

Executive Board

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Date

February 2016

Position Executive Board of Eindhoven University of Technology regarding the research assessment of the department Chemical Engineering 2015

The Executive Boards of the technical universities of Delft, Twente and Eindhoven have commissioned an international peer review committee to perform an assessment of research on Chemical Engineering conducted by their research units. Chair of the peer review committee was prof. dr. Klaus Müllen (Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, Germany). The research assessment covered the period of 2008 – 2014 and was carried using the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP 2015 – 2021) for the research assessment of public organizations in the Netherlands. The findings of the review committee were published in the report Research Assessment Chemical Engineering 3TU 2015 (<https://www.tue.nl/onderzoek/onderzoeksbeoordelingen/>)

The Executive Board of Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) has accepted the report and wishes to thank the members of the committee for their considerable time and effort which they have spent on this assessment. The Executive Board highly values the positive judgement, the constructive criticism and the useful recommendations of the committee, and is very pleased with the findings, such as the recognition of the overall high standard of research quality in Chemical Engineering in the Netherlands. The committee is of the opinion that the research performed at the TU/e Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemistry is internationally recognized as excellent: “*The unit has been shown to be one of the few most influential research groups in the world in Chemical Engineering*”. The quality of the research program is considered to be exceptionally high. The two thematic clusters, Molecular Systems and Materials Chemistry and Chemical and Process Technology are balanced in size and complement each other both in terms of strong points, scientifically outstanding chemistry groups and groups excelling in valorisation of research results in the chemical and process technology cluster, and in terms of possible cross fertilization. The committee is impressed by the activity of the department in attracting high quality junior professors with an international background. The department is also recognized for making an outstanding contribution to society, indicated by e.g., the very strong interaction with the industrial world, the high number of high-ranking papers with industry, the very impressive list of spin-offs and start-ups, and the numerous prizes and valorisation grants.

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The committee has made very useful recommendations for continuance and improvement of the scientific quality and societal relevance of the research of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemistry. The committee states that the department's duality, viz. science and engineering, is actually one of the strengths and the resilience of the department and recommends to continue to strengthen the coherence and links between the two thematic clusters. To remain attractive to young talented staff and to further develop excellence of the department, the committee advises to use start-up packages for all new (senior and junior) staff, to consider clear career plans, e.g. to tackle the problem of the 'ius promovendi', and to have an open eye for the increasing work load. The decrease of the department's direct funding and the limited accessibility of national research funds cause an increasing amount of time investment in writing grant proposals, added to the teaching of a growing number of students and the coaching and supervision of PhD students. The university is encouraged to shorten and streamline the PhD trajectories by the reduction of 'bureaucracy' and the implementation in the Graduate School. The committee expresses concerns about the decrease of the direct funding of the department, next to a general decrease of direct government funding, due to a change in the TU/e internal funding allocation scheme.

The Executive Board of the TU/e and the Board of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemistry have discussed and adopted the results of the research assessment. The boards have started the implementation of the main recommendations of the review committee: e.g., starting discussions about the academic career path at TU/e (tenure track system), the TU/e funding allocation scheme, the appointment of new chair holders linking the two thematic clusters of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemistry.