

# **Joint audit Research Centres Zuyd University of Applied Sciences Assessment Report**

**5 September, 2023**



## Table of contents

|    |                                                                                        |    |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Preface                                                                                | 3  |
| 2. | Introduction                                                                           | 4  |
|    | Context of the assessment                                                              | 4  |
|    | Assessment Panel                                                                       | 4  |
|    | Procedures                                                                             | 5  |
| 3. | Assessment of the research centres                                                     | 6  |
|    | Standard 1: Research profile and programme                                             | 6  |
|    | Standard 2: contribution to professional practice, education, and the knowledge domain | 9  |
|    | Standard 3: Adhere to methodological quality standards                                 | 13 |
|    | Standard 4: Organisation of the research unit                                          | 15 |
|    | Overall conclusion and recommendations                                                 | 18 |
| 4. | Annexes                                                                                | 20 |
|    | Annex 1: CV panel members                                                              | 20 |
|    | Annex 2: Documents                                                                     | 22 |
|    | Annex 3: Site visit programme                                                          | 23 |

## 1. PREFACE

This assessment report presents the evaluation of the joint audit of the Research Centres *Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society*, *Global Minds @ Work*, and *Future of Food* of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences. We focus on the period 2017-2023 and follow the new Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance Research 2023-2028.

For us as a research assessment panel, this was an intriguing experience. It was fascinating to see how the research centres are evolving from transformation to consolidation, and are making important contributions to changing the way in which applied research is being conducted, while science, applications, and tools become more inclusive, sensitive and open to society and industry. At the same time, we believe, as critical friends, that this could be taken one step further, and therefore we have tried to present our findings and recommendations as concisely as possible. Last but not least, the hospitality of the research centres, staff and students of Zuyd UAS have made our work a pleasant experience – thank you.

Dr. Erwin Losekoot

(Chair of the research assessment panel)

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### Context of the assessment

Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (Zuyd UAS) is responsible for the quality of the research centres at their institution. As part of the quality assurance cycle, research centres are formally assessed every six years. Three research centres are involved in this audit, of which Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society (PCDS) has the longest history. This evaluation formally covers the period from 2017 to the present (2023). However, the two research centres Future of Food and Global Minds @ Work were established in their current form in 2021 and 2020 respectively. For those two centres, the panel will focus specifically on the period from their establishment to the present. The research centres have chosen to participate in a joint audit process to gather feedback supporting their individual research centres but also to obtain feedback on their further developments as a cluster. The audit involves:

- Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society (PCDS) in existence since 2008 and under the leadership of Mark Pluymaekers since 2014,
- Global Minds @ Work (GM@W) under the leadership of Ankie Hoefnagels since 2020,
- Future of Food (FF) under the leadership of Dai-In (Danny) Han since 2021.

The panel was asked to assess the quality of the three research centres separately as well as to offer recommendations to improve the development of the research unit as a whole. The assessment was conducted using the four standards of the Sector Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research 2023-2028 (in Dutch: Brancheprotocol Kwaliteitszorg Onderzoek BKO 2023-2028). The evaluation includes both a backward-looking and a forward-looking component.

### Assessment Panel

In accordance with the guidelines of the governmental BKO Sector Protocol, the research performance of the research centres is evaluated by an assessment panel of external independent peers and experts (hereafter: the panel) that performed the underlying assessment. The Executive Board of Zuyd UAS appointed the following members:

- Erwin Losekoot (chair), Professor of Hospitality Studies at NHL Stenden UAS
- Vincent Pijnenburg, Professor in Cross-Border Regional Development at Fontys UAS
- Caroline Goukens, Professor Consumer Behavior at Maastricht University
- Harco Leertouwer, Managing Director Europe at Acre Resources BV

The panel members have an excellent academic standing, affinity with the three common themes of digitalisation, globalisation, and sustainability, and knowledge of the Dutch design and context of applied research and research assessment. As a team, they provide a broad representation of the different disciplines; (international) business and communication and hotel and facility management. A more detailed description of their expertise can be found in Annex 1.

| Panel members      | Knowledge domain | Research | Education | Professional practice | Quality assurance |
|--------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Erwin Losekoot     | X                | X        | X         |                       | X                 |
| Vincent Pijnenburg | X                | X        | X         |                       | X                 |
| Caroline Goukens   | X                | X        | X         |                       | X                 |
| Harco Leertouwer   | X                |          | X         | X                     |                   |

To ensure a transparent and independent assessment process, the members of the assessment panel reflected on their personal interests that could influence their ability to conduct an independent and impartial assessment. The panel members signed a statement of independence for this purpose. The secretary of the panel, Elian Bogers from Odion Onderzoek, was responsible for the process coordination and drafting of the assessment report.

## Procedures

The research centres prepared a self-assessment report in a collaborative effort. The professors of the research centres sent the report to the panel on 28 April, 2023. Extensive background information was supplied to the panel via a secure MTeams link. A list of all documents made available to the panel is available in Annex 2. Prior to the site visit, the panel members studied the self-assessment report and independently formulated first impressions and initial questions. First impressions and questions were shared with the secretary and panel members one week prior to the physical site visit. The secretary made a compilation of these first impressions, composed questions and shared it with the panel members. During the preparatory meeting on site on 15 June, 2023, the evening prior to the audit, panel members discussed their impressions and identified key questions for discussion. The panel members were instructed and informed about the assessment framework and procedure prior to and during the preparatory meeting by the chair and secretary of the panel.

The site visit took place on 16 June, 2023, at the Hotel Management School Maastricht (HMSM). The programme for the site visit is outlined in Annex 3. The panel discussed their initial assessments and preliminary findings during breaks and the dedicated deliberation session. At the end of the site visit the panel issued a judgement on the three research centres according to the four standards of the branch protocol 2023-2028. The chair shared the panel's preliminary reflection and assessment per standard at the end of the site visit. These were based on the findings of the site visit and built on the assessment of the program documents.

The attached report contains a systematic presentation of the panel's findings, considerations and conclusions according to the protocol. A draft version of the report was prepared by the secretary, in close collaboration with the chair, after the site visit, and was sent to the panel members for comments. The draft report was added to and then approved by the chair before being presented to the research centres for them to identify any factual inaccuracies. Their comments were reviewed by the secretary and incorporated into the final report in close consultation with the chair and other panel members. Upon their response, this report has been finalised and endorsed by the chair.

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF THE RESEARCH CENTRES

#### Standard 1: Research profile and programme

*The research unit has a relevant, ambitious and challenging research profile and research programme.*

##### **Research profile and programme**

Zuyd's vision on practice-oriented research is two-fold: it endorses the importance of practice-oriented research for the quality of its education, and it aims to contribute to solutions for regional societal and economic issues. Zuyd aims to focus on challenges that connect to the themes that play prominent roles in the (EU) region and, as such, have societal value. Research centres are challenged to align their programmes with regional transition themes—as defined in the Zuyd's Regional Transition and Innovation (RTI) Initiative. Within that initiative, four research themes have been identified that resonate with the main transition challenges of the EUregion Meuse-Rhine: 1) Healthy Society, 2) Future-proof Business, 3) Valuable Neighbourhoods, and 4) Circular Production. The panel finds that the three research centres contribute to Zuyd's RTI through a variety of projects and initiatives focusing on transition challenges that logically fit within the scope of the research centres.

##### *Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society*

The research centre PCDS wants to help students, professionals and organizations become better communicators by creating and improving digital tools that can be used in education and professional practice. It also aims to investigate when and how these tools improve the quality of learning, professional communication, and the relationships between organisations and their stakeholders. The centre is organized along three research lines:

- 1) Enhancing the communicative competences of AI
- 2) Fitness for purpose in professional communication
- 3) Innovative didactics for communicative competences

The panel finds the research centre clearly organized along those three research lines. For each research line, main research questions have been formulated. The recent name change to 'Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society' offers a clear perspective and focus on digitalizing societies and contributes to a stronger focus in its research profile. This, in combination with clear research questions and concrete short-term and long-term goals and ambitions, results in a focused programme. As it is clear for internal and external partners where PCDS is focusing its efforts, the centre has increased their visibility. In this manner, the centre followed up on the previous panel's recommendation (audit 2017) to formulate concrete goals to make the research centre more visible and enhance its functional orientation. In order to keep the research profile and programme relevant and up-to-date, it has been periodically adjusted. The centre works with a long-term agenda but also develops a yearly team plan including short term ambitions offering flexibility to respond to new opportunities.

### *Global Minds @ Work*

GM@W aims to contribute to the development of young professionals' global competences by means of 1) innovative, interdisciplinary, applied research and education, 2) translating (valorising) this into real-world applications in education and professional domains and 3) by engaging a wide variety of stakeholders from different disciplines. GM@W wants to become the go-to center of expertise for global and intercultural competences for Zuyd UAS and their professional network. The research centre is organized around two research lines:

- 1) Global Minds in Education: strategies for enhancing the international learning environment in higher education.
- 2) Global Minds on the Workfloor: the role and operationalisation of global competence in different professional domains.

The panel also finds GM@W to possess a clear and relevant research agenda. The two research lines are clearly supported by lecturer-researchers as they are developed in co-creation with the team and closely linked to their specific expertise and interests. Especially the first research line is well developed. The second research line is still in its early stages two years after its launch date. A clear action plan for the development of this second line—with specific and measurable goals—may help speed the development of this second line. The panel expects a number of (completed) successful projects by the next audit. Having a number of major industry players involved would also provide excellent evidence of progress. GM@W periodically adjusts its research profile and programme. In monthly meetings, the entirety of activities and plans within the research programme will be reviewed and adjusted if necessary.

### *Future of Food*

The research centre FF aims to serve as a platform that brings together industry practitioners, researchers, and students nationally and internationally to identify current and future challenges across the food service and hospitality industry. They propose interventions that can be prototyped and tested through applied research with the aim of stimulating sustainable innovation in the industry. The research centre is organized around two research lines:

- 1) Sustainable Food Experience Innovation: development of innovative food and hospitality interventions for consumers to stimulate them to make more sustainable and health-conscious food choices.
- 2) Food Service Transformation: deals with disruptors and initiatives for transformation across the food service sector.

The panel finds a clear rationale and conscious choices being made for the selection of topics and the focus of the research programme. The wide range in expertise, perspectives and ambitions of the team members (i.e. on technology, food, and sustainability) contribute to diversity in perspectives and initiatives related to the future of food. The research centre has made a well-considered choice to focus on the first research line and gradually build up the second research line. The panel perceived a co-created and well-supported research programme which is well-suited to the individual researchers and the institute's aims and goals.

### *Research unit*

In the documentation and discussions, the research centres reflected on their joint profile and ambitions. The themes digitalization, globalisation and sustainability are important themes that connect the three research centres. As a cluster, they aim to respond to new possibilities in various ways. Besides closer collaboration of the three research centres in this audit, it aims to join forces with two additional research centres: Sustainable International Business and Data-Driven Hospitality. The panel is enthusiastic about the future plans to collaborate closely as a cluster around the three common themes. The joint mission to contribute to the long-term success of the region fits Zuyd's mission well. The panel finds the research centres complementary to each other and expects, through collaboration, that the individual unique research profiles can be enriched. Even though the panel perceives the individual research profiles and programmes to be relevant, challenging and highly ambitious, it feels centres also have to focus and prioritize in order to keep their programmes sustainable in terms of time and other resources in the future. Given the limited capacity of the centres and the ambitious goals set, not everything is possible and they will need to be selective in their endeavors. Setting clear and integrated common goals as a cluster can support centres to do so.

### **Objectives and indicators**

All three research centres developed a clear set of goals as outlined in their *lectoraatsplannen*. Research centre PCDS identified their objectives for each target group (education, professional practice and the research domain). For GM@W the objectives are outlined per research line, and for FF objectives were formulated for the research centre as a whole. The panel noticed research centres regularly evaluate the extent to which they succeed in realising their ambitions. All three research centres developed a different approach for evaluating the realisation of their ambitions, but all showed a continuous focus on their indicators and the evaluation of the impact they wish to achieve. The panel was pleased to learn about the 'output overview form' that research centres use in order to monitor research activities and outcomes. This seems an effective way to measure output, link established objectives and indicators to the outcomes achieved and to periodically share outcomes with the academy management. As a cluster, they aim to jointly develop a structured approach for evaluating the performance of the cluster as a whole, and such forms could help in achieving this.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the panel discussions with staff and examination of the supporting documentation, the panel concludes that all three research centres are "satisfactory" in meeting **standard 1**. The panel considers the research profiles and programmes relevant, challenging and highly ambitious. Each centre developed broadly supported and clear research lines resulting in ownership by all team members. The three identified common themes (i.e. digitalization, globalisation and sustainability) offer plentiful opportunities for collaboration as a research unit on relevant societal issues with internal and external stakeholders in the future. The unit, as well as the research centres, must demonstrate resilience and be continuously able to anticipate new opportunities. Closer collaboration as a research unit offers research centres the opportunity to be focused in their research programme but still being able to navigate to interesting new opportunities.

## Standard 2: contribution to professional practice, education, and the knowledge domain

*The research unit makes transparent what its contribution is to the development of professional practice and society at large, of education, and of the research domain.*

### **Contribution to education**

#### *Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society*

The research centre contributes to education in various ways. It is involved in the Hotel Management School (i.e. assignment provider and graduation assignments), Oriental Languages and Communication programme (i.e. graduation assignments) and in European Studies (i.e. Academic Paper minor and graduation assignments). The professor and team members are actively involved in education; as lecturers but also in curriculum innovations and the reorientation of the bachelor programme of Oriental Languages and Communication. In addition, the research centre develops knowledge tools that are used in various other Zuyd programmes. The panel noted the centre strongly contributes to the professionalization of lecturers, through gaining research experience within the centre and by providing training opportunities focused especially on research skills. Even though the educational output clearly shows contribution to education, the panel finds the reflection and monitoring of the value and impact on education by the research centre limited. Collecting evidence that demonstrate the impact on education (i.e. use and valuation) and close monitoring (i.e. how often these tools are used and how satisfied users are with the tools) could make impact more visible. The panel advises the centre to invest in its visibility to students. The centre is involved in multiple educational programmes, but the panel wonders if students are sufficiently aware of the connection of those educational programmes with PCDS (as is the case for the Academic Paper minor, for example).

#### *Global Minds @ Work*

The panel is impressed by the contributions of the research centre GM@W to the development and impact on education, both within and outside Zuyd UAS. The centre is strongly and well-connected to education; by developing educational activities related to global competences, through team members holding positions in educational programmes (i.e. chair curriculum committee, curriculum development support, development minor, coordinator Global Minds learning line, supervision student projects) and by offering thesis assignments and internships to students. The centre actively disseminates their research and expertise among lecturers and researchers within Zuyd UAS and beyond. Team members regularly provide staff training within the two schools (HMSM and International Business and Communication) and developed a cultural intelligence training programme for Zuyd UAS lecturers.

In the discussions with staff the GM@W professor and team members are described by colleagues as pro-active, transparent, easily approachable, and accommodating. Considering the short period of time since the development of the centre, the panel is impressed by their visibility, especially to students (“it’s hard to miss them”). In the discussions with lecturer-researchers, internal and external stakeholders, Ankie is praised for her unbridled energy and willingness to help, co-operate and implement new initiatives. The educational activities related to global competences seem to have significant impact. Students felt they develop skills and knowledge useful for future endeavors.

### *Future of Food*

The research centre is closely involved in education at the Hotel Management School Maastricht. The centre contributes to curriculum development of the food business learning line. Researchers are involved in education for the supervision of students and available for consultation by students in other projects. Every semester, a small number of students is involved in graduation projects. In the discussions with students, the panel noticed significant visibility for students who are interested in the specific food business line, students felt connected to the centre and supported in their endeavors. The panel finds the number of students reached somewhat limited. It encourages the centre in their plans to develop a complete food business line as part of the curriculum where the research centre will be continuously visible and integrated in order to reach more students.

### ***Contribution to research domain***

#### *Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society*

In response to the previous panel's recommendation to publish research in academic journals, the research centre increased their efforts and considerably increased the number of academic contributions. The number of peer-reviewed academic publications has increased from 2 between 2008 and 2017 to at least 10 between 2017 and 2023. The panel is impressed by the centre's contribution to the research domain, through publications, citations by fellow researchers and their presentation of work at academic conferences.

#### *Global Minds @ Work*

GM@W actively contributes to international conferences in their field of expertise. Since their development in 2020, it has produced a number of academic publications and conference papers. It identifies opportunities to capitalise on the substantial and rich amount of data that has been collected with the Global Mind Monitor, the 'Curious People' blog platform, and the international 'Hopeful Career State' projects. The impact on the research domain is still mainly characterized by conference papers and to a lesser extent by peer reviewed journal papers. The panel expects the PhD and PD trajectories will provide excellent opportunities to increase efforts in the latter.

