on a less secure basis than before and that many, especially self-funded candidates, at several points during their time at ASH face financial stress. It therefore emphasises the need for structural and careful reflection on measures that can be taken to support PhD candidates at all stages of their training to continue to strengthen the programme's success rates.

### **3.8. Research integrity**

ASH researchers are bound by the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice. PhD students are informed about this code in their first meeting at the Graduate School for Humanities. Furthermore, research integrity is addressed in one of the optional skills courses for PhD students offered by the GSH. The Faculty of Humanities has an ethics committee, which uses a documented review procedure with clearly defined criteria. The ethics committee approves all interviews or experiments with human test subjects before the research commences. Research data management takes place according to university policy. Research data are managed in a data management system called UvA Figshare.

The panel studied these policies and concluded that they are rather generic and not attuned to the faculty's needs and practices. For instance, no thought is given to using digital humanities and its needs as an emerging field. Given the challenges that come with digital data and the citation of on-line sources, the committee feels that more attention could be paid to ethical and digital procedures. The Graduate School of the Humanities offers as part of the training programme for PhD candidates two core courses: a course on 'Research Data Management' and a course on 'Scientific Integrity'. In addition to these courses, PhD candidates seem to be briefed individually on matters of research integrity and ethics. However, the committee feels that this individual instruction should be conducted at a more centralised level and in a more structural way to guarantee that they all are correctly briefed and successfully prepared for the challenges ahead, in particular with respect to ethical procedures. Also, it advises to regularly address ethics and data management with staff members, as these policies tend to evolve with the advancement of digital humanities.

### **3.9. Diversity**

ASH adheres to the Faculty policy on diversity, which was provided to the committee. ASH is satisfactorily addressing gender diversity though has not yet reached gender parity: 35% of staff and 49% of PhD students is female. Moreover, ASH has been awarded 2 of the 7 Aspasia grants within the Faculty. The committee feels that ASH uses a rather limited definition of diversity; diversity transcends the single issue of gender. ASH has a very international staff, who also take leading positions in the School's structure and management. This is a reflection of the open and inclusive culture at ASH. Nonetheless, in the future the committee would like to see a broader definition of diversity to include other categories such as migration background, ethnicity or disability. Policy forwarding this issue should probably be designed at Faculty level.

### **3.10. Conclusions**

The committee concludes that ASH is an excellent research school defined by an interdisciplinary and bottom-up approach to historical studies. Many of its researchers are involved in excellent, ground-



breaking and innovative research. Some groups and centres, in particular those with expertise on urban history and the Dutch Golden Age, are without a doubt world-leading in the way they define the (sub)field and spur on new lines of inquiry. The School's publication record, excellent portfolio of 'hybrid' products, success in obtaining prestigious grants and the visibility of its members are further indicators of its excellent position and outstanding reputation, both nationally and internationally.

The committee considers ASH relevance to society strong and its impact very good. Its outreach activities are embedded within the City of Amsterdam and its local institutions, yet branches out. The committee considers ASH in the ideal position to develop a more coherent valorisation strategy which will help to identify new opportunities, better support one-off initiatives and, if possible, develop them into more structural collaborations – also outside of Amsterdam – which will add to the School's further relevance to society.

According to the committee, a similar research output and strong international representation can be expected in the years to come. ASH is a thriving and very robust research community. As an overarching structure, ASH would benefit from a clearer vision about its added value and from a stronger external profile, especially where its interdisciplinary nature (e.g. the role of art history) is concerned. More long-term planning (about the future of research centres and renewal or downsizing of research groups) is desired to maintain its current attractiveness for obtaining international and external funding. At the level of AIHR, it is important to take measures to protect the allotted research time of the staff, to create sufficient opportunities for advancement and to envisage a more ambitious sabbatical scheme to secure and maintain ASH's excellent research activities. Despite these remarks, the committee considers ASH's viability excellent.

Diversity and research integrity policies need to be revised and updated. The increase of self-funded PhDs requires adapted policies regarding their monitoring and the compensation for supervision. Overall, ASH offers a challenging and safe environment for its staff and PhD candidates, supported by a well-reviewed and effective PhD programme. The committee considers ASH a very strong research schools with a pivotal role in historical research, excellent output and reputation that is well-placed to maintain its current pioneering academic reputation.

### **3.11. Overview of the quantitative assessment of the research unit**

After having assessed the research quality, relevance to society and viability, and comparing that to the developments and standard in the field, the committee comes to the following quantitative assessments:

Research quality:	excellent	(1)
Relevance to society:	very good	(2)
Viability:	excellent	(1)





## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen the profile of the research school. ASH should claim its own ground vis à vis other schools of history in the Netherlands and abroad by defining its own unique intellectual footprint. It should also develop a more coherent societal strategy.
- Strengthen the profile of the research centres and research groups and further clarify their nature; connect groups and centres to measurable goals and targets.
- Address the current imbalance between the research centres and some research groups; it is recommended to transcend the thematic approach of the research centres by highlighting distinct conceptual and/or methodological choices underlying the research taking place within these centres. Scaling down the total number of research groups should hereby be considered.
- Create a programme allowing for sabbatical leave for staff members.
- Define diversity in broader terms to include other categories such as migration background, ethnicity or disability. Policy forwarding this issue should probably be designed at Faculty level.
- Reformulate policy on supervision hours for external PhD candidates. The risk of taking on a self-funded PhD candidate should not lie with the supervisors alone.
- Communicate existing procedures for mental support and conflict mediation more structurally amongst PhD candidates and staff.
- Support PhD candidates and continue to monitor their progress in order to strengthen completion rates.
- Update the current ethics code and formulate a more integrated policy on data management in due of the advancement of digital humanities. Communicate these policies structurally to both PhD candidates and staff members.





# APPENDICES



## APPENDIX 1: THE SEP CRITERIA AND CATEGORIES

There are three criteria that have to be assessed:

- Research quality:
  - Level of excellence in the international field;
  - Quality and Scientific relevance of research;
  - Contribution to body of scientific knowledge;
  - Academic reputation;
  - Scale of the unit's research results (scientific publications, instruments and infrastructure developed and other contributions).
  
- Relevance to society:
  - quality, scale and relevance of contributions targeting specific economic, social or cultural target groups;
  - advisory reports for policy;
  - contributions to public debates.

The point is to assess contributions in areas that the research unit has itself designated as target areas.

- Viability:
  - the strategy that the research unit intends to pursue in the years ahead and the extent to which it is capable of meeting its targets in research and society during this period;
  - the governance and leadership skills of the research unit's management.

Category	Meaning	Research quality	Relevance to society	Viability
1	World leading/excellent	The unit has been shown to be one of the most influential research groups in the world in its particular field.	The unit makes an outstanding contribution to society	The unit is excellently equipped for the future
2	Very good	The unit conducts very good, internationally recognised research	The unit makes a very good contribution to society	The unit is very well equipped for the future
3	Good	The unit conducts good research	The unit makes a good contribution to society	The unit makes responsible strategic decisions and is therefore well equipped for the future
4	Unsatisfactory	The unit does not achieve satisfactory results in its field	The unit does not make a satisfactory contribution to society	The unit is not adequately equipped for the future







## APPENDIX 2: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

### Day 1: 12 December 2018

<b>Time</b>	<b>Who/What</b>	<b>Where</b>
10:00-10:30	<i>coffee</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
10:30-12:30	Private meeting for committee members only with secretary QANU	E1.01E
12:30-13:00	Prof. Fred Weerman (dean), prof. Thomas Vaessens (director AIHR and vice-dean), dr. Elske Gerritsen (head of research)	E1.01E
13:00-13:45	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
13:45-14:15	Meeting on the educational programme for PhD's: dr. Carlos Reijnen (director Graduate School of the Humanities), Thomas Vaessens, and Elske Gerritsen	E1.01E
14:15-15:00	Prof. dr. Liz Buettner (director of ASH), Simon Speksnijder and Brigit van der Pas (coordinator of ASH)	E1.01E
15:00-15:30	<i>Tea break</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
15:30-16:15	Prof. dr. Rob van der Laarse (director AHM), dr. Ihab Saloul, Rene Does (coordinator AHM)	E1.01E
16:15-17:00	Dr. Christian Noack (director ARTES), Paul Koopman (coordinator ARTES)	E1.01E
17:00-18:00	<i>Drinks committee, secretary Qanu, Fred Weerman, Thomas Vaessens, Carlos Reijnen, Elske Gerritsen, directors schools and coordinators</i>	<i>F1.01</i>
18:30-21:00	<i>Diner committee, secretary Qanu</i>	<i>Restaurant De Compagnon</i>

### Day 2: 13 December 2018

<b>Time</b>	<b>Who/What</b>	<b>Where</b>
9:00-9:30	Private meeting for committee members only with secretary QANU	E1.01E
9:30-10:00	Meeting with PhD students of ASH, ARTES and AHM: Laura van Hasselt (ASH), Arjan Nuijten (ASH), Nanouschka Wamelink (ASH), Nour Munawar (AHM), Inge Kallen-den Oudsten (AHM), Milou van Hout (ARTES), Enno Maessen (ARTES)	E1.01E
10:00-10:15	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
10:15-11:00	Meeting with Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors of ASH: Moritz Föllmer, Charles van den Heuvel, Geert Janssen, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, Manon Parry, Gerard Wiegiers Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, Djoeke van Netten	E1.01E



11:00-11:45	Meeting with Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors of AHM: Patricia Lulof, Maartje Stols-Witlox, Frank van Vree, Maarten van Bommel, Carolyn Birdsall, Nanci Adler	E1.01E
11:45-12:30	Meeting with Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors of ARTES: Luiza Bialasiewicz, Barbara Hogenboom, Matthijs Lok, Marleen Rensen, Yolanda Rodríguez Perez	E1.01E
<i>12:30-13:15</i>	<i>Lunch with members of the research schools</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
13:15-13:25	Private meeting for committee member only with secretary QANU	E1.01E
13:25-14:00	Meeting with Elske Gerritsen, Thomas Vaessens, Christian Noack, Liz Buettner, Ihab Saloul	E1.01E
14:00-16:00	Private meeting for committee member only with secretary QANU	E1.01E
16:00 - 16:30	<i>Transport to Amsterdam Museum</i>	
16:30 - 18:00	Visit Amsterdam Museum	
<i>18:30-21:00</i>	<i>Diner committee members, secretary Qanu</i>	<i>Brasserie Ambassade</i>

### Day 3: 14 December 2018

<b>Time</b>	<b>Who/What</b>	<b>Where</b>
9:30-10:30	Private meeting (committee members only)	E1.01E
10:30-11:30	Meeting with representatives of the Board of Huizinga, including PhD's: Judith Pollmann (UL), Arnoud Visser (UU), Jan Hein Furnée (RU), Anjana Singh (RUG), Michael Wintle (UvA), Michel van Duijnen (PhD), Tymen Peverelli (PhD), Larissa Schulte Nordholt (PhD), Paul Koopman (coordinator)	E1.01E
<i>11:30-11:45</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
11:45-12:15	Meeting with director and coordinator of Huizinga for further questions	E1.01E
<i>12:15 - 13:00</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
13:00-15:00	Private meeting (committee members only)	E1.01E
<i>15:00-15:30</i>	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>E1.01D</i>
15:30-16:30 VOC	Presentation of preliminary conclusions by the Committee	V.O.C. Room
<i>16:30-</i>	<i>Drinks</i>	<i>V.O.C. Room</i>

