

Response to Research Evaluation Mathematics 2009-2014 (public version)

The evaluation committee is broadly positive on the achievements and policies of the Mathematical Institute, and awarded the highest possible marks. We are particularly pleased with the committee's support for the hiring policy of the institute, which "*puts quality above specialisation, considering that excellent researchers will find ways to establish their specialisation within the institute*", even though this policy leads and has led to changes in research focus that are not the result of long-term planning. This policy will be continued.

The evaluation committee makes a number of helpful observations, most of which come back in the five recommendations.

The first recommendation regards the undesirability of the distinction between tenure track and temporary assistant-professors. This concern is shared by the management of the Mathematical Institute, and at the top of its agenda of situations to be resolved in the coming years.

The second recommendation is that "*the MI should be more pro-active in exploiting the mathematics that it develops*". Currently we run joint projects with physicists, biologists, pharmacists, medical scientists, forensic experts, data scientists, cryptographers, environmental scientists, marine scientists, and others. As acknowledged by the committee we are also active in outreach activities to the general public and high schools. We are always open to start new projects, definitely also from the newly started Networks program, as the committee suggests.

The third recommendation is that the stochastics and analysis groups cooperate more, for instance on "uncertainty quantification". The latter topic is a core interest of the statistics group, which does already communicate to analysts at other universities as well as to non-mathematical scientists, and to a lesser extent to the local analysts. It is a worth while suggestion to deepen the latter cooperation, as well as develop other links between stochastics and analysis.

The fourth recommendation is to exploit our connections with biologists and medical scientists to become a partner in the Top Sector Life Sciences and Health. In its general report the evaluation committee makes a plea for mathematics in general to participate more in the Top Sector programs, claiming that mathematics is a "fundamental requirement in all Top Sectors". The Mathematical Institute has been successful in obtaining funding for fundamental mathematical research in the past period, but never in the Top Sectors. The committee "*appreciates the positive approach the institute has towards external changes that might not always favour mathematics, for example the focus on Top-sectors. As was mentioned in several interviews during the site visit, the institute management decided not to complain, but rather approach any change as an opportunity.*" We intend to continue the latter attitude, and meanwhile agree with the committee, expressed in the preceding quote, that the Top Sectors do not favour mathematics.

The final recommendation of the committee is to hire another top-level algebraist or number theorist. The Mathematical Institute understands this recommendation as a reaction on the recent retirement of a "*world-renowned number theorist*" from the institute. We agree that there is room for another top-level mathematician. In agreement with the policy of the Mathematical Institute to put quality above specialisation, we shall focus on a wider area than "algebra or number theory" and act as the opportunity arises. Meanwhile there are eight young mathematicians in the area of algebra/geometry/number theory within the Mathematical Institute, who will keep the algebra/geometry/number theory section very much alive.