### *Future of Food*

The research centre FF also contributes to the research domain through conferences and events, publishing 10 peer-reviewed academic articles in journals and books, as well as several conference papers.

### ***Contribution to professional practice and society at large***

#### *Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society*

In response to the outcomes of the previous audit, PCDS increased their efforts in more systematically collaborating with industry, for example by developing joint research assignments for students. Through publishing more about their research in outlets for industry professionals, they aim to increase their visibility among professionals. The panel acknowledges their efforts to increase collaboration with the professional practice. However, evidence of practice-based research in co-creation with industry is lacking. A structural approach or strategy on the connection with industry is needed in every stage of the

research process. In order to increase impact, the panel recommends to further focus on the development of sustainable connections with the industry, not only in the early stages of the research process (i.e. formulating research questions) but also in conducting research, evaluating and monitoring research outcomes, and impact.

#### *Global Minds @ Work*

The research centre clearly invests in their connections with external partners in order to create impact in industry. The centre aims to increase their visibility outside Zuyd UAS through industry publications and monthly columns in the press. GM@W has developed a professional product for the Expat Center Maastricht Region and hosts workshops on global competences and empathy building for volunteers and coordinators of the Refugee Project Maastricht. The panel perceives the Global Minds Monitor (GMM) as a success story on multiple levels. The GMM provides students and educators with first-hand insights into their global competences and their development over time. In 2018, an alliance was formed between GM@W and Etil Research Group to further professionalise the GMM, develop partnerships with other universities and provide a structure for safe data storage, data management and visualisations. The panel perceives that the GMM project creates significant visibility with students, educational and industry partners. It creates research opportunities and impact for education, research and the professional practice (i.e. developing global competences in business).

#### *Future of Food*

The research centre experiences challenges in the identification of suitable industry partners for collaboration. According to FF, conducting high-standard, innovative academic research that is future-oriented does not always meet all partners' daily challenges with today's operational questions. The centre expects that more visibility in professional outlets and gatherings could further enhance the communication to and positioning in the industry. As the research centre's theme has a long-term horizon, it makes it somewhat challenging for the industry to join in projects. The panel encourages the centre to work on their visibility in the field and in establishing an approach on their collaboration with industry partners.

#### *Research unit*

All three research centres aim to build long-term relationships with industry in order to strengthen cooperation with and accomplish significant impact in the professional field. In the discussions with industry partners, it became evident to the panel that the research centres are capable of building sincere, equal, and strong relationships. However, collaboration with the professional field seems ad hoc and dependent on individual connections of (in particular) the professors. In order to increase impact, the panel recommends the research unit to focus on the development of a structural approach to build sustainable connections throughout the whole research process. It suggests giving proper emphasis to a structured follow-up and after care with partners (i.e. evaluation and monitoring of projects and their impact). As a research unit, they can look for tools and vehicles to become more prominent in industry. The professors see the establishment of a joint Living Lab as a promising avenue for strengthening the collaboration with the industry, higher education institutions (e.g. Maastricht University) and residents from the region. The panel expects that a joint Living Lab and dedicated space for the research unit in

Zuyd UAS buildings to showcase research outcomes will also benefit their visibility. The panel also recommends to further explore opportunities to connect with the work field through student projects. This standard is a challenging one for a cluster of professorships, one of which has changed name recently and the other two which are still relatively new – it takes time and stability to build a research reputation and be able to demonstrate results and impact.

### Conclusion

The panel concludes that the three research centres are clearly connected with and contribute to educational programmes and the professionalization of staff. All centres make relevant contributions to knowledge development within the research domain. For all research centres, the panel considers that the research centres succeed in contributing – partly through establishing meaningful relationships and dissemination of knowledge – to the development of professional practice. The answer to the question whether output also leads to valorization, especially as far as professional practice is concerned, is still limited. For GM@W, the panel takes into consideration that in its short history of existence the centre has achieved a credible output especially in education, but also significantly contributed to the research domain and the professional field. The centre builds impressive visibility by good use of internal and external stakeholders. Based on the above, the committee reaches the verdict "satisfactory" for the research centres PCDS and FF and "excellent" for GM@W on **standard 2**. The panel certainly sees potential for the coming years – when collaboration between research centres has become more established – to realize stronger relationships with external partners and create impact in the professional field.

### Standard 3: Adhere to methodological quality standards

*The research unit's research complies with the standards applicable in the field with regard to conducting research.*

#### *Quality standards for research*

The research centres organize quality assurance in several different ways. The quality of their research is defined, among other things, by the research skills of the professors who hold doctorates and participate in (international) networks. Lecturer-researchers hold at least a Masters degree and at least half of the researchers in each centre hold doctorates. A wide variety of experience and expertise is present in the different teams, in terms of applying different research methodologies, research techniques and fields of expertise.

Research is conducted in accordance with the standards of the Dutch Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. At an institutional level, a Research Ethics Committee (ECO) is active, providing solicited and unsolicited advice on ethical issues concerning research at Zuyd UAS. Members of the different research centres are aware of the ECO, though their degree of familiarity varies between centres. Especially GM@W is familiar with the ECO, as the ECO provided a knowledge session on ethics for the entire team.

The quality of research is monitored internally by ongoing dialogues about research outcomes and quality measures of research more generally. Professors are involved as supervisors in each research project although the sustainability of this as the centre grows was questioned. During the discussions it became clear that professors guide researchers according to their needs and expertise. The panel came across appreciation for the supervision provided; lecturer-researchers expressed their appreciation for the close involvement and guidance of professors in order to safeguard the quality of research processes. However, the panel thinks this structure may become unsustainable as research centres grow. It recommends considering the appointment of associate professors in research centres. Associate professors would be able to support professors in managing and supporting lecturer-researchers within the institutes. The panel feels this will contribute to balancing professors' responsibilities in supervising projects, teaching and networking, both within the institution and with external stakeholders. In the future, the research centres aim to synchronize their quality assurance efforts further, for example by organizing joint internal peer review sessions and by allowing lecturer-researchers to learn from each other's expertise more systematically. The panel commends those initiatives; enhanced collaboration on quality assurance and ethics is identified as one of the major opportunities for the research unit as a whole.

External validation at the end of research projects is done by grant providers and/or when peer-reviewed for acceptance in (inter)national academic publications. GM@W regularly invites experts and external partners to discussions on the ethics, design and methodology of research projects. However, there seems to be no uniform method of involving external stakeholders in the evaluation process. For PCDS, external stakeholders are involved to a limited extent in the research design and implementation phase. Research centre FF currently does not consistently involve external stakeholders in the evaluation of the

quality of their research process. It is therefore recommended that a structure involving a feedback loop or PDCA cycle is clearly articulated and reported on.

#### *Quality culture*

The panel appreciates the transparent and honest character of the critical self-evaluation and the open discussions during the site visit. This indicates an engaged and reflective quality culture with a significant drive for ongoing improvements. The panel recognizes the good work in establishing a research culture that fosters openness, collaboration, social engagement, and (societal) impact. Because of this openness and eagerness to share knowledge and involve internal and external colleagues in research projects, there seems to be a solid base to further develop and synchronise quality assurance efforts within and between the three research centres.

#### *Open science*

The panel commends the research centres for making their publications open access as much as possible and striving to make research results and datasets available to the general public, as far as privacy laws and contractual agreements with partners allow. Even though Open Science is considered as highly desirable and part of Zuyd's research ambitions, Zuyd UAS does not directly cover the open access publishing fees. As these fees are currently paid through the budget of the research centres, open access publishing might come under pressure even as the number of potential publications increases. The panel encourages Zuyd UAS to support the institutes' research infrastructure and to make budget available specifically for open access publications.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that all three research centres incorporate the research standards set by the Dutch Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, professors foster quality culture and ensure an ongoing dialogue with lecturer-researchers on the use of appropriate research methodologies. Room for improvement lies in the involvement of external stakeholders throughout the whole research process. These findings result in a "satisfactory" on **standard 3** for all three research centres.

#### Standard 4: Organisation of the research unit

*The way in which the unit is organised, the deployment of people and resources, and the internal and external partnerships, networks, and relationships, make it possible to achieve the research profile.*

##### *Organization, facilities and support*

At Zuyd UAS, almost all regular research centres are organisationally linked to one of Zuyd's 30 schools. The 30 schools are clustered in 8 domains, which fall under the formal responsibility of a dean. Deans act as formal supervisors to all professors who are linked to their respective domains. The three research centres involved in this joint audit are affiliated to two different schools, which belong to two different domains. Research centres FF and GM@W are affiliated to the Hotel Management School Maastricht and PCDS to the School of Oriental Languages and Communication. The panel finds the organization of the research centres effective and efficiently organized. The professors are members of the management team of the schools with which their research centre is affiliated. Professors manage lecturer-researchers within their research centres. The panel learned that meetings take place on a regular basis within research centres to reflect on progress reached on the output goals. For research centre FF, the achievement of ambitions is monitored by the professor individually. The panel encourages the centre to periodically reflect and evaluate whether they are achieving their ambitions collectively.

At HMSM, a food experience lab and underlying infrastructure for research and projects is organized for the research centre FF. For GM@W, no workspaces and meeting rooms are available at HMSM resulting in limited visibility at HMSM. The research centres aim to increase their visibility to internal (including students) and external stakeholders using dedicated work space within the Zuyd UAS buildings. The panel expects a dedicated space within the institution to increase visibility within the institution and finds it a vital precondition to accommodate collaboration between research centres in the future. Research centres will be able to showcase research activities, not only to students, lecturers and staff, but also to external stakeholders and visitors. The panel welcomes the development of a joint Living Lab focusing on answering research questions relevant for all three research centres: the effective use of extended reality technology to enhance customers experiences with digital humans, stimulate sustainable consumer behaviour and train intercultural and communication skills that are indispensable for future-proof professionals in the economic domain.

The panel draws specific attention to the individual academic career paths within Zuyd UAS. Zuyd UAS offers career paths for lecturers but not specifically for researchers. For Zuyd UAS to move to an institution where research is considered part of the primary process and where research becomes a core part of everyone's responsibilities, institution-wide professionalization opportunities and formalization of a career path for researchers is vital. The panel also sees a responsibility for the institution to improve general support systems for professors and lecturer-researchers. In the discussions with professors and lecturer-researchers, the panel observes a balancing-act regarding research and educational activities. Scheduling issues are perceived to be a significant energy drain. In order to balance both responsibilities (and be able to bid for, win and implement larger research projects, be accessible to internal and external partners, etc.) flexibility with regard to the deployment of people is important. Finally, research centres

experience challenges with data management, available work spaces, access to specialized software and access to current academic literature. The panel recommends Zuyd UAS to optimize the support and facilitation of research centres.