## APPENDIX 3: QUANTITATIVE DATA

ASH	2015	2015	2016	2016	2017	2017
	#	fte	#	fte	#	fte
Scientific staff	121	42,1	97	36,5	84	33,1
Postdoc	13	8,6	11	7,8	7	4,3
PhD student (employed)	50	38,0	40	32,4	46	37,3
Support staff (general)		2,8		2,6		2,6
<b>Total Research staff (employed)</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>91,5</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>79,3</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>77,2</b>
PhD student (self-funded)	46		53		58	
Professors by special appointment	17		17		16	
<b>Total Research staff</b>	<b>247</b>		<b>218</b>		<b>211</b>	

Output category	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total in category
Refereed articles	66	58	73	62	259
Non-refereed journal articles	43	29	34	30	136
Books	43	26	26	24	119
Book chapters	107	108	83	84	382
PhD Theses	22	12	15	16	65
Conference papers	24	14	14	12	64
Professional publications	85	51	53	37	226
Publications aimed at the general public	73	51	35	26	185
Other research output	76	49	66	53	244
<b>Total publications</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>1680</b>

ASH	2015		2016		2017	
	fte	%	fte	%	fte	%
Scientific staff	34,72		27,83		26,14	
PD	1,00					
PhD	19,76		15,39		16,20	
<b>Direct funding</b>	<b>55,48</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>43,22</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>42,34</b>	<b>57%</b>
Scientific staff	5,94		7,24		5,55	
PD	4,66		6,43		3,98	
PhD	16,72		15,39		19,44	
<b>Research grants</b>	<b>27,32</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>29,06</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>28,97</b>	<b>39%</b>
Scientific staff	1,43		1,43		1,43	
PD	2,93		1,37		0,30	
PhD	1,52		1,62		1,62	
Contract research	5,88	7%	4,42	6%	3,35	4%
<b>Other</b>						
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>88,68</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>76,70</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>74,66</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>	<b>€</b>		<b>€</b>		<b>€</b>	
Direct Personal costs	5.919.509	56%	4.808.289	58%	4.581.050	60%
Indirect Personal costs	4.120.350	39%	2.994.609	36%	2.714.004	35%
Other costs	504.976	5%	530.653	6%	364.787	5%
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>10.544.835</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8.333.551</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7.659.841</b>	<b>100%</b>

Funding 2014-2017

Authorised	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>NWO</b>				
VICI	-	-	-	-
VIDI	1		1	1
VENI	1	1	1	-
Aspasia	-	-	1	1
Rubicon	-	-	-	1
PhDs in the Humanities	1	1	-	2
<b>EU</b>				
ERC Advanced	-	-	-	-
ERC Consolidator	-	-	1	-
ERC Starting	-	-	-	-
Marie Curie Skłodowska - IF	-	-	-	1
<b>KNAW</b>				
NIAS Fellowship	-	2	-	3
<b>Other</b>				
Niels Stensen	-	1	-	1
<b>Reasoned</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>NWO</b>				
Research Infrastructure - large	-	-	1	-
Gravitation*	-	-	-	1
Free Competition	1	2	1	-
Creative industries (KIEM)	1	-	-	3
Internationalisation in the Humanities	-	-	1	1
Graduate Programme	-	1	-	-
Programmatic research	1	1	2	-
Other	-	1	-	-
<b>EU</b>				
Calls FP7/ Horizon2020*	-	1	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total NWO</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total EU</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total KNAW</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total Others</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>

\* Partner, not PI

PhD Completion Rate 2010-2013

Enrolment	Starting year		total	Graduated in								pending		discontinued	
	male	female		≤ year 4	≤ year 5	≤ year 6	≤ year 7	#	%	#	%				
	#	#	#	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
2010	2	5	7	0	0	3	43	2	29	1	14	1	14	0	0
2011	8	8	16	0	0	2	13	5	31	0	0	8	50	1	6
2012	3	9	12	0	0	6	50	0	0	0	0	5	42	1	8
2013	2	7	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	100	0	0
<b>Total ASH</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
	34%	66%													