

Research Assessment 2011

Behavioural Science Institute

Radboud University Nijmegen

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Netherlands System of Quality Assessment of Research

This quality assessment of research is part of the assessment system for all public Dutch university research, as organized by the universities in the Netherlands. The aims of the assessment system are:

- Improvement of research quality based on an external peer review, including scientific and societal relevance of research, research policy and research management.
- Accountability to the board of the research organization, and towards funding agencies, government and society at large

The assessment takes place at the level of research institutes and research programs. The research institutes submit a description of the results that have been achieved in all contributing research programs during the previous six years (including quantitative data about staff input, PhD's, publications, financial resources), a short outline of the mission of the institute, the objective of each individual program, and developments anticipated in the context of the research profile of the faculty or institute. Important elements of the assessments are the interviews, which the Evaluation Committee conducts with the management and the program directors, and the visit to the facilities.

This evaluation of the Behavioural Science Institute was commissioned by the Executive Board of Radboud University Nijmegen.

1.2 The Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee was appointed in July 2011 and consisted of:

- Professor W. A. Collins (Chair), professor at the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, Minnesota, USA.
- Professor R.A. Fabes, professor at the School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, Arizona, USA.
- Professor K. Fiedler, professor at the Psychologisches Institut, University Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany.
- Professor L.E. Tetrick, professor at the Psychology department of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA.
- Professor K.R. Pugh, professor at Haskins Laboratories, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

- Professor P. Muris, professor at the Institute of Psychology of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Mrs. M.J.V. Van Bogaert PhD, project leader at QANU, was appointed secretary to the Evaluation Committee.

A short curriculum vitae of each of the members is included in Appendix 1.

Independence

All members of the Committee signed a statement of independence to ensure that:

- they would judge without bias, personal preference or personal interest, and
- their judgment is made without undue influence from the institute, the program or other stakeholders.

1.3 Scope of the Assessment

This assessment covers the research of the Behavioural Science Institute. The period of assessment is 2005-2010, and recent developments have been taken into account as much as possible.

The Committee was asked to operate according to the *Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 for Public Research Universities*. This Protocol specifies the criteria for the assessment and the information that must be provided to the Committee.

1.4 Data provided to the Committee

The Evaluation Committee has received a detailed self-evaluation report provided by the Behavioural Science Institute. For each program, ten key publications were specified in the report and these publications were provided to the Committee via a secluded website. The documentation included all the information required by the Protocol.

1.5 Procedures followed by the Committee

The assessments are based on the documentation provided by the Behavioural Science Institute, the key publications of each program, the interviews and the tour of the facilities. The interviews took place during the site visit on 4 and 5 October 2011. Time was allowed for visits to the experimental and instrumental set-ups and discussions with the Director of the Institute, senior researchers, PhD-students, and postdocs. The program of the site visit is included in Appendix 2. At the Welcome meeting in Nijmegen, the Committee had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Faculty Board and the Behavioural Science Institute Management.

The Committee members have all read the Self Evaluation Report. The key publications of each program were read by the first and the second reviewers of each program, who independently gave a preliminary assessment, using the form provided in the Protocol. These preliminary assessments were discussed by the members preceding the site visit. During this internal Committee meeting on the evening of 3 October 2011, preceding the site visit, for the institute as well as for each program, a number of comments and questions were decided upon. The Committee also agreed upon procedural matters and aspects of the assessment as described in the following paragraphs.

The interviews with the Director of the Institute, Program Leaders, PhD students and postdocs took place during the site visits on 4 October 2011. All interviews and discussions were conducted with the plenary Committee. A tour of the facilities was conducted at the end of the first full day of the visit. After the tour of the facilities the Committee held a final meeting with the Director of the Institute and the program leaders.

On the second day of the site visit the Committee discussed the results for each program as well as for the institute to prepare this report. Afterwards a meeting with the representatives of the University and Faculty Board and the Management was arranged, in which the main findings of the Committee were reported to them and to the research staff of BSI.

A draft version of this report was sent to the Behavioural Science Institute and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences in November 2011, for factual corrections and comments. In December 2011 the comments were discussed with the Committee Chairman via e-mail. This led to minor corrections and clarifications. The report was subsequently submitted to the Executive Board of Radboud University Nijmegen.

1.6 Aspects and Assessment Scale

The Protocol requires the Evaluation Committee to assess the research on four main criteria of the *Standard Evaluation Protocol*:

- Quality (the level of the research conducted)
- Productivity (relationship between input and output)
- Societal relevance (social, economic and cultural relevance of the research)
- Vitality and feasibility (flexibility, management and leadership)

The ratings used are: Excellent (5); Very good (4); Good (3); Satisfactory (2); Unsatisfactory (1). This five-point scale used in the assessment is described in the *Standard Evaluation Protocol* as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Excellent (5) | Research is world leading. Researchers are working at the forefront of their field internationally and their research had an important and substantial impact in the field. |
| Very Good (4) | Research is internationally competitive and makes a significant contribution to the field. Research is considered nationally leading. |
| Good (3) | Work is competitive at the national level and will probably make a valuable contribution in the international field. Research is considered internationally visible. |
| Satisfactory (2) | Work adds to our understanding and is solid, but not exciting. Research is nationally visible. |
| Unsatisfactory (1) | Work that is neither solid nor exciting flawed in the scientific and or technical approach, repetitions of other work, etc. |

2 Assessment of the Behavioural Science Institute

Behavioural Science Institute

Director of the institute: Professor M. Kompier

Academic staff in 2010: 102.2 fte

2.1 Mission, goals and research activities

The mission of the Behavioural Science Institute (BSI) is to conduct top level research on the fundamental principles and processes that govern human behavior. In addition to this fundamental aim ('understand behavior'), the BSI aims at societal relevance ('influence behavior').

The ambition of the BSI is 1) to be a cohesive top-level institute in behavioral science; 2) with cooperating world leading research programs; 3) to train future generations of highly qualified researchers in behavioral sciences; and 4) to be an attractive workplace for its employees.

BSI research is integrated in six programs:

- Developmental psychopathology;
- Experimental psychopathology and treatment;
- Learning and plasticity;
- Social cognition;
- Social development;
- Work, stress and health.

BSI has taken several steps to improve the focus and cohesion of the research. After the previous evaluation in 2004, two programs were discontinued and much effort is put in promoting a 'BSI identity' and in increasing 'bottom up' cooperation between research staff across programs. Examples are regular meetings of researchers from different programs, stimulation of joint applications for research grants and contract research and stimulation of joint publications. The institute has also invested in international collaboration; much collaboration exists on MSc and PhD-projects.

In the period of the assessment, the BSI tenured staff remained stable, whereas a steady increase in non-tenured staff and in PhD students results in an increase of total staff since 2005.

BSI staff also teach (usually 50% research -50% teaching) in the School of Psychology and Artificial Intelligence and the School of Education.

2.1.1 General Assessment of the BSI

The committee found that the BSI is a remarkably well balanced collection of six research programs. All programs were given a 4, 4.5 or 5 on quality for the 1999-2004 period and 4.5 or 5 in this accounting of the 2005-2010 period. Most important, all six programs reported increases in the common indicators of quality (e.g., number of publications in higher impact journals, indicative Hirsch-indices for senior scholars) from 2004 to 2010. The primary feature of these quality-enhancing efforts appears to have been a collaborative leadership process among program leaders and senior staff in the BSI. This process consisted largely of frequent steering meetings to establish and monitor annual targets for publication in top journals, setting and maintaining goals for high quality supervision and guidance of PhD students, targets for submissions of grant and contract proposals. These targets and goals were considered at the level of the institute, program, and individual. Clearly, the BSI is highly effective in fostering and supporting a remarkably high level of functioning in its constituent units.

2.2 Quality

2.2.1 Leadership

The director of BSI is appointed by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences for a period of five years. The director is authorized to make managerial decisions within the confines of the institute's budget. The director chairs the BSI Advisory Board, which consists of the professors that lead the six research programs, the RM program director and the PhD-coordinator. For financial, HRM and other managerial and operational issues support is provided by the Bureau of the Faculty. Five advisory committees have been installed to facilitate and support BSI management processes.

2.2.2 Organization

BSI integrates the main psychological and educational sub disciplines in one cohesive research institute that aims at top level research combined with high societal relevance. BSI uses several quality standards to judge its international position: 1) accreditation as a research school by the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW); and 2) official recognition as Graduate School by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

2.2.3 Academic reputation

According to the self evaluation report the outstanding international academic position and recognition of BSI are reflected in many prizes, awards, key note lectures, organization of conferences, memberships of academies, etc. Key editorial positions of BSI faculty are considered another illustration of the academic reputation. In the assessment period BSI members are or were (assistant/associate) editor of 18 journals.

2.2.4 Resources

The ambition of the BSI is to be an attractive and pleasant place to work in, both for current researchers and for (potential) new members. BSI successfully applied for a high competitive strategic 'Top researcher-grant' from the Board of Radboud University Nijmegen. Strategic recruitment is used, hiring the highest qualified researchers. BSI makes use of 1) performance monitoring and performance evaluation through yearly meetings between the researcher and his/her program leader; 2) personal development plans that follow from these; 3) a transparent career policy which enables excellent assistant professors to be promoted to associate professor, and excellent associate professors to full professor. BSI has created research facilities and invests in training and development of its members.

In 2010 the total research budget of BSI was € 8.1 million of which 81% was spent on personnel costs. Overall, 57% of the funding is direct (university), 26% comes from research grants and 17% from contract research. Direct funding decreased over the evaluation period, but total budget increased. The self-evaluation report states the (personal) grants that were received over the evaluation period.

2.2.5 Committee findings on Quality of the Institute

The quality of the Institute stems directly from its effectiveness in fostering collaborative goal-setting and strategic planning among its constituent programs. Between 2004 and 2010 the BSI led the six programs in establishing and monitoring annual targets for publication in top journals, setting and maintaining goals for high quality supervision and guidance of PhD students, targets for submissions of grant and contract proposals. The improvement in indicators of quality identified in this external review is in large part attributable to the activities that occurred at the level of the BSI between 2005 and 2010. The leadership efforts of both the current and past directors and program members contributed greatly to the high quality and collaborative nature of the BSI.

2.2.6 PhD training and supervision

BSI invests in the future generation of researchers. In 2010 the BSI Graduate School was officially recognized and granted by NWO. The high average scores led to a major investment grant for the graduate school. Furthermore, the institute offers a two year Research Master program in

Behavioral Science, many of the courses are offered in interdisciplinary cooperation between the research programs. PhD students have to spend 26 ECTS to training activities. Some activities are obligatory; 1) organizing and attending international BSI workshops; 2) attending BSI-PhD symposia; 3) a course on presentation skills; and 4) a course on publishing skills. In consultation with the supervisors, PhD students can choose other, specialized courses.

The projects of PhD students are closely monitored and assessed by the institute, using the BSI-PhD tracking system. PhD students meet weekly with their supervisor and at least monthly with their promotor. Each year each PhD student has a meeting with his/her supervisor and promotor for a performance evaluation meeting and to discuss progress. The report is subsequently discussed by the chair of the PhD-platform and the six program leaders. The PhD students are informed on the outcome of this discussion and possible actions that will be taken. BSI provides resources for conference attendance and international visits.

2.2.7 Committee findings on PhD training and supervision

The two year research master program in Behavioural Science is considered an excellent preparation for students to continue their academic career as a PhD student. The PhD students the committee interviewed were overall satisfied with the supervision and training received. They stated that the institute is involved in their training and is open to suggestions for change. From what the committee has read in the self-evaluation report and heard in the interviews, the PhD training is excellent and supervision is taken very seriously.

The success rate of the PhD training is good, from the PhD students who started between 2002 and 2004 a total of 86% completed their thesis. It is hard for the committee to evaluate whether the time to complete a thesis is reasonable. The committee has the impression that over the past years, the institute has invested in improving time to complete. It furthermore expects that PhD students who previously finished a research master will need less time to complete their thesis and therefore time to complete is expected improve. Since the committee has no detailed information on the reason of the eight discontinuations, it will only emphasize the importance of selection and supervision to minimize dropouts. According to the committee the BSI is paying sufficient attention to this aspect.

The committee applauds that giving education, for example to undergraduates, recently became obligatory for PhD students. The committee emphasizes the importance of not only training PhD students in research activities, but also in supervising bachelor or master students and giving lectures. These activities will be part of their future academic jobs and should be trained adequately.

Concluding, the committee is of opinion that the BSI has invested strongly and successfully in PhD training in the past evaluation period. In a competitive setting, the BSI Graduate School is officially recognized and granted by NWO. This is clearly the consequence of the high quality training and supervision of PhD students.

2.3 Productivity

2.3.1 Productivity strategy

BSI has refined its productivity and publication strategy through a process of learning from each other. The following targets were set: 1) define clear (yearly) targets for each program with regards to number and type of publications, aiming at top-journals; 2) take care of high quality supervision and guidance of PhD-students; 3) improve monitoring of PhD students; 4) set clear targets for writing research grant and contract research proposals, at the level of the institute, the program and the individual researcher.

The scientific output is high according to the BSI and has increased after the previous evaluation. It is stated in the Self-Evaluation Report that two parameters stand out: 1) scientific papers in international peer reviewed journals, and 2) completed PhD-theses. These indicators revealed that, despite comparable amounts of tenured staff, the number of published scientific papers more than doubled in this evaluation period. In addition, the number of completed PhD theses increased from 76 in the period 1999-2004 to 118 in the period 2005-2010. Of these completed PhD theses, 40% were products of collaboration outside the 'own' BSI group.

2.3.2 Use of research facilities by third parties

BSI has strengthened its research infrastructure, e.g. the facilities, committee structure and the appointment of an international top scholar as BSI-principal investigator within the Donders Centre of Cognitive Neuroimaging (DCCN).

2.3.3 Committee findings on Productivity of the Institute

The changes posted in the 2004-2010 period provide an impressive example of a research institute that works effectively at all levels. All programs show signs of having benefitted from deliberate strategies generated and supported by BSI and the programs working in concert. One remarkable feature of the improvements is that, despite program diversity and concerted efforts to build the strength of individual programs, BSI has created an atmosphere in which collaborations flourish across the lines that traditionally divide and isolate programs and even individuals within programs. This collaborativeness in scientific activities and in the governance and goal-setting of the institute as a whole may be the single most laudatory change in the BSI in the past 6 years.

Some variation in productivity exists across programs, but these may be understood in terms of prevailing disciplinary and sub-disciplinary differences, and differences in the size and make-up of members of the programs. For example, the number of influential journals publishing work on developmental psychopathology, experimental psychopathology and treatment, and learning and plasticity exceed the number of journals that are considered high quality outlets for research on social development, social cognition, and work, stress, and health.

2.4 Societal relevance

The self evaluation report does not provide information on the societal relevance of the BSI as a whole. Moreover, the six programs of BSI vary in the ease with which societal relevance can be pursued and recognized. In the 2005-2010 period, however, most programs effectively extended their reach in this respect and clearly deserved the higher ratings assigned to them in this evaluation. All programs have prioritized further improvements in the six years just ahead.

2.5 Vitality and feasibility

2.5.1 Strategy

The current mission of the BSI is to aim at top level research combined with high societal relevance. This mission will be remained in the future. The strategy is to foster the balance between the fundamental and the applied aims and to allocate a substantial amount of direct research funding to fundamental research on behavior. A second strategic aim is to receive the status of a 'center of excellence' for behavioral research within Radboud University Nijmegen.

2.5.2 Committee findings on Vitality and Feasibility of the Institute

BSI collectively and programs individually report high and increasing levels of vitality and, despite difficult economic conditions and shrinking research dollars, feasibility. As in the past, some programs enjoy some relative advantages due to the eminence and impressive track records of the faculty, but the absolute levels of differential advantage now appear to be less pronounced than at the time of the last external review. Leadership and action at the institute level is likely to be increasingly important to maintain the current relative standing of the institute and the programs. The BSI has created remarkably effective strategies for short- and long-term planning, as well as for acting nimbly to pursue new goals, seek additional resources, and supports the efforts of its members both at the level of programs and individuals. Today, the BSI is strongly emerging as a *center of excellence* in behavioral science research, it is multiply connected to leading networks of behavioral scientists, and it is in an excellent position to continue to produce compelling research findings of both scientific and applied significance.

3 Assessments per program

The committee has carried out an assessment at the level of the programs, as defined by the Behavioural Science Institute.

Comments that are applicable to all programs have been made in Chapter 2 (Assessment of the Institute) and are not repeated below.

The committee assessed the following research programs:

1. Developmental Psychopathology
2. Experimental Psychopathology and Treatment
3. Learning & Plasticity
4. Social Cognition
5. Social Development
6. Work, Stress and Health

Program:	Developmental Psychopathology		
Program director:	Professor Rutger Engels, professor Isabela Granic		
Academic staff in 2010:	23.7 fte		
Assessment:	Quality	:	5
	Productivity	:	5
	Societal Relevance	:	5
	Vitality and feasibility	:	4.5

Objectives and research activities

The program focuses on the study of 1) micro-social (observed) imitation processes and the impact of environmental cues and pressures on developmental pathways of psychopathology, 2) the development of implicit and explicit cognitive associations, their biological and social underpinnings, and their effects on the onset of problem behavior, 3) the impact of genetic variation on psychopathology, and 4) the effects and underlying mechanisms of evidence-based prevention and treatment of substance use and internalizing psychopathologies.

Quality

Since the last assessment, this group has achieved an outstanding level of productivity that would compare highly to any group of developmental psychopathologists anywhere in the world. The quantity and quality of the publications, particularly the journal publications, are exceptional. It is clear that this group has found an effective strategy for engaging each other, colleagues from other programs and institutions, and their graduate students in publication efforts that lead to successful outcomes in many high quality and high impact outlets. They have had a steep increase in productivity since the last review and this can be seen in the number and quality of publications as well as in successful grant writing. In terms of funding, the level of research grant funding has tripled over the course of this evaluation. This reflects on the high quality of research being conducted, on the successful strategies implemented by group members (that they must submit one grant per year), and on the high degree of experience and talent of the tenured and non-tenured staff. The total number of projects is very impressive and the collaborative nature of these, as well as the involvement of PhD students, is clearly strengths that have been used wisely and effectively. This is all the more impressive given the fact that there is no research staff to provide assistance (beyond post-doc and PhD students). The recent hiring of a new full professor will bring even more opportunities and recognition to this already very impressive group.

Productivity

As already noted, this group has been extremely productive over the period of time covered in this evaluation. Publications and research grant funding have tripled over this period of time. In addition, the number of PhD students has generally increased over this period of time. This too is a reflection of the enhanced productivity and visibility of the group. The group has engaged in successful collaborations that have enhanced their output and it is likely that this will increase over time with the addition of new faculty and students – particularly in connections with colleagues who have interests in brain and behavior. It is highly commendable that the program uses a variety of deliberate strategies to foster timely production of publications. Faculty also provides graduate students with immediate opportunities to become engaged in writing for publication and provide timely and quick feedback to these students. The use of faculty-student writing retreats for the purpose of collaborative, as well as individual, writing, represents a wise investment in this aspect of productivity, while at the same time providing rich opportunities for research training.

Societal relevance

As a research program focused on the development of conditions needful of clinical diagnoses and on the creation, implementation, and evaluation of treatment interventions, a certain level of societal relevance would be expected and, indeed, is evident in the productivity record. The degree to which faculty are engaged in translational work directly is somewhat unclear to the committee. Given the importance of the early years as an important point of prevention and intervention, more focus on this area could help solidify the relevance and impact of the work. Some resources will be needed to effectively insure the translation of the work to the broader social community. The nomination of the director of this program for the 'Huibregtsprijs 2011' (award for the best Dutch research that is both scientifically innovative and societal relevant) is further testimony to the relevance and societal importance of the work conducted by this group. The use of Facebook and other social media outlets may facilitate further outreach and impact.

Vitality and feasibility

The vitality of the program is evident in the high level of productivity and the success in securing funds. The vitality of the program is also strengthened by the addition of a relatively young new full professor who can provide important new research avenues and leadership to this group. The increase in the number of PhDs also ensures vitality and the fact there has not been a single PhD student drop out of this program since 2002 attests to the collaborative and nurturing work environment that fosters engagement and commitment. It is noted that at some point, the graduate student and instructional load of this group may become a burden that cannot continue to be carried on the shoulders of only a few faculty and no research staff.

Conclusions

This program continues to be strong and has made notable strides since the last review.

Already a strong program at that time, the increased productivity, quality, and collaborative nature of the work has produced a steady and impressive increase in visibility, vitality, and prominence of this program – at both the national and international levels. More investment in this group is certainly warranted and the future looks very strong and promising for this program in the years to come.

Program:	Experimental Psychopathology and Treatment		
Program director:	Professor Eni Becker, professor Karin Roelofs		
Academic staff in 2010:	11.3 fte		
Assessment:	Quality	:	5
	Productivity	:	5
	Societal Relevance	:	5
	Vitality and feasibility	:	4.5

Objectives and research activities

The major aim of the program is to contribute fundamental scientific knowledge to the domain of abnormal psychology through the experimental study of cognitive and biological processes in psychopathology. The program studies 1) the development and maintenance of psychological and somatic dysfunctions, 2) the process of change caused by clinical and preventive interventions, and 3) clinical decision-making.

Quality

This program is extremely good. The principal researchers in this group are widely recognized as top researchers in the domain of experimental psychopathology. Strongly inspired by insights from cognitive psychology, the researchers are able to study fundamental processes of abnormal human behavior and to employ this knowledge in the treatment of people who suffer from various types of mental disorders (anxiety disorders, depression, and substance use disorder). By focusing on the role of motivation and approach-avoidance tendencies in particular, this group has obtained a quite unique position within the experimental psychopathology research. With the recent arrival of a new full professor in the group, the biological aspects of these basic phenomena can be also explored, which will further improve the quality and impact of the group. The group is already collaborating with other BSI partners, but it is likely that the new hiring will further strengthen this collaboration and also the link with the Donders Institute.

The program leader has done an extremely good job at managing this group, which has now a more clear-cut and consistent research agenda. Her research management capacity appears to be excellent when looking at the quality and quantity of the output, and the numbers of recruited PhD students. The only (mild) negative remark that can be made concerns the inclusion of the Clinical Decision Making research, which does not seem to fit well with the main mission of the program. The Clinical Decision Making program was discontinued after the last research evaluation and was adopted by the Experimental Psychopathology and Treatment program.

As this program is responsible for a large number of bachelor and master students, the ratio of research and education staff seems to be out of balance, which may have in time an impact on the research activities of the members in this group.

Productivity

In the report of the previous assessment committee, the productivity of this group was already qualified as 'impressive', leading to an overall rating of 4 'very good'. Since then this group has almost tripled its research output to a number of 402 publications, with 73% being published in journals with an impact factor > 1 and 20% being placed in top 10% journals. So in terms of productivity, this group has shown an excellent performance over the past six years. The group also demonstrated good earning capacity, the number of research fte's recruited via grants has doubled since the last assessment.

Societal Relevance

The fact that this group is extremely good in initiating creative fundamental research does not mean that there is no societal impact or valorization of the work. Over the past years, the program has expanded the network of collaboration with clinical institutes so that they can test theoretical insights as obtained in non-clinical subjects in clinical patients. The program also has succeeded in translating its ideas in experimental treatments and interventions, which have been implemented in clinical practice and evaluated in randomized controlled trials.

Vitality and feasibility

This group indeed has the potential to achieve their main goal namely 'to become the world's leading research center for the study of approach and avoidance motivation'. Staff members are extremely talented, bringing insights from cognitive and biological theories together, thereby creating a unique research climate in which this type of research can flourish. The program has a very good and determined leader who also has view for the implementation of this research in clinical settings. It is unclear how the Clinical Decision Making fits in this picture and what the strategy will be to deal with this 'outlier in the program'.

Conclusions

In sum, the Experimental Psychopathology and Treatment program has performed exceptionally well since the last review. Research has been outstanding in terms of quantity and quality. The staff of this group is excellent and includes a good mixture of cognitively and biologically oriented researchers, which provides opportunities to improve the future research in this domain to a top level. An obstruction for achieving this goal might be the limited staff capacity (given the fairly high turnover of bachelor and master students equipped by members of this program).

Program:	Learning and Plasticity	
Program director:	Professor Ludo Verhoeven, professor James McQueen	
Academic staff in 2010:	29.7 fte	
Assessment:	Quality	: 4.5
	Productivity	: 4.5
	Societal Relevance	: 5
	Vitality and feasibility	: 5

Objectives and research activities

The program in Learning and Plasticity deals with the micro-analysis of learning and plasticity. The program aims to conduct fundamental research on learning and plasticity in the domains of communications and cognition and with a perspective on societal application. The main focus is on learning in normal populations and in atypical populations. Special attention is given to cognitive, social and motivational constraints on learning, and on the contextual effects of instruction and intervention.

Quality

The Learning and Plasticity program was considered strong at the previous assessment (overall very good). Since then this program has improved significantly, as a consequence of good management, solid interdisciplinary collaborations within the BSI, three outstanding new hires (all doing cutting edge in the subfields of cognitive neuroscience), effective international partnerships, a strengthening of research ties (and funding) with both the Donders Neuroimaging Center and Max Planck Institute (MPI), a reasonable balance of applied and basic research within the program, new technical resources in support of applied research in schools (e.g., the mobile EEG lab), and finally increased productivity (both in terms of numbers of PHD theses, and in the quality and quantity of refereed publications). The academic reputations of key researchers are outstanding. Finally, the program is clearly situated to maintain an international presence in the coming years with new focus on three hot topics: dynamic systems, embodied cognition, and the neurocognitive foundations of learning and consolidation (and their disorders). With respect to resources, while they are generally outstanding, the dependence on Donders and MPI for neuroimaging and speech research in general is not optimal since future ties cannot be fully insured. Greater investment in cognitive science within the BSI to support the continued growth of the program is desirable.

Productivity

Given the size of the program, the reviewers during the previous assessment had expressed some concerns on numbers of publications. Since then the numbers have doubled, and 40% of the papers were in top quarter journals. This is good progress, but given the increased size in research fte of the program relative to others in the BSI the productivity is still an area to work on going forward. However, given the positive changes alluded to above, and particularly the strength of new hires there is good reason to be confident of continued improvement in this area.

Societal relevance

The program is ideally structured to connect basic science in language, perception and cognition with clinical and educational themes and this group (especially its leader) has been a model of effective translational work. Indeed, through significant collaborations with national and international educational agencies, outreach programs to educators and the public (e.g., Curious Minds), and with research validated assessments now made available to clinicians, the program has fulfilled its mission to bring better science to the classroom and clinic. Finally, given the examples of cutting edge translational research being pursued in some of the new grants and theses, the impact of Learning and Plasticity research on society at large is likely to increase in the future.

Vitality and feasibility

As noted in the assessment of the quality, with highly strategic new hires, attention to important new 'hot topics' in cognitive science and solid translational research, and with strong and stable connections with Donders, MPI, and international partners, the program obviously scores high in vitality and feasibility. The leadership has shown excellent vision and good scientific instincts. However, it was not clear from the Self Evaluation Report whether the program management has fully explored strategic planning on longer time scales (i.e., 10 years), and attention to long term scientific planning would be very helpful. To illustrate, the development of a deeper understanding of the brain bases of typical or atypical language and cognitive development will require going beyond neuroimaging and toward more intensive study of gene-brain-behavior pathways; to these ends greater attention from the leadership as to how to strengthen ties to basic genetics and neuroscience going forward is recommended (indeed, grant success in the coming years may well depend on deepening cognitive neuroscience in these ways). It is clear however, that the program has the talent and energy to remain cutting edge, and with increased focus on longer term planning the future of this program looks very bright indeed.

Conclusions

This is an extremely well-managed program with very strong cross-disciplinary collaborations, with great potential for world class research in the coming years. With terrific (and strategic) new hires, increased ties with Donders and MPI, solid international partnerships, cutting edge themes, and integrated basic and applied research the program has improved considerably since the last review cycle. Minor concerns were noted over limited BSI infrastructure for cognitive neuroscience and psycholinguistics (overreliance on partners), and the need to better plan for increased emphasis on gene-brain-behavior pathways that will be key to international funding opportunities in the coming years.

Program:	Social Cognition	
Program director:	Professor Ap Dijksterhuis, professor Daniel Wigboldus	
Academic staff in 2010:	21.4 fte	
Assessment:	Quality	: 5
	Productivity	: 4.5
	Societal Relevance	: 5
	Vitality and feasibility	: 4.5

Objectives and research activities

The program aims to do social cognition research on the highest level, comparable to the very best European and North American Institutions. The program does fundamental research, strives to publish in the best outlets, aims to be highly visible on international conferences, and seeks international collaboration. Increasing attention has been paid to applied and practical research and to the dissemination and valorization of research findings.

Quality

Doubtlessly, the social cognition program constitutes a major asset of the Behavioral Science Institute. Directed by two outstanding principle investigators, whose scientific contributions must be considered world class by all standards, the group includes a number of accomplished mid-career and younger faculty members, doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows, who are eager to collaborate with experienced and accomplished faculty members at all levels. Virtually all staff members have been successful in publishing their work in the most prestigious outlets of social cognition and neighboring disciplines, and even in super-disciplinary journals. The reputation of this group in the international community is widely acknowledged and manifested in the quality of the publications, their citation indices, in awards and key functions served by Nijmegen researchers as journal editors, editorial board members and as agents of international networking activities.

Despite its growing size, the social cognition group is organized and administered efficiently. This efficiency is to a considerable extent due to the fact that the high teaching load causes little interference with the various ambitious research projects. The researchers' intrinsic motivation to teach and their positive relationship to young scientists and students create a highly productive academic climate, fostering the development of PhD students and their contribution to publications and conference presentations. It is not by coincidence that young scientists from Nijmegen have been regularly involved in the development of new national and international schemes of graduate training (Kurt-Lewin Institute; ISCON; ESCON).

Productivity

The BSI's productivity in the social cognition area is impressive both in terms of the number and the quality of the publications documenting the scientific work. Almost 200 publications in less than six years in peer-reviewed international journals, apart from other book chapters and miscellaneous publications, testify to this positive conclusion. It is worth noting that the quality of many of these publications, in terms of originality and impact, is far above average and sometimes even ground-breaking.

The scientific merits of scientists from this program not only include empirical contributions but also methodological innovations (immersive virtual realities) and applications of fundamental social cognition approaches in applied areas such as consumer psychology, affect regulation, relationship and decision making.

The recommendation of the previous evaluation committee to place a stronger emphasis on theoretical innovation has been taken up seriously, leading to notable reflection and theoretical debates (e.g., about unconscious thought theory). Nevertheless, there still seems to be room for improvement in this direction. Although innovative theorizing is still lagging behind industrial empirical research in this area, this appears to be reflective of the general state of affairs in the area of social cognition rather than any failure of the BSI research program.

Societal relevance

Although the societal, political, and economical relevance of social-cognition research continues to be underestimated and neglected by politicians, journalists, and by the public, scientists of this program have done a lot to popularize key findings from this area as well as their intriguing implications. They are recognized in the mass media and as consultants for organizations and for the public. It is no exaggeration to classify a book by the program leader on the unconscious as a best-seller.

Future efforts and activities in this direction might even more clearly articulate the unique role of behavioral science in general and social cognition in particular, as distinguished from other disciplines, for coping with the major challenges of the 21st century (risk assessment, health-related behaviors, communication and new media, information overflow, aging, relationship threats etc.).

Vitality and feasibility

For several reasons, the committee arrives at an optimistic appraisal concerning the feasibility of the research goals and the future development of the social cognition research program.

Most importantly, this positive prognosis is based on such auspicious conditions as the high volume of research funding, the charisma of the principle investigators and their generous personal grants, the productive climate, the fruitful international networking, the pioneering graduate training activities, and the remarkable fact that Nijmegen has gained the image of a real attractor for students and researchers in social cognition. Their concept to combine process-oriented fundamental research paradigms with their natural applications in diverse societal domains is widely noticed and appreciated in the scientific community.

The robustness and stability of this success story, though, depends on future funding and university policy decisions that cannot be predicted with certainty. The committee strongly recommends Radboud University Nijmegen to continue fostering this research group as one of its strongholds of excellent research in behavioral science.

Conclusions

The Social Cognition research program is outstanding, and certainly one of the core programs of the BSI, not only terms of its scientific output and great reputation worldwide, but also in terms of its efficient organization and the interface of research and teaching at all levels. The evaluation committee strongly recommends Radboud University Nijmegen to continue supporting this research unit at the highest level priority.

Program:	Social Development	
Program director:	Professor Toon Cillessen, professor Marianne Riksen-Walraven	
Academic staff in 2010:	10.4 fte	
Assessment:	Quality	: 4.5
	Productivity	: 4.5
	Societal Relevance	: 5
	Vitality and feasibility	: 4.5

Objectives and research activities

The Social Development program aims to contribute new scientific knowledge with applied relevance by conducting fundamental research on social development and related processes across the life span. In the 2005-2010 period, the program has become more intensively focused on key social relationships and contexts across the life span and approaches that draw on the new concepts and methods and insights emanating from research on the role of biomarkers and processes in developmental science more broadly. The activities have touched on questions pertaining to the significance of early social experiences, especially in educational and child-care settings; the development of social competence, especially in the peer relations typical of adolescence; and autonomy, relatedness, and well-being in later life.

Quality

The self-evaluation report shows that research in social development, a long strength of the BSI, has gained strength since the previous evaluation. As activities less central to the themes of the program dropped away in the wake of the 2005 report, new elements have been incorporated and integrated. The on-going re-focusing of the program has taken considerable time and energy on the part of faculty, and the positive results are likely to become increasingly more visible in the next 2-3 years. The development and use of refined longitudinal methods is strength of this work and likely will continue to undergird high-quality publications into the foreseeable future. Experimental methods are central as well. Indeed, two members of the faculty with particular interests in the integration of behavioral and biological processes are Vidi laureates; and one post-doctoral fellow currently holds a Veni. Program-wide, external funding is higher than in the previous evaluation period. Dissertations have received university and external awards. Faculty members are active as editorial board members and also hold leadership positions in professional organizations internationally. Faculty and students are highly visible on conference programs internationally. These impressive gains in a relatively short time since the previous assessment period may well imply that even more rapid gains can be expected in the years just ahead.

Productivity

Productivity has increased since the 2005 report, with an especially notable increase in the past year and publications now consistently appear in high impact journals; the breadth of these journals is impressive. This change has taken place since the last review despite a drop in research fte. Moreover, although the number of PhD students has remained relatively constant, they have been remarkably productive. The gains in productivity partly reflect the success of the collaborative approach to research, both between and among faculty members and students and across programs. In just the last few years, new collaborations between members of the Social Development program and with members of other programs (e.g., Developmental Psychopathology), are clearly manifesting the forward-looking potential of the new mix of theoretical and methodological strengths in Social Development. Future productivity can be further enhanced by a stronger central focus on areas of particular strength and currency in the unit, such as processes and developmental significance of close relationships and biological, motivational, and neural processes that account for competent social functioning.

Societal Relevance

The work of the Social Development group includes considerable examples of efforts to address societal problems directly. By improving existing research methods and sharpening guidelines for choosing and applying methods to new problems, the work of the program has enabled astute adaptations of familiar methods to achieve greater pertinence to actual life experiences and conditions and to yield data of greater reliability and validity. This is especially evident in their research on the impact of early education and care arrangements. Program members have become important resources on better design and statistical methods for studies of this kind.

Vitality and Feasibility

Increases in productivity and research funding, as well as a more thorough integration of long-standing commitments to the social of social relationships and behavior in both early life and adolescence with an infusion of expertise in the study of biological processes, are strong indications that the group is actively adapting to emerging research questions and methods. The newer research directions and the pioneering of methodological and statistical innovations have also enhanced strengths for additional collaborative activities with other BSI programs (e.g., advances in methods for analyzing dyadic interactions and networks). It should be noted that many promising signs of vitality are attributable to several relatively junior members of the faculty. It is essential that their lines of work, or similar lines, become stable long-term features of the program in the years just ahead.

Conclusions

Between 2005 and 2010 the Social Development program has experienced faculty turnover and other normative changes that have resulted in enhanced potential for leading-edge research. Key examples include an infusion of expertise in the study of biological processes in social behavior and in contemporary models for the statistical analysis of social behavior in context. Research productivity has increased, and visibility of the group has been enhanced through publications in leading journals and unusually strong presence on conference programs in Europe and the U.S. An important goal for the future will be to further focus and highlight the strong central themes of research in the group and capitalize on their relevance to dominant themes in the study of social development generally. One such theme is the consistent focus on the nature and significance of close relationships across the lifespan; the other is the interplay of social and biological processes in cognitive, motivational, and neural functioning in both typical and atypical development.

Program:	Work, Stress and Health	
Program director:	Professor Michiel Kompier, professor Sabine Geurts	
Academic staff in 2010:	5.9 fte	
Assessment:	Quality	: 5
	Productivity	: 4.5
	Societal Relevance	: 4.5
	Vitality and feasibility	: 4.5

Objectives and research activities

The mission of the program is to conduct high quality research in occupational health psychology. Its research is characterized by the combination of fundamental research and applied research. The fundamental goal is to advance knowledge and theory on cognitive, motivational and physiological processes that underlie human work behavior. The applied goal is to provide evidence-based guidelines to design healthy jobs, to prevent stress, and to promote recovery, motivation, learning, performance and a proper balance between work and nonwork.

Quality

The Work, Stress and Health program continues to be well above average in the quality of its publications. Since the previous assessment the program has established three primary themes for its research activities: stress, fatigue and recovery; new systems of work organization; and motivation, learning and performance. Further, in response to the previous assessment, the program has increased its publications in international refereed journals in lieu of publications in Dutch journals. The program has published several publications in leading journals in the field of occupational health psychology. The previous assessment indicated that some of these journals had yet to receive impact factors since occupational health psychology is still an emerging field; however, this has changed during the period of 2005 – 2010 and the tenured staff and PhD students have been successful in increasing their publications in high impact journals. This improvement supports the quality of the research being conducted and published by this program. The tenured staff has established international reputations in the field of occupational health psychology and serve on numerous editorial boards and editorships further reflecting their international reputations as individual scholars. The quality of the research being conducted reflects strong leadership and success in supporting doctoral students on research projects, especially in light of the fact that this program did not have any non-tenured staff during this evaluation period. In sum, the quality of the research being conducted in the Work, Stress and Health program is excellent.

Productivity

The quantity of the publications was relatively stable over the period 2005 – 2010 with a bump in the number of international refereed articles after 2005. Given the program had the smallest fte in the BSI, the number of publications was exceptional. For example, in 2010 the year in which one of the program leaders became the Director of BSI, the program had 23 publications with only 1.78 tenured research staff fte and 4.09 fte PhD students. This level of productivity is substantially above occupational health psychology programs internationally. This suggests the importance of the research foci of the program and their strategy of building collaborative research projects within the program, the BSI, and other research centers in the Netherlands and internationally. The program has met with more success in supporting PhD students than in the prior assessment period and has experienced a growth in the number of PhD students, especially in 2009 and 2010. Considering that this program is very small, it has achieved a high level of productivity for the period 2005 – 2010.

Societal relevance

The Work, Stress and Health program by virtue of the foci of occupational health psychology has a high potential for social, economic and cultural relevance. The societal relevance is evidenced by the involvement of the faculty in several national and international commissions. The program has established links with organizations allowing long term field research to establish evidence based practices, which are intended to enhance the well-being of employees. In addition, the program has organized workshops and published books to enhance the valorization of their work. Given the relevance of the field of occupational health psychology, the program is somewhat constrained by the small number of tenured staff and the teaching demands in becoming more involved in the valorization of their work.

Vitality and feasibility

The Work, Stress and Health program is well positioned to take advantage of developments in the field of occupational health psychology through its involvement in many internal and external activities such as commissions, editorial boards, and the like. Internally, the program has established collaborative relations with other programs in the Institute. For example, they have been developing a collaborative program in BSI and DCC on sport and exercise psychology. Another area of interest that overlaps tenured staff in other programs at BSI which has not yet been really developed is in the area of healthy aging and older workers. The potential challenge for the program is that it is so small that it may not have sufficient staff to capitalize on societal relevant opportunities. The program did lose staff during this period due to unavoidable, personal reasons and it may be advisable for the Institute to consider allocating one or more junior faculty to this program.

Conclusions

The Work, Stress and Health program is a highly productive program with an outstanding international reputation in occupational health psychology. Its tenured staff is highly visible and influential and the program has been successful in attracting outstanding PhD students. Further improvements to this program may be to increase the number of tenured staff, continued efforts to increase external funding, and further establishment of collaborative projects with tenured staff in other programs at BSI.

Response of the institute

On behalf of all research program leaders of the Behavioural Science Institute, and also on behalf of the previous directors of BSI in the period 2005-2010, we would like to extend our sincerest appreciation and gratitude to the Evaluation Committee for its thorough and well-balanced assessment of our institute and our six research programs. The Evaluation Committee consisted of international top researchers who combined their specific expertise in a particular field of interest with a broad expertise in behavioural science. We believe that the Committee has worked in a highly professional, efficient, and conscientious way. We also believe its report to be well-balanced and clearly formulated.

Overall the Evaluation Committee regards the BSI as an important and internationally very competitive player. Especially the quality of our research programs (four programs with the score '5', two with score '4.5') was assessed very highly. We are glad that the other scores (for Productivity, Societal Relevance, Vitality and feasibility) are also very positive (either 4.5 or 5). The Committee concluded that the BSI is strongly emerging as a *center of excellence* in behavioural science research.

Although the Evaluation Committee did not provide a specified list of recommendations, several suggestions were formulated for our research programs. One point that stands out throughout the report is the suggestion to increase the number of tenured staff. The BSI is glad that this point has been adopted by the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences. In response to this suggestion, and in response to the need to intensify teaching in the School of Psychology and Artificial Intelligence and the School of Education, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences will appoint nine new assistant professors within BSI, thereby strengthening the relationship between research and teaching. These are structural positions that are directly funded. Another stimulus for BSI will be additional possibilities to appoint PhD-students or post-doctoral researchers, also through direct funding.

We would like to conclude by reiterating our gratitude to the Chair and members of the Evaluation Committee for their efforts and thoughtful assessment. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Michiel Kompier, Director BSI

Appendix 1

Curricula vitae of the Evaluation Committee members

Professor W. A. Collins (Chair)

Andy Collins is professor at the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, Minnesota, USA. Collins received his bachelors (1967), masters (1968) degree and PhD (1971) at Stanford University (US). In 1980 he became professor at the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota. Collins was director of this institute from 1982 to 1989. Since 1995 he furthermore is adjunct professor at the Department of Psychology of the University of Minnesota. Collins was visiting Scholar at the School of Behavioural Sciences at Macquarie University (AUS) and visiting professor at the Department of Psychology, Arizona State University in 1995. He received many awards during his career; the last one was the Outstanding Mentor Award from the International Association for Relationships Research in 2008. Collins is editor for several Child Development journals. Focus of his current research is trajectories and processes of change in close relationships.

Professor R.A. Fabes

Rick Fabes is professor at and chair of the School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, Arizona, US. He received his PhD in 1982 at Oklahoma State University on *Family Relations and Child Development*. He was assistant and associate professor at the Department of Family and Human Development at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona (US) until he became professor in 1994. Richard Fabes' research interests include children's adaptation to school, emotional development, peer relationships, temperament, and gender and adjustment. His teaching activities emphasize social-emotional development, peer relationships, and temperament. Dr. Fabes' current research project is a federally funded study of children's adjustment to school: The Understanding School Success (USS) project, of which he is a principal investigator.

Professor K. Fiedler

Klaus Fiedler is professor at the Psychologisches Institut, University Heidelberg, and Heidelberg, Germany. Fiedler finished his dissertation in 1979 on social judgment formation and received a dissertation reward of the University of Giessen. He became research assistant and assistant professor at the University of Giessen. In 1987 he became professor in cognitive and social-cognitive psychology at the University of Giessen. In 1990 he became professor for social psychology and micro sociology in Mannheim and since 1992 Fiedler is full professor for social psychology at the University of Heidelberg. His research interests are

language and cognition, person memory, inductive information processing, emotion and cognition, cognitive-environmental interface, constructive memory, lie detection, associative learning, judgment and decision making, attribution research, methodology, and computer simulation models.

Professor P. Muris

Peter Muris (1964) is professor Developmental Psychopathology at the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience at Maastricht University. He obtained his master's degree in Health Sciences at Maastricht University in 1990. Subsequently he obtained his PhD in 1994 in Clinical Psychology at the University of Amsterdam on the subject of *Monitoring and Blunting. Coping Styles and Strategies in Threatening Situations*. Muris was assistant professor and associate professor at the Faculty of Health Sciences at Maastricht University until he became full professor in Clinical and Health Psychology at the Institute of Psychology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2004. In this position he was also head of the GZ-education of the Central RINO group. He is involved in education of psychology students as program coordinator, both previously in Rotterdam and currently in Maastricht. Muris has written a large number of scientific publications and is well cited. He furthermore has written books for the general public on anxiety in children and adolescents.

Professor K.R. Pugh

Kenneth Pugh is professor at Haskins Laboratories, New Haven, Connecticut, USA. In 2008 Pugh was appointed president and director of research of Haskins Laboratories. Pugh is furthermore professor at the department of Psychology of the University of Connecticut, associate professor at the Department of Diagnostic Radiology at the Yale School of Medicine and director of the Yale Reading Center. Pugh received his PhD in 1990 in Experimental Psychology at the Ohio State University. He is best known for his work on the neural, behavioral and cognitive underpinnings of reading and other cognitive activities. Pugh studies reading systems and adaptive learning mechanisms in developing readers. He has published extensively in the domains of cognitive neuroscience, functional organization of the brain as it pertains to reading and language, dyslexia and related areas.

Professor L.E. Tetrick

Lois Tetrick is professor at the Psychology department of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA. Dr. Tetrick received her doctorate in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Georgia Institute of Technology in 1983. Upon completion of her doctoral studies, she joined the faculty of the Department of Psychology at Wayne State University and remained there until 1995 when she moved to the Department of Psychology at the University of Houston. She joined the faculty at George Mason University as the Director of the Industrial

and Organizational Psychology Program in 2003. Dr. Tetrick served as (Associate) Editor of many journals and co-edited the first edition and second editions of the *Handbook of Occupational Health Psychology* and *Health and Safety in Organizations*. Dr. Tetrick's research interests are in the areas of occupational health and safety, occupational stress, and the work-family interface. Her other area of research focuses on psychological contracts and the exchange relationship between employees and their organizations. A common underlying interest in both of these lines of research is incorporating a global perspective in understanding employees' experiences of the work environment.

Appendix 2 Program of the site visit

Day 1: Monday October 3, 2011

- 16.00 Welcome reception and introduction with Dean Faculty of Social Sciences,
Director of the BSI and program leaders
- 17.00 Site visit preparation by the committee
- 19.00 Committee dinner
- 20.30 Further preparation of the site visit

Day 2: Tuesday October 4, 2011

- 09.00 Welcome by Rector Magnificus
- 09.10 Presentation on BSI by Director Institute
- 09.40 Meeting with program leaders
- 9.40 Developmental Psychopathology
- 10.30 Experimental Psychopathology & Treatment
- 11.20 Learning & Plasticity
- 12.05 Social Cognition
- 12.45 Lunch with Director Institute
- 13.45 Meeting with program leaders
- 13.45 Social Development
- 14.40 Work, Stress & Health
- 15.30 Meeting with PhD students and post docs
- 16.30 Tour Spinoza building and BSI lab
- 18.00 Meeting committee with Director Institute and program leaders
- 19.00 Diner committee with Dean Faculty, Director Institute and program leaders

Day 3: Wednesday October 5, 2011

- 09.00 Committee meeting to discuss results and preparation of site visit report
- 14.00 Presentation of preliminary findings by the committee