#### *Deployment of people*

Each research centre consists of one professor and a number of lecturer-researchers. At research centre PCDS, 5 (senior) lecturer-researchers are appointed for 0.2 fte each and 1 lecturer-researcher for 0.5 fte. The centre is supported by an officer from the International Business and Communication (IBC) secretarial office. At GM@W, there are 7 (lecturer-) researchers appointed for 0.2 fte each, and one office manager. At the research centre FF, 3 lecturer-researchers are appointed for 0.4 fte each, including as a lab manager/management assistant. FF has its deployment of people especially well organized, including larger contracts per researcher and fixed research days blocked in the diaries of the researchers. The panel considers 0.2 fte appointments to be rather small, creating limited research capacity and availability as a research team. The panel expects bigger secondments (increasing appointments per researcher) would provide an opportunity for centres to increase research capacity and create stronger relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including the feedback loop mentioned above. At this point, no doctoral students are part of the research centres. The panel considers doctoral or Professional Doctorate students an opportunity to further shape the research centres and offer continuity in the project portfolio. Based on the interviews conducted with professors and lecturer-researchers, the panel concludes that the research centres are closely collaborating teams that radiate commitment, enthusiasm, and ambition. The panel considers this as an important strength of each individual knowledge centre and the unit as a whole.

As previously stated, lecturer-researchers hold at least a Masters degree and at least half of the researchers in each centre hold doctorates. All research centres offer a good level of training and development opportunities for team members. During the site visit, it became evident that lecturer-researchers have access to sufficient allocated funds and time to visit conferences and network events and to participate in courses and professionalization activities. Lecturer-researchers express their appreciation for their professors' active involvement in their personal development and in accommodating ambitions. The above, according to the panel, results in ambitious and productive researchers. The panel concludes that researchers are sufficiently equipped to contribute to achieve the current research profiles.

#### *Financial resources*

Zuyd UAS provides each centre with a yearly base funding of about 215,000 euros per academic year. Over recent years, base funding at Zuyd UAS has been stable and is considered adequate by the three research centres. PCDS has a more diversified strategy on acquiring revenues and has been able to secure additional funding from various sources in the past 6 years, both from grants and contract activities. However, most of the additional revenues have come from two large-scale grant projects in which the research centre participated. The success rate of such grant proposals is relatively low across the higher education sector. Up until now, GM@W and FF have not been able to acquire substantial additional external funds. GM@W acquired additional funding from quality agreements, to introduce activities for

students to develop international skills in times when students were not able to leave the country due to Covid restrictions. During the site visit, the professors discussed the trade-off of investing time and efforts in acquiring external funding and the required staff to carry out the research when being successful. Limited time to spend on grant applications, in combination with small research centres and human resources to carry out the research projects, make centres cautious about investing in external funding opportunities.

The panel concludes the base funding to be sufficient to get projects started and establish the required research infrastructure. Due to Zuyd's funding system, research centres are less dependent on research grants and external funding than at some other institutions. Even though the panel highly values the access to sufficient internal resources, it recommends research centres to collaboratively invest in obtaining revenues from external sources. Intensifying cluster collaboration on acquiring funding reduces the impact of grant writing activities on daily research activities of lecturer-researchers and professors. The panel emphasizes that external funding is an effective way to build consortia and networks, especially with industry partners. As a cluster, it creates opportunities to build a (collective) strategy on applying for larger grants to share these human and financial resources in order to safeguard continuity. The panel sees a responsibility for Zuyd UAS in supporting research centres and clusters to obtain external funding, and more specifically in writing grant applications.

### *Networks*

The research centres work closely together with educational programmes within the two domains. Based on the observations, there seems to be no issues regarding the communication between educational partners (i.e. lecturers and programme managers) and the research centres. Lecturer-researchers provide education in multiple programmes and are enrolled in various educational committees (e.g. curriculum development). The panel noticed that lecturer-researchers of the three research centres seemed to know each other already quite well.

All three research centres are actively involved in various relevant national and international networks. The research centre PCDS is affiliated with the Association for Business Communication, the Flemish Association for Business Communication (VVZC) and the Network for academic communicative skills (NACV). The research centre FF is, among others, connected to industry networks (Food Service Network) and international academic communities (EuroCHRIE, IAITI) where the professor serves on the board. The panel is especially impressed by the strong academic and educational network GM@W established in the relatively short period of time since they are founded. The GM@W research centre members are active in in the International Academy for Intercultural Research (IAIR), EAIR, SIETAR, and the World Council on Global and Intercultural Competence. An active network is built around the Global Mind Monitor in which they collaborate with 18 Dutch universities of applied sciences and universities, and the professor and lecturer-researchers work closely together with Penn State University, Maastricht University and industry partner Etil Research Group. PCDS and FF have stated their aim to increase their number of projects in which collaboration with partners from industry takes place. The panel identified many chances to act as a cluster, especially in expanding connections with academic and industry partners. The panel observes networks to be dependent on individual connections and recommends

working on a structural approach and strategy on the joint and individual connections with industry. This will result in a more structural approach to and collaboration with industry partners. It was noted that while there have been collaborative activities together with the University of Maastricht (i.e. joint PhD project between PCDS and UM), much more is possible and would be welcomed by both parties.

### Conclusion

The three research centres are considered financially healthy. Research centres receive a stable and adequate amount of base funding, though, the panel recommends research centres to collaboratively invest in obtaining revenues from external sources. It considers external funding is an effective way to build consortia and networks, especially with industry partners. The panel is very positive about the internal and external academic networks and partnerships. All three research centres show significant visibility within the institution, colleagues and students know where to find them. A point of attention, especially for research centre FF and PCDS, are the long-term partnerships with industry. The panel expects closer collaboration as a research unit on external network building to result in stronger connections with academic and industry partners. The research centres are made up of ambitious, collaborative and professional researchers and an open quality culture. The organization, facilities and support at the research centre level, are sufficiently in place to achieve the research profiles and the research programmes based upon it. Considering the predominantly positive findings, the panel concludes **standard 4** to be “satisfactory” for all three research centres.

### Overall conclusion and recommendations

The panel has assessed the research centres along four standards as required by the BKO and the brief given to the panel by the three research centres. The panel concludes that the centres meet all standards and subsequently assesses the overall quality of the research unit as satisfactory.

| Standard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Judgement                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Standard 1:</b> The research unit has a relevant, ambitious, and challenging research profile and a research program with associated goals that have been operationalized in a number of indicators.                                                                                                 | Satisfactory                                              |
| <b>Standard 2:</b> The research unit realizes sufficient relevance in the field of: (1) professional practice and society; (2) education and professionalization of lecturers; (3) knowledge development within the academic domain. The research has a sufficient impact on the areas described above. | PCDS: Satisfactory<br>GM@W: Excellent<br>FF: Satisfactory |
| <b>Standard 3:</b> The research of the research unit meets the standards that apply within the discipline for conducting research. In addition, the research unit regularly and systematically evaluates the research processes and results. The research unit makes improvements where necessary.      | Satisfactory                                              |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Standard 4:</b> The way in which the unit is organized, the deployment of people and resources and the internal and external partnerships, networks and relationships enable the realization of the research profile. | Satisfactory |
| <b>Overall conclusion</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                | Satisfactory |

The panel has observed a strong commitment to research, quality, and impact throughout its discussions. Based on the documentation and discussion during the site visit, the panel concludes that the research centres and the professorships within it are developing well and delivering solutions to education, industry and academic stakeholders. In the previous sections, the panel has evidenced and articulated its positive considerations about the research centres per standard. In addition to the positive considerations, the panel considers there is (still) room for improvement on several aspects of the centres. It therefore recommends the research centres to:

- Formulate a well-defined strategy for utilizing shares of Zuyd's additional government research funding for practice-oriented research allowing each professorship to focus on its development priorities.
- Work together on attracting external funding from funding bodies and from industry in order to further develop links with industry, with funding bodies, and as part of international consortia of educational establishments.
- Further develop as a cluster, including closer collaboration with the additional research centres Sustainable International Business and Data-driven Hospitality.
- Further focus on the development of sustainable connections with the industry, not only in the early stages of the research process (i.e. formulating research questions) but also in conducting research, evaluating and monitoring research outcomes, and impact.
- Continue the good work in implementing the Global Mind Monitor.
- Ensure that the opportunities provided by the Professional Doctorate developments are a catalyst for staff development across the schools and widen the pool of staff involved in research.
- To continue to develop PhD and PD opportunities for staff.
- To ensure the research centres are involved in the various Masters programmes on offer across Zuyd UAS and in collaboration with other local education providers.
- To continue to push Zuyd UAS for administrative systems, processes and support for research (e.g. specific software, Open Access publication fees, appointment of associate professors in research centres, grant writing application support, research career path development, etc.).

## 4. ANNEXES

### Annex 1: CV panel members

#### **Dr. Erwin Losekoot, Professor of Applied Sciences in Hospitality Studies (chair)**

Erwin Losekoot completed a BA in Hotel and Catering Management at Strathclyde University's Scottish Hotel School in Glasgow, Scotland. He completed an MBA at Edinburgh University and took up the position of the Sir Hugh Wontner Lectureship in Hospitality Management at Strathclyde University in 1999, during which time he also taught on programmes delivered in Iran and Hong Kong. Ten years later he moved to Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand as Senior Lecturer. He taught hospitality management and also completed his PhD in the area of the customer experience of airports. He left AUT to become Academic Head of Programmes at Auckland Institute of Studies. Then he was teaching and researching at RMIT University in Saigon, Vietnam. Since 2018 he has been Professor of Hospitality Studies at the Hotel Management School, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands. During his academic career he has published 24 refereed journal papers, presented over 30 refereed conference papers and published three book chapters. Most of these have been about the nature of hospitality and how we can make places and people more hospitable. He is on the editorial board of one academic journal and reviewed papers for many others. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He has significant experience with quality assurance processes; including past experience as ISO9000 auditor for Technicolor Video Services; MBA graduation project on quality assurance in hospitality; Mock Audit Panel for Tourism, Leisure & Events Academy, NHL Stenden UAS (September 2019, Chair); Mid-term Audit Panel for Zorg en Welzijn Academy, NHL Stenden UAS (December 2021, Chair); NVAO panel member for "Besluit accreditatie nieuwe opleiding hbo-master Leading Hospitality Innovation (joint degree) van Zuyd Hogeschool, Technological University Dublin and IQS School of Management Barcelona" (October 2022).

#### **Dr. Vincent Pijnenburg, Professor of Applied Sciences in cross-border regional development**

Vincent Pijnenburg completed a BA and Master's in spatial planning at Radboud University Nijmegen. After some years of work experience in the professional field, he started as a PhD student at Fontys UAS, location Venlo. As a researcher, he was also affiliated to the Radboud University as an external PhD candidate. He conducted his doctoral research on the opportunities for cross-border cooperation between the Netherlands and Germany in regional and spatial development. He has now been working for Fontys UAS for almost 10 years, including four years as a professor of applied science. As a professor, he is responsible for the quality assurance of his research unit. Moreover, in recent years, as a steering committee member, he has actively contributed to the new Fontys wide research policy, including the quality assurance in the field of applied sciences. As a researcher and later as a professor, he published in several scientific journals, edited a book in 2021 and presented at several conferences in recent years. Apart from his academic focus, he holds several ancillary positions. These include being chairman of a German-Dutch Business Club and director of the Netherlands of the European economic and knowledge-

oriented platform EURECO. Filling such ancillary positions allows him to make good connections between science and practice.

**Prof. Dr. Caroline Goukens, Professor in Consumer Behavior, Maastricht University**

Caroline Goukens is Professor at the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management at Maastricht University School of Business and Economics. She studied Applied Economics at the University of Leuven, and holds a PhD in Consumer Behaviour. She teaches consumer behavior courses in the master, PhD and PGD programme. Her research focuses on individual decision-making, consumption behavior and the effect of contextual cues on consumer behaviour. She has published in journals such as the Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing Research, PNAS, and the International Journal of Research in Marketing. She is member of the research theme group "Human Decisions and Policy Design."

**Harco Leertouwer MBA, Managing Director Acre**

Harco Leertouwer is Managing Director Europe and Executive Board member at Acre, leading the company's work in global Sustainability Executive Search, Recruitment and Advisory. Harco brings in a wealth of executive search and international business growth experience, having been a Director of Michael Page in Germany and Managing Director for Badenoch & Clark Germany and the Netherlands. Before joining Acre, Harco set up his own executive search boutique, focusing on Sustainability, Renewable Energy and Clean Technology. Harco studied at the Hogeschool Zuyd (Hotel Management, 1994-1998) and holds an MBA, having graduated in Corporate Social Responsibility at the prestigious Henley Management College (Henley-on-Thames, U.K.). Harco is an external examiner at Zuyd UAS. Harco is an active member of the Climate Reality Project, a diverse group of passionate individuals who have come together to solve the greatest challenge of our time. He was trained by the Institute's founder, Nobel Peace prize laureate and former US Vice President Mr. Al Gore. He is of Dutch nationality and is fluent in Dutch, English and German.

## **Annex 2: Documents**

### **Self-evaluation report and annexes**

- Self evaluation report
- PDCA documents
  - Annual reports
  - Assessment reports prior audits
  - Joint vision on research quality
  - Lectoraatsplannen
- Policy documents
  - Basis kwaliteitshandboek onderzoek Zuyd
  - Stand van zaken praktijk onderzoek
  - Klachtenregeling wetenschappelijke integriteit Onderzoek
  - Nota kwaliteit en kwaliteitszorg Onderzoek Zuyd
  - Onderwijsvisie in de praktijk Zuyd
  - Regeling ethische commissie Onderzoek
  - Ontwikkeling van het lectoraat
  - Zuyd visie op de betekenis van praktijkgericht onderzoek
  - Zuyd visie op eigentijds hoger beroepsonderwijs
- List of additional references

### **Materials made available electronically**

- Factsheets
- Financial overview
- Overview of outputs

### **Materials made available during site visit**

- Copies of a range of edited books with chapters by staff
- Material for disseminating information on Global Mind Monitor
- Examples of handbooks for professional communication
- A 3-D food printer for FoF Professorship

### Annex 3: Site visit programme

**Date:** Friday 16 June 2023

**Location:** Teaching Hotel Château Bethlehem, Hotel Management School Maastricht  
Bethlehemweg 2, 6222 BM Maastricht

| Time          | Activity                                                                             | Participants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 – 09:30 | Preparation time for the panel                                                       | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 09.30 – 10.30 | Meeting with professors and deans                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ankie Hoefnagels, professor Global Minds @ Work</li> <li>- Danny Han, professor Future of Food</li> <li>- Mark Pluymaekers, professor Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society</li> <li>- Yvette Froeling, dean International Business and Communication</li> <li>- Bas Vogelsangs, dean Hotel and Facility Management</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | Break                                                                                | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 10:45 – 11:45 | Meeting with lecturer-researchers                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joris Boonen, lecturer-researcher Global Minds @ Work</li> <li>- Marleen van Heel, lecturer-researcher Global Minds @ Work</li> <li>- Tom Kuypers, lecturer-researcher Global Minds @ Work</li> <li>- Hilde Hanegreefs, lecturer-researcher Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society</li> <li>- Svenja Widdershoven, lecturer-researcher Professional Communication in a Digitalizing Society</li> <li>- Malu Boerwinkel, lecturer-researcher Future of Food</li> <li>- Silvia Abreu e Silva, lecturer-researcher Future of Food</li> </ul> |
| 11:45 – 12:30 | Lunch and deliberation                                                               | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 12:30 – 13:45 | Meeting with internal stakeholders (lecturers, programme directors, policy advisors) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marja Windhorst, programme manager Hotel Management School Maastricht</li> <li>- Angela van Malde, senior lecturer Oriental Languages and Communication</li> <li>- Ben Wijering, programme manager European Studies</li> <li>- Marc Koppert, lecturer Healthcare Biometrics</li> <li>- Bert Kamphuis, policy advisor Internationalisation</li> <li>- Jos Heumakers, lecturer Oriental Languages and Communication</li> </ul>                                                                                                                            |
| 13:45 – 14:00 | Break                                                                                | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 13:45 – 14:45 | Meeting with students                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Laurens Savenije, 4<sup>th</sup> year student European Studies</li> <li>- Elina Veelenturf, 4<sup>th</sup> year student Hotel Management School</li> <li>- Sanne Habets, 4<sup>th</sup> year student European Studies</li> <li>- Pim Vencken, 3<sup>rd</sup> year student Hotel Management School</li> <li>- Sven Bakker, 4<sup>th</sup> year student Hotel Management School</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                |

|               |                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14:45 – 15:00 | Break                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 15:00 – 16:00 | Meeting with external stakeholders                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Michiel Hulsbergen, founder and CEO of DialogueTrainer</li> <li>- Jeroen Meuwissen, director labour market Etil research group</li> <li>- Bert van Hoof, professor Hospitality Management at the Penn State School of Hospitality, USA</li> <li>- Lotte Zuidwijk, owner LotteZ Productions</li> <li>- Maurice Lambriex, strategy &amp; lobby officer Brightsite Center</li> </ul> |
| 16:00 – 17:00 | Deliberation / additional meetings if requested by the panel | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 17:00 – 17:15 | Presentation of preliminary findings by the panel            | All interested parties                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |