

## Year report Research Committee psychology institute – 2024-2025

### Introduction

The 2024-2025 academic year started for the Research Committee with a strategy session (“Heidag”) in October during which the Committee reflected on its identity, tasks and objectives for the coming year. As part of this reorientation, the Committee reaffirmed its core role in safeguarding research quality for both the PhD candidates as well as other staff within our institute. Aligned with this, the committee members were in favor of explicitly taking on topics such as scientific integrity and healthy research culture, from the firm belief that they are a prerequisite for quality research. In consultation with other committees and their (newly formed) roles, our identity was further sharpened. For instance, the task of selection of LUF grant recipients was handed over to the Research Coordinators, allowing our committee to focus more strategically on its core aims. This reorientation of the Committees tasks has also been presented at the Research Kick-off at the end of October 2024.

To practice what we preach, the Committee also decided during the Heidag to write a yearly report for transparency and efficient collaboration and communication with other committees and the Institute Board. This document is the very first edition. In this report the Committee will present a narrative of the committee’s activities, changes in processes, what the members have signaled in reviewing the TSP’s that they have evaluated, and future aspirations, supported by quantitative information about meetings and the Training and Supervision plans (TSP’s) evaluated.

### General aim of the committee

The Research Committee gives solicited and unsolicited advice to the Institute board with regards to the strategy, vision, and policy concerning research. Moreover, the committee evaluates the Training and Supervision plans of PhD candidates to assure the quality of the PhD trajectories in our institute. The Research Committee initiates research-related activities and plays an advisory role in internal research related matters with a focus on ensuring our institute fosters an environment where research of high quality and integrity can be conducted and are rewarded and recognized. The research committee oversees and is the jury for thematic PhD awards (‘best paper’ and ‘wildcard’). Finally, the Research Committee evaluates research proposals concerning basic (f)MRI research on suitability and quality and provides accompanying letters for METC applications. Note that this core purpose and how it is communicated on the institute’s website will be updated where necessary during our next Heidag, scheduled for September 2025.

### Changes in composition, coordination with stakeholders

During the 2024-2025 academic year the Research Committee met six times (including the Heidag meeting) and has seen some changes of personnel. The chair stepped down to become chair of the Developmental and Educational Psychology unit and subsequently the new chair from the Methods and Statistics unit was appointed. Another member was added to the Committee as the representative member of the Methodology and Statistics unit. The Research Committee further enhanced the connections and coordination of responsibilities within the Institute and Faculty. For example, Research Director participated in various meetings to help shape the focus on topics like social safety and integrity, and the new chair joined the Research Coordinators meetings to smooth the division and transition tasks (e.g., the assessment of the LUF grant proposals). Moreover, the Graduate School Officer was invited to join the Committee meeting in which the updated TSP template was discussed (see more details on these updates below).

As our committee serves the PhD candidates of our institute, we believe it is important to ensure that they have room to weigh in and participate in the work we do. We

therefore implemented several changes to improve communication and shorten the lines of contact with PhD candidates. Our secretary and PhD coordinator of the institute plays a role as intermediary and frequently voices concerns of the PhD candidates in committee meetings and in preparation meetings with the chair. In this past year, the Research Committee has suggested inviting the PhD Council to join the Research Committee meetings regularly in the future. The PhD Council accepted this invitation and will send one or two members to join two to three meetings in the coming academic year. In addition, the Research Committee will share the agenda of their meetings with the PhD Council to make it possible for the Council to decide when and if they want to send a representative to join a meeting.

### **Updates to the TSP template**

One of the core responsibilities of the committee is to ensure the quality and feasibility of the planned research and training of PhD candidates in our institute under appropriate supervision. This is primarily done through the evaluation of the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP), which is submitted within the first three months of the PhD program. The TSP outlines mutual expectations between the PhD candidate and their supervisors and acts as a guiding framework throughout the PhD trajectory. In May 2025, a revised TSP template was introduced, reflecting multiple rounds of feedback from the Research Committee as well as valuable input from other stakeholders, including PhD candidates, the director of research, and the graduate school officer. This updated template includes several key improvements that significantly enhance the clarity of the document and emphasizes aspects that align with the strategic vision of the Institute of Psychology:

- 1) More emphasis on that the document is meant to allow for the whole team to consciously consider and commit to their plans, and reflect or update them where necessary in the yearly GROW conversations, supporting the whole trajectory instead of merely at the beginning;
- 2) Clearer supervisory roles and responsibilities, with dedicated sections on supervisory/mentoring expertise and fostering a positive, collaborative working environment;
- 3) Stronger emphasis on research integrity and transparency, through a Responsible Practices Statement that gives space for confirming plans regarding practices such as pre-registration, open data, and reproducibility checks;
- 4) Clarification on the conditions under which teaching tasks may be assigned, providing more transparency and consistency across PhD trajectories;
- 5) Standardized and clarified research proposal requirements based on PhD candidate feedback, adding more detailed instructions, a word limit, and guidance to support clear and feasible research planning.

Moreover, whereas earlier versions of the TSP were often narrowly focused and referred to larger grant proposals for additional context, the updated approach encourages candidates and supervisors to outline the research project more fully within the TSP template itself. This change helps ensure that the team has explicitly considered and articulated the specific aims and scope of the candidate's work within the broader context of a larger grant or research program. Next to that, it also makes the TSP document better fitted for being useful not just at the start of the project but as a living plan that is reflected upon in each GROW.

The updated template is already available online and Research Committee members will present the new template at upcoming unit meetings within the Institute of Psychology to support its implementation. These updates are expected to enhance the quality of TSP submissions and encourage PhD candidates and their supervisory teams to engage with important topics at an early stage. This, in turn, helps to ensure well-aligned mutual expectations throughout the PhD

trajectory. Simultaneously to this process, we have updated the evaluation guidelines for reviewers as to make our reviews 1) more standardized and 2) ensure new members know what to do.

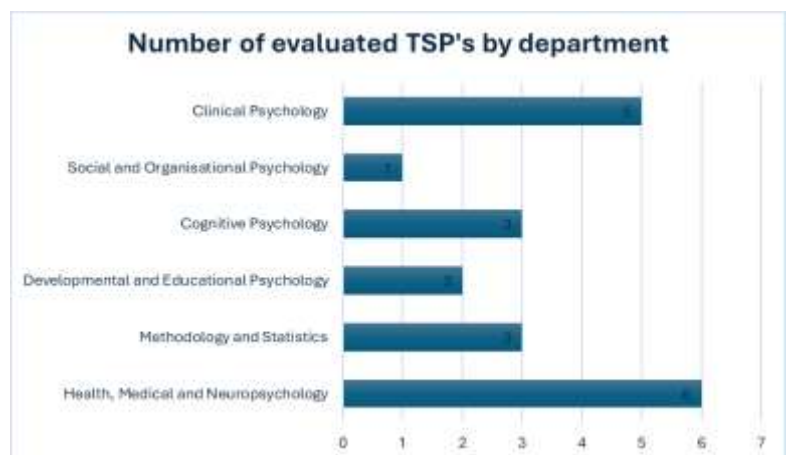
### TSP evaluation processes

To serve our PhDs in a timely manner, the Research Committee has self-imposed a clear and shorter deadline of four weeks for the evaluation of TSP's. All the reviewers are provided with this deadline by the secretary on receiving the TSP for evaluation. The aim is to shorten the time that PhD candidates and their supervisors wait for the result of the evaluation of their TSP, which can further aid the TSP in being a supportive document with agreements throughout the trajectory. Additionally, to ensure consistency and clarity in communicating the reviewers' comments to the team, the Chair of the Research Committee now reads and where necessary takes an editor role for all the approval and revision letters before they are sent.

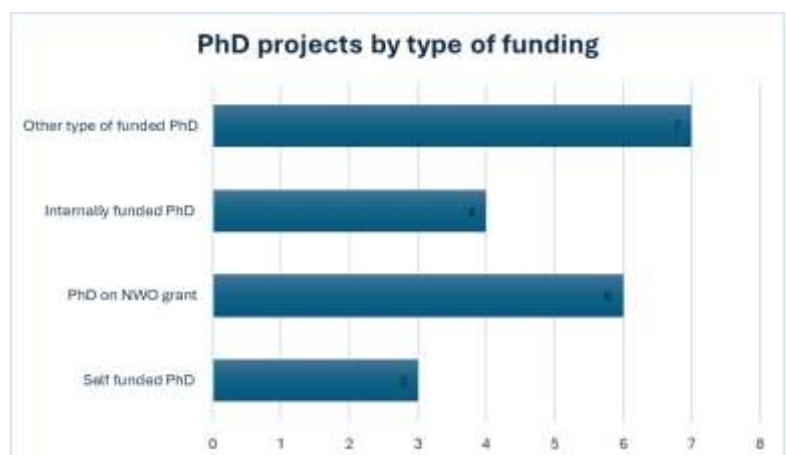
### General patterns in what committee advises for TSPs

To facilitate connections and joint focus on the strategy of our institute and the various committees and entities within it, it can be useful to extract and summarize some themes from what the reviewers see in our TSPs each year. The committee has evaluated 20 TSPs in 2024-2025.

The Health, Medical and Neuropsychology department of our institute sent most TSPs to be evaluated (6), closely followed by the Clinical Psychology department (5). The Methodology and Statistics department and Cognitive Psychology department both sent three TSPs to be evaluated, the Developmental and Educational Psychology two and the Social and Organisational Psychology department sent one TSP to be evaluated.



Moreover, the division of type of funding of the evaluated TSP's can be divided in four types of funding. A big part of the funding came from NWO (six of the 20 evaluated TSPs). The other big part (7) of the funding for the PhD projects came from different sources, for example Reuma NL, Mercator Sapiens Stimulus grants and Nationaal MS fonds. The other two sources were the internal starters-, and stimulation grants (4) and self-funded PhD projects (3).



Finally, the Research Committee has looked at cross-unit cooperation within the supervision teams. Working towards 'one institute' is one of the five priorities of the Strategic Plan of the Institute of Psychology for 2023-2027. Although the composition of the supervision teams might be considered a limited indicator, it still can tell us something about the state of the cross-unit cooperation within our institute. At the moment all of the 20 supervision teams evaluated in this academic year consisted either of promotor and co-promotor of the same unit or of a combination of promotor from one of the units and a co-promotor of the LUMC or Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society, or other universities in either the Netherlands (Utrecht and Amsterdam) or Germany (Konstanz) or Belgium (Antwerp).

Over the past months, the reviewers have seen the first Responsible Practices Statements and are happy to see this part of the template give space and recognition to good practices within our institute (such as making data and code openly available, posting preprints, making publicly available tutorials for newly developed statistical analysis procedures, etc.). On several occasions, the reviewers have asked teams to revise or update the methodological rigor of studies to increase or explicitly justify the informative value of studies. Another notable suggestion by reviewers has been to remove words suggesting that the plan is to have (a number of) 'published' papers by the end of the trajectory, replacing this with planned outputs such as preprints that are not reliant on peer-review pace and quality.

### **Psychology connected evaluation**

To foster collaboration and connection within our department, we organized the Psychology Connected sessions; thematic gatherings four times a year, followed by an informal drink. Psychology Connected aims to provide a space to share ideas, explore topics from different perspectives, and connect with colleagues from other departments. Attending these sessions offers valuable opportunities to gain new insights, engage in interdisciplinary discussions, and strengthen professional relationships.

To gain insight into the experiences and preferences surrounding the PsychologyConnected gatherings, a short questionnaire was distributed among staff members of the institute. A total of 29 respondents filled out the survey. The questionnaire included general questions about participants' subdepartments and how often they attended the PsychologyConnected sessions in the past year. It also explored the perceived importance of interdepartmental connection and collaboration.

Results showed that there is a clear appreciation for PsyCon's underlying goal: fostering meaningful interdepartmental connection. Most respondents value this aim highly and have attended at least once in the past year. However, the findings also suggest that the format and timing could be barriers to broader or more consistent engagement. Many respondents are eager for more interaction, interdisciplinary exchange, and practical relevance to their own work. These insights offer valuable direction for shaping future gatherings: with relatively modest adjustments in content, setting, and structure.

Strengthened by these insights, the Research Committee has decided to put asking for new budget for organizing PsyCon on hold for the coming academic year (2025-2026), and to use these results to advise and support other initiatives. This can create more attention (less competition regarding colleague's time investment) for initiatives from other committees. For instance, the Board and Research Coordinators are working on streamlining communication surrounding the colloquia organized by all the different units so they can become moments of cross unit interaction. The Research Committee will provide the Research Coordinators and the communication team with the recommendations from our Psychology Connected evaluation.

The Research Committee will look for future opportunities to initiate events that are aligned with our focus on research integrity, and also look at co-organizing or tagging along with already planned events or existing work (everyone bring their last poster or print of another output?), being mindful of costs in times of budget cuts.

### **Future outlook – allow our researchers to thrive**

In light of our aim to safeguard the quality of the work done in our institute, the committee plans to create a firm connection with efforts surrounding scientific integrity. For instance, the integrity workgroup will be brought to life again in the coming year, with a strong presence of members of our committee. The new chair of the Research Committee has an integrative profile in this area and will lead the effort to connect the committee more with these topics that are at the heart of the quality of our institute. In the coming year, we aim to strengthen our responsibility in providing accessible points of contact for any colleague in the institute who wishes to raise concerns about research integrity, discuss good and responsible practices (ideally before issues escalate), seek guidance on where to go with questions or complaints, or simply reflect on the values that underpin our work and help reinforce our shared goals.

Freedom of scientific research is a core value of our Institute, and it has attracted exceptional talent from around the world. However, once within the system, sustaining scientific motivation and engagement can be challenging. A range of factors currently make it difficult to remain passionately involved in research—from dwindling (already limited) funding to academia's continued reliance on misleading indicators such as publication counts and grant totals. While these external pressures can be discouraging, we remain hopeful. We believe that the talent and dedication within our community can come together to build a more resilient and supportive scientific environment. There is growing interest in alternative approaches such as open science and slow science, which emphasize transparency, collaboration, and thoughtful, long-term inquiry. To explore these ideas further, the Research Committee will keep internal reflection on these topics as a regular meeting item and continue our work with solicited and unsolicited advice in order to create 'one institute' where inclusion and community foster meaningful research engagement. During our next Heidag, we will turn our ambitions into concrete outputs and actions. One foreseen output for the upcoming year is finalizing our draft of new PhD dissertation guidelines for our institute, which aims to give guidance to PhD trajectories in a changing (inter)national landscape.