

African Studies Centre Leiden

RQA REPORT

Spring 2017

(Final version: June 23, 2017)

I. Introduction

This report covers the research quality assessment of the African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL) for the period 2011-2016. The Review Committee looked at the quality and relevance to society of the research conducted by the ASCL during that period. It also looked at the ASCL research strategy and the library, documentation and information (LDI) functions of the ASCL. The assessment was carried out in accordance with the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2015-2021 (amended version of September 2016). The Committee was also asked to comment on the African Studies' Assembly in Leiden with reference to its strategic targets and to the governance and leadership skills of its management.

The Review Committee was appointed by the Board of Leiden University. The members were:

- Professor Paul Nugent, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland (Chair)
- Professor Michael Bollig, Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Cologne, Germany
- Iina Soiri M.A., Director Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden
- Dr. Dzodzi Tsikata, Director, Institute of African Studies, Associate Professor, ISSER University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana
- Dr. Marion Wallace, Lead Curator, African Collections at the British Library, London, England

Linda Johnson MBA was appointed as secretary to the Review Committee, on behalf of EADI, the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes in Bonn.

Criteria

The assessment was carried out according to the criteria formulated in the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) for Research Assessments in The Netherlands (SEP) 2015-2021 (amended version of September 2016). The scoring categories were on the four-point SEP scale: 1. World leading/excellent 2. Very good 3. Good 4. Unsatisfactory.

Procedure

The Review Committee followed the procedure sketched below:

A draft programme for the site visit was drawn up by the ASCL Management Team. The Chair and the Secretary of the Review Committee discussed the programme and requested a few small changes, which were largely intended to ensure that all Committee Members were able to gain a good impression of the LDI functions, rather than relying heavily on a single member for this part of the task. More time was also requested for discussions on strategy once the site visit had started. The changes requested were agreed upon and accommodated within the time available.

The Review Committee was supplied in advance with separate self-evaluation reports for ASCL and for the LDI function and a good deal of additional documentation. The documentation consisted of the ASCL benchmark analysis 2011-2016, the ASCL assessment SWOT, the ASCL Research Harvest 2011-2016, the self-evaluation report (2004-2010), the RQA report (2011), the management response to the 2011 RQA report, the self-evaluation report of the mid-term review (2011-2014), the mid-term report (2015), the management response to the 2015 mid-term report and a set of

information notes. The Review Committee shared first impressions of the ASCL with one another in writing, based on the background material, in advance of the visit.

The site visit took place from 11-13/4 2017. The director of the ASCL and various staff members from ASCL met the Committee for dinner on the first evening. Prior to dinner, the director, Ton Dietz, welcomed the Committee on behalf of the ASCL. The Committee held a preparatory meeting after dinner.

The first full day of the site visit provided an opportunity for the Committee to meet and interview the full range of those involved in the ASCL and its Library. Meetings were held with researchers (senior and junior), PhD candidates, the internal evaluation team, library staff, support staff, visiting fellows, members of the works council, key figures within ASA, the chair (via skype) and members of the Scientific Advisory Council, and the chair of the Societal Advisory Network.

Notes on the interviews were compared over a working dinner at the end of the first full day.

The final morning was spent ordering the opinions and conclusions of the Committee and discussing scoring. The visit culminated in a presentation by the Chair and one member of the Review Committee of the preliminary conclusions and advice formulated by the Review Committee. This presentation was attended by a large number of ASCL staff, the ASA management team and by the three members of the ASCL Board, also representing Leiden University (two Leiden University deans – Humanities and Social Sciences - and one person representing the dean of the Faculty of Law).

The members of the Committee divided the task of writing up the advice and opinions after the site visit. Revisions of the report were done iteratively via e-mail. The final draft was checked for factual errors by the internal evaluation team of the ASCL.

The report structure consists of:

- I. Introduction
- II.i. Assessment of the Research of ASCL
- II.ii. Assessment of the LDI function of ASCL
- II.iii. Assessment of Leiden African Studies Assembly
- III. Recommendations
- IV. Appendices
 1. CV s of the members of the Review Committee
 2. Site Visit Programme
 3. Quantitative data on research unit's composition and funding
 4. Explanation of the categories used

II.i. Assessment of the research of ASCL

a. Description of the research unit's strategy and targets

The research output of the ASCL, as reflected in the Research Harvest, is impressive. Almost all research staff have maintained a steady throughput of publications despite the accumulating

pressures on time. In advance of the review, the ASCL engaged in a bench-marking exercise to measure the quality of its research against comparable institutions in Europe, the United States, China, and Africa. Although there are inevitably some questions about the methodological starting-points, the finding that the ASCL is located in the second tier of similar institutions globally, is both credible and significant.

There is some concern that with fewer research staff, and greater demands on their time, the output is likely to tail off in the coming years. The Self-Evaluation refers to the likely reduction of publication output by 25 per cent from 2018-2023. This throws into sharper relief the need to be more strategic about academic publication. The ASCL has longstanding publication agreements with Brill and Karthala. While many of the book series perform a vital function in terms of branding the ASCL, as well as strengthening its African partnerships (on which more below), there is a case for arguing that some (but not all) staff have tended to rely rather heavily on these outlets. That there is perceived to be an issue here is clear from the Midterm Self-Evaluation Report, and it would be fair to say that the issue of establishing a balance is a matter for ongoing debate. A useful benchmarking exercise might be to compare the Google Scholar citations for different categories of publication. It seems likely that the impact of ASCL researchers would be higher if researchers were incentivized to target their best research towards leading journals within the African Studies and disciplinary fields. The same applies to publishing monographs with leading international publishers. The intention here is not to undermine the existing series - and indeed the Committee felt that they should be actively supported (see below) - but to adopt a more tactical and variegated approach to publication because this is arguably the most realistic means of squaring the circle.

In the past, the ASCL was fortunate enough to enjoy core funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (and part of the ODA budget of the Dutch government) and was able to focus overwhelmingly on research. Since the last major review, successive budget cuts, falling academic staff numbers and shifting priorities within government Ministries, including Foreign Affairs, have made the former model unsustainable, although core funding from the Ministry continues and is expected to continue, although at lower levels than before 2012. The ASCL entered into negotiations for a merger into Leiden University in the knowledge that much of its core business would need to change, most notably with respect to course delivery and teaching. But the merger was also considered to hold some potential advantages. The ASCL will also be able appoint its own Professors with effect from 2017. The number of professors is expected to stabilize at eight. The future creation of an ASCL Graduate School and PhD programme will also create a significant new income stream (as indicated in Self-Evaluation 2011-2016) which is expected to cover much of the funding gap. However, this will inevitably have an impact on the distribution of staff time and overall workloads, which is a matter of concern for those who work at the ASCL and will need to be carefully managed.

In the last full review of the ASC (2004-2010), the report commented on issues of management transparency and a de facto compartmentalisation of researchers. The mid-term review of April 2015 also noted that the ASCL was overly reactive to events as the integration process went forward. There is now good evidence to suggest that many of these points have been taken on board and that there has been a positive attempt to reform the management structures - most notably through the introduction of a Researchers' Forum and the creation of a series of cross-cutting Collaborative Research Groups (CRGs). The current configuration of ASCL as an Interfaculty Institute situated amidst a cluster of three faculties (humanities, social sciences and law) seems to work well and to enjoy the support of the Deans. An impressive change process has been taking place in the ASCL

following a series of drastic changes in the external circumstances (financing environment, changing political priorities of the Dutch government, changes in European relations to Africa, trends and priorities on the African continent and its academic environment), as well as due to the vision of the director, who took over the reins of the institute in 2010. The Director has made a sustained effort to rally staff around the numerous changes. The ASCL has also made a concerted effort to diversify its engagements with the world beyond academia, to include not just the government Ministries, but also the media, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and especially the business community through the regular *Africa Works* event. However, this activity has added to workloads in often unpredictable ways, and there is probably a need for a more selective and strategic approach to such engagement.

During the period under evaluation 2011-2016, ASC Leiden has had two formal organisational structures (an independent foundation steered by specially designed decision-making bodies 2011-2016 and an inter-faculty institute led by (representatives of) the deans of three faculties from 2016 onwards). During the interviews, it was clear that some deep collective reflections within the institution had preceded the decision to join the university, and efforts have been made to position the ASCL in ways which maximize the gains it will make from the reforms, while minimizing dislocation and challenges.

The Director, Ton Dietz, has presided over the ASCL since May 2010, and hence, during the whole period currently under evaluation. He will hand over to the new Director, Professor Jan Bart Gewald, on September 1, 2017. The new director was also available for the evaluation team.

The recent merger with Leiden University is not complete, but there is currently a 5 year transition period during which many pertinent and fundamental organisational and management issues will be debated, designed and resolved. The period of evaluation coincides with a period of transition. The financially stressful conditions before the merger as well as the strains of the current transition period have influenced what has been done by ASCL and how these activities have been executed, and this consequently influences the conclusions of this evaluation.

Research quality

In becoming part of Leiden University, the African Studies Centre has clearly been through a substantive reform process, and has emerged from this energized and with plans for becoming bigger and better through reorganizing its research (the unified research programme with themes and integrative domains)

The profile of an Institution's research can be fully assessed by an analysis of its entire research portfolio and scientific outputs using criteria such as contribution to scientific knowledge, the range and reputation of publication and dissemination outlets, awareness of and use of outputs within the scientific community and other publics, the extent to which the Institution is recognized for particular research endeavours, the existence of other forms of recognition of research projects and outputs beyond publication e.g. prizes, awards, research funding etc., and the name recognition of key members of the institution. This current assessment was not able to ascertain directly from the scientific community and other publics their awareness and use of the scientific outputs. However, based on interviews with staff and other important actors and the self-assessment, we have been able to make a judgement about the scientific profile of the ASCL.

In the institutional self-assessment, there is a reference to the most important scientific outputs, based on the number of citations those publications have received. The list presented is about 30 publications - monographs, edited books and journal articles out of a total of 555 peer reviewed and other academic publications. The publications are based on research in East, West, Central and Southern Africa and a few on multiple countries, and cover four broad themes - resources and wellbeing, constellations of governance, identification and belonging in a media age, and Africa's global connections. In terms of quantity, this is certainly an impressive body of work, placed in a wide array of scientific dissemination outlets. Although questions have been raised above about the proportion of publications in the top tier journals, this is always a tricky question given the politics of access to certain journals. It is noteworthy that many of the publications are in highly regarded journals. Regarding name recognition, several of the faculty are well known, mainly by fellow academics in their areas of specialisation, particularly in Africa. The fact that people trained by the ASC have secured academic positions in the UK and the USA speaks to the Centre's research profile. An issue arising in thinking about the profile of the Centre's research is whether a distinction needs to be made between the profile of individual researchers and that of the ASCL. As the Centre is more than a sum of the research profiles of its faculty, this is an interesting methodological issue that we could not determine. Possibly future evaluations need to be aware of this distinction and its implications for thinking about the research profile of the Centre. Going forward, it would be useful for the Centre to decide which areas of research it wants to be known for and use its many strategies to ensure that it becomes the go to for these, while protecting the freedom of faculty to develop their own research interests. The Researchers' Assembly should have a direct input into setting this agenda.

From the documentation and from our interactions, the Centre and faculty have prioritized several instruments and strategies for raising the profile of the research. One of these is the ASCL's publication series. The Centre's relationship with Brill, a highly regarded academic publisher in the Netherlands, has enabled it to develop some well-regarded and prolific publication series. These include the Afrika-Studiecentrum Series, African Dynamics and the award-winning Africa Yearbook. The ASCL also has as a working paper series and a thesis publication series, to name only a few. The flagship publications have international editorial boards or editors as the case may be. At least one of them is a co-publishing arrangement with a Cameroon based publisher. The publications showcase some of the research endeavours of ASCL staff, especially early career researchers, while providing a much-needed forum for other Africanists and African researchers to disseminate their work. Given the challenges with finding reputable publication outlets in Africa and the muted contribution of African scholars to social science and humanities scientific outputs, targeting them is really important, as it increases the diversity of sources of knowledge in African Studies and therefore its legitimacy. There is agreement among staff that the ASCL's relationship with Brill has been mutually beneficial and can be even more productive if some challenges such as the cost of Brill publications, its preference for selling to libraries and its lack of strong links with bookshops and other distribution outlets are dealt with. The biggest threats to the publication series are anticipated financial cuts which are bound to affect the volume of publications and the staffing arrangements to manage publications. The contribution of publications to the ASCL's profile needs to be more explicitly valued in order to make the case for the expenditure in a situation of resource challenges.

Not surprisingly, there is concern about the future of the publication series in the new dispensation. In the negotiations with Leiden University about the future, the place of the publication series in _____

Leiden University's social sciences and humanities publication portfolio will need negotiation in order to protect the publications series. Linking the Brill publication series more directly to ASCL could also be one approach to ensuring their sustainability and reaching an even wider audience and could help address the problem of finding sufficient manuscripts from Africa.

Other strategies for strengthening the profile of the Centre's research include the fact that scholars increasingly publish in English and are largely multi-lingual and the fact that all scholars have Google Scholar pages. Achievements which speak to the profile of the research and researchers include awards, special professorships, research grants won, book prizes, conferences organized, journal editorships and membership in scientific institutions and visits to the ASCL website. These are all present in the Centre's portfolio. However, we do not have a basis to determine whether what exists is sufficient or whether more work is needed to raise the profile of ASCL and its researchers.

Interestingly, in discussions during the site visit, some of these engagements of research staff were identified as competing with time for teaching and research and for taking up internal administrative duties. Given the importance of these undertakings for building the profile of the ASCL, something that will become even more important in the Centre's new location within Leiden University, some reflection on the status of these activities and the allocation of time to them will be useful going forward. This comes back to the issue of being strategic about research and publication plans.

In terms of scientific profile, there is no doubt that the ASCL is considered to be an authoritative source of knowledge about Africa by policy makers, the media, civil society groups etc. within the Netherlands. Staff spoke about the sheer volume and intensity of requests and their time-consuming nature. The high quantity of these activities is not in any doubt. However, there is value in working more deliberately to go further than the Netherlands to the rest of Europe and to Africa to build a stronger global reputation as an authoritative source of knowledge about Africa. In this connection, the presence of scholars of African descent and the use of strategic media outlets should help this agenda.

ASCL wants to be a catalyst for Leiden ASA and to be at the centre of an African studies' knowledge hub at Leiden University, the Netherlands and beyond, and will grow the infrastructure it has established for this. These include plans to further improve its internal and external communications, further develop its teaching and research programmes, library collaborations, developing a network with African knowledge partners, the appointment of 7 or 8 professors, Graduate school etc. These are outlined in the self-assessment report as nine preliminary targets for 2018 to 2023. This sets out a clear agenda for deepening reforms and achieving certain goals.

This clear agenda notwithstanding, there is a need to fully spell out what the strategic long term vision of the ASCL is and how these building blocks fit into it. As the self-assessment documents note, the review is to help fashion a long-term vision. This acknowledges that there is work to be done. It is important for the ASCL to undertake such a task while it is in reflexive mode, and before final negotiations with Leiden University about the future. This would give flesh to the thinking about how to address the current challenges as identified in the self-assessment and those of the future. For example, the self-assessment notes that the right to foreign/white scholars to do research in Africa is increasingly being challenged. If this is a serious issue, a long-term vision should put in place measures to respond to this. Again, while a laudable effort has been made to uphold the centrality of History within the disciplinary mix, there is potentially an issue about the future of the study of

Politics, which most institutions would regard as a fundamental discipline. How the ASCL plans to manage disciplinary balance in the context of future retirements requires careful consideration.

Other matters that should be on the agenda of strategic visioning include the ASCL's relations with knowledge centres in Africa. This is mentioned several times in the documentation, but the nature of these relationships as they exist and how they will be developed, is not too clear. The African diaspora is also mentioned in terms of collaborative partnerships, but not as a subject of research. This speaks to the remit of African studies as defined by ASCL. In other places, it includes Africa's diasporas, in addition to the continental definition. This means studying Africans in Europe, the Americas and wherever else they might be. It broadens the research agenda and could be a new vein of endeavor which could further strengthen links between the ASCL and diaspora scholars and networks. The question is whether going forward, the ASCL's conception of its relations with the Africa diaspora will change over time and if so, in what directions.

Yet to be tackled as well are the ASCL's interests in integrating SDGs as part of developing its policy appeal. By extension, this should include attention to Africa conceived programmes such as Agenda 2063, The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Africa Mining Vision (AMV). This interest in policy processes raises a further question about the future character of ASCL and the balance of its scientific portfolio. At one level, the Centre affirms its focus on basic deep research, while expressing a continued interest in policy relevant research. The strategic envisioning will need to examine possible tensions in this position and come to a view about how to manage these, as well as the balance between basic research and policy research, and between research and policy under the new dispensation. In this connection, the threat to funding and research posed by developments in Europe and the US as well as the tendency now to fund relatively large scale organisationally complex projects, which sometimes discourages and stifles the development of younger researchers, needs to be on the agenda as does the tension between the pressures of short term research requests and long-term research.

Additional questions include whether and how the ASCL can take advantage of this notion of the Netherlands as a potential hub of triangular relations among Europe, Africa and China. How realistic is the notion in the first place, and what could disorganize such a notion, and how would the ASCL position itself in relation to this issue?

Relevance to society

The material and analysis provided to the Review Committee in advance was rich, comprehensive and wide, and included a good summary of the activities and results linked to societal relevance and valorisation of the research undertaken. The Institute has clearly undergone a joint internal (and external) discussion on what is meant by the societal relevance of its research. It has carefully assessed reasons and motivations, calling for research that has an impact on society beyond the academic community, and has designed strategies and invested in processes and resources to ensure societal relevance. The ASCL has a professional and dedicated support staff with specific tasks to enhance relevance to society and to support researchers and information specialists to increase this relevance. Following the global debate about the social impact and utilisation of academic research, ASCL defines valorisation as 'the process of value-creation out of knowledge, by making this knowledge suitable and available for economic and societal utilization and to translate this into high-potential products, services, processes and industrial activity'. Valorisation is not just about 'money' but about the impact that can be created through the transfer/exchange of scientific knowledge.

There are many ways in which research can make an impact on society, and many stakeholders that can potentially benefit from this impact. Every research organisation needs to find the ways that are most appropriate and fitting to its operations in any given time, in any given circumstance. For ASCL there are three distinctive periods to consider: before the merger, in the current transition period and after the planned full integration into Leiden University. Each period requires a tailored strategy for societal relevance.

ASCL has studied the debate in the Netherlands and globally, drawn many lessons and applied them to its research processes and other strategies. As a result, the valorisation of research and the will to achieve societal relevance has been an important and interlinked goal of ASCL research and LDI operations during the period before the merger as well as now in the transition period. It has adopted strategies and processes that are linked to choice of research agenda (by agreeing to seek and conduct research assigned and valued by societal stakeholders), research process (by including societal stakeholders as part of research design), as well as delivery of research (adopting open access policies & packaging strategies, investing in dedicated research communication and LDI, including active utilisation of social media). The outcome has proved successful but not entirely unproblematic. The ASCL clearly prioritized Dutch societal actors as beneficiaries of its research before the merger and transition. This is understandable, as it has also formed part of its struggle to show its relevance for and to ensure resources from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a degree of influence over the ODA funding from which the ASCL core subsidy is financed.

In order to assess the success of these strategies, a few words about the challenges of measuring and assessing the societal relevance of research are needed. It is methodologically challenging to measure societal relevance in quantitative terms. This stems from the fact that social interaction is not a one-way process, and beneficiaries of the research are also equally responsible for interaction and utilisation of the research results that are produced, delivered and communicated. This raises interesting questions as to what is then the desired outcome of a research institute in terms of societal relevance. Is it sufficient to prove that there has been a high level of production of high-quality research (=research harvest) that is sought after and actively delivered to different stakeholders in a format appropriate for utilisation? Attempts to measure actual interaction between researchers and the stakeholders is not only methodologically problematic but also raises questions of the integrity and independence of the research and researchers. This again poses further questions as research results are more often than not, not the only factor influencing the social actors (and their intended or unintended actions). Researchers operate in the complex environment of interlinked social processes. This is not to say that a research institute should not aim to be socially relevant and valorize the results of its research. However, it is important to note the difficulty of drawing direct conclusions as to whether research has been successful (=relevant) and if so, with which stakeholders and in which processes impact can be recorded. Comparisons are also very difficult.

Be that as it may, the ASCL is aware of the challenges. It has differentiated its output into two categories: 1. output that creates 'visibility' (using citations as outcomes) 2. output that is both academically and societally relevant, i.e. that inspires the academic community and generates new ideas and methods that are useful for the knowledge community and society (self-evaluation report 2017). The ASCL can clearly show impressive results on both counts. ASCL is an independent 'hybrid' research and knowledge centre that has been able to adopt a strategy that aims for wide influence

on a large number of societal actors, and has produced a variety of products of benefit to many in their diverse societal processes. On the other hand, important choices have had to be made due to diminishing resources during the period before the merger, and the Review Committee notes that priority has been given to actors in the Netherlands. The Committee deems this choice both necessary and wise. ASCL is well known in its home territory, and the various formal and informal contacts of the ASCL leadership and its researchers have facilitated this interaction. On the other hand, it is to be noted that some post-doctoral researchers seem to have difficulty in being both scientifically successful and visible in society. There is little evidence that ASCL has had impact at the level of European decision-making (which might also be a reason for a lack of ERC funding). On the positive side, there are some good examples of how impact has been made in communities involved in the African continent. These activities involve combinations of research projects and traditional development interventions.

Another noteworthy conclusion that has emerged from both documentation and interviews is that the attempt to gain maximum visibility and relevance has taken a toll on, and increased the work load of, researchers, support staff and LDI staff. The staff experience difficulty managing the competing responsibilities (research, teaching, resource mobilisation, valorisation) during the available working time, as well as growing uncertainty as to how this work will be possible when teaching and PhD supervision increase due to the merger with Leiden University. There was also a concern that as part of the university, the assessment of research and of researchers at ASCL will in future be judged by purely academic criteria. This might lead to the situation where research and activities linked to wider social interaction might not be valued in work planning and performance assessment and might need to be performed outside formal working time (which is the case to some extent already). Even though the university management assured the Committee during the interview that the societal impact of research is valued in the university structures, there is a risk that this goal will be de-prioritized. This might happen due to pressures for higher academic quality and working time being allocated using the new formula (50% research and resource mobilization, 30% PhD supervision and teaching, 20% valorisation) once the merger has taken full effect.

During the transition period, it is important that time and effort is dedicated to discussing within the new leadership structures, what the change from independent research institute to a university unit means with regard to valorisation of research and resources devoted to this. On the other hand, as the financial resources of ASCL will be more secure within the university set-up, it might become less pressing to retain funding from other societal actors i.e. ODA funding, thus diminishing the dependency but also risking the loss of the beneficial positive interaction with policy-makers, development practitioners and other societal actors. Some researchers expressed concerns that this interaction, which is widely valued might not be safe-guarded in the future, thus changing the nature of their work. The decreasing dependency on ODA funding might, on the other hand, mean that more attention can be paid to societal relevance and interaction in the African continent together with smart partnerships with various academic institutes.

Viability

The ASCL's integration into Leiden University has necessitated a new governance/administrative structure, which has recently been implemented. Relationships to the University's bodies of decision making (e.g. executive board, faculty) have had to be devised and brought into being. All academic

affairs have to be harmonized with regulations and practices within the university and all administrative issues have to be linked to/brought into line with the practices of Leiden University's administration. It is obvious that such a process cannot be finalized within a year or two. The ASCL and Leiden University have made some pertinent steps towards the integration of the formerly independent centre. New institutions of governance have been implemented and time will be needed before judgement can be passed upon their feasibility/efficacy.

Board of Governors: A Board of Governors consisting of three members, with a mandate from the Executive Board, formally steers the ASCL. The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities is its Chair and the Dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Director of the Van Vollenhoven Institute (as a representative of the Faculty of Law) are members of this Board. The Board of Governors and the director are advised by an Academic Advisory Council (also known as Scientific Advisory Council) and by a Societal Advisory Council. This latter Council connects ASCL with its non-academic users and is still in the process of being set up.

The mandate of the Board of Governors is clearly stipulated in a set of "rules and regulations". The collaboration between Board and director has been smooth to date and the Board governs the ASCL "from a distance" leaving major day to day decision making with the director. Whether this good working relationship depends on the people currently in charge or whether it can be attributed to a convincing institutional structure remains to be seen. Of course, such an inter-faculty institute with a Board of Governors is somewhat unusual for a university and Leiden University has only one other inter-faculty institute, governed by a similar structure. While there is some likelihood that the ASCL will be integrated into one of the faculties (probably the Faculty of Humanities) at a later stage, the current governance structure should be given at least three more years in order to determine whether the current structure is viable in the long term or whether it is only transitory in nature.

The current governance model leaves a lot of authority to the director and the ASCL-internal governance. All search committees are internally nominated and also other decisions pertaining to work allocation, financial transfers and strategy are made internally. This helps to maintain some of the autonomous character of the previous ASC governance structure. It is possible that issues may arise around tenure decisions and the exact nature of employment contracts. Such issues might prove difficult to address at the decentralized level. There is real need for the director and the Board of Governors to work together closely. (In many university settings, tenure issues are handled by the faculty and the dean and not by a centre or an institute, i.e. by people at one remove from direct collegial collaboration).

Academic Advisory Council: While the governance relations between the Board of Governors and ASCL are comparatively clear, this is not so for the relationship between the Academic Advisory Council and the Centre. The Academic Advisory Council is large (20 members). It consists solely of members from Dutch institutions. When the Council was set up, the guiding principle seems to have been to involve all senior Dutch Africa-oriented scientists in it. The Academic Advisory Council meets three times a year but rarely do more than 10 of the 20 members attend the meetings. While it is certainly a good idea to have an Academic Advisory Council, it would be advisable to (a) considerably reduce the size of the Council (to not more than 5 members), (b) to internationalise it (or at least consider internationalisation), (c) to make it really external (i.e. do not include Leiden scientists in the Council as they are already linked to ASCL through the internal ASA network). It would be good to assign

some clearly defined functions to the Academic Advisory Council. This Council is clearly intended to assume a mentoring role. It will be very useful to discuss mid and long term strategic issues with the Council.

Societal Advisory Council: The Societal Advisory Council is in the process of being constituted. So far there has been one [successful and well-attended] meeting of the network of societal partners within the Netherlands (in December 2016). There is no doubt that such a Council can be of significant use: (a) the council needs to be limited in size, (b) it should be considered whether one or two key actors from Africa (e.g. retired politician, development specialist) would be admissible/useful, (c) it needs a clear mission statement/terms of reference.

It might be wise to hold at least one joint meeting of the Board of Governors and both Councils a year. It is worth reflecting on whether academic advice and societal advice need be organized in Councils. A trust-based mentorship relationship with a few outstanding scientists and representatives of society may be useful as an approach in order to gain support from domains outside of Leiden University. Councils usually have supervisory functions, need rules and regulations and clear mission statements/terms of reference. They should also be part of the overall university structure. Mentors do not need all of this. Mentors are simply meant to support the strategic orientation of ASCL as best as they can, at any time they can. Such mentoring advice does not necessarily have to be formally coordinated.

Budgetary Issues (Funding Sources, Governance, Administration): Core funding for the ASCL comes from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in the Netherlands. It comes on a so-called ODA ticket, i.e. the money spent on the ASCL is regarded as part of Dutch development aid. It is assumed that the ODA designation of ASCL funds may come to an end sooner or later. This may cause some budgetary turbulence and it is feared that such a re-labelling of funds will be problematic and may lead to financial losses (as is usually the case in such exercises). It seems to the Committee to be necessary that the ASCL funding should be linked progressively to the standard budget of the university. This advice applies to budgets used for academic as well as for support staff. It is important that the budget should be insulated against the changing tides of day to day politics. Only an agreed upon long-term budget will ensure long-term viability.

The ASCL depends to a large part on Third Party funded projects. A total of roughly 30% of funding comes from this source. The major source of Second Party funding is the governmental NWO. Third Party funding comes from a number of NGOs and other organisations (mainly of Dutch origin).

Appendix 2 Funding and expenditure

Table A2.1 Sources of funding (x €1000)

2011–2016		
	€	%
Direct funding	17,059	64.1
2 nd funding	2,412	9.1
3 rd funding	4,926	18.5
Other	2,210	8.3
Total	26,607	100

Notes:

- Direct funding: funds provided directly by the government.
- 2nd funding source: research funds received from national and European science foundations (mainly NWO).
- 3rd funding source: funds from a third party, like ministries or NGOs, for specific activities.
- Other: includes graduation bonuses, secondment of personnel, teaching, etc.

2016 provisional.

In the years to come, direct funding needs to be based on a stable long term commitment beyond ODA by the relevant Dutch ministry. Second tier funding needs to be diversified (with potentially a larger role for EU/ERC funding) and third tier funding to be stabilized. The significant amount of funding from NGOs signposts the societal impact of the ASCL. The Dutch NGO world takes it for granted that good and ‘application-near’ knowledge is produced at the ASCL. During the site visit, societal impact was discussed at length, as were the difficulties of measuring such input. It could be argued that the significant amounts of third party funding from NGOs and ministries are an indicator of societal impact and influence. Looking at ASCL from an international perspective, not much more evidence would be needed to show that the institution is societally relevant!

The budget will be significantly bolstered by the opening of a graduate school. On an annual basis, a group of 3 to 6 PhDs will graduate (possibly more) and each one would add € 45,000 to the annual budget. The graduate school will thus pay for its own management and will potentially bring additional funds to the ASCL’s budget. The efficient establishment of the graduate school is seen as an important, timely and significant measure to ensure the long term viability of the ASCL.

The governance of the budget is a matter requiring attention. It became clear to the Committee that major budgetary issues were a matter to be negotiated between the ASCL Board and the director. The internal ASCL management team (or ‘Executive Board’, EB) is involved as well and the Researchers’ Assembly (RA) formulates proposals for using the research fund. Unlike in the previous set up in which thematic research groups governed large parts of the budget, in the present set up Collaborative Research Groups do not have budgetary responsibility. They have to get funding through the RA and the EB. The Committee regards this as an important step on the road to the consolidation of ASCL finances.

How these layers of budgetary control and decision-making work in practice probably needs to be tested during the coming 3- year phase. Given the complexity of ASCL funding (especially third tier funding through NGOs and other organisations with their own regulations), budgetary governance and planning should be a key concern. This is the area about which academic teams disagree. Reliability and viability are essential here. Access to, and administration of, administrative overheads is a pertinent governance issue. Many (if not all) second tier funding organizations pay administrative overheads: universities have developed different modes as to how these overheads are shared between university central administration, faculties and the relevant PIs. If all administrative issues (e.g. work space, support services, technical environment) are allocated to the ASCL budget then logically the entire overhead should stay with the PIs. If the central university takes charge of e.g. work space, it will deduct a certain amount from this overhead. A transparent long-term decision on the sharing of overheads is necessary. This may become an even more pertinent issue once more EU/ERC funding is involved.

The administration of funds is a further issue: all third party projects are administered within the ASCL and currently the ASCL employs some support staff to carry out this work. Given the complexity and size of third party funding acquired through the ASCL, this seems to be a good solution. In the long run, it should be considered whether parts of the budgetary administration would be best in the hands of Leiden University's central administration. For the transition period, however, it would seem wise to work within the existing, well established and efficient structures.

For understandable reasons, the ASCL has tended to target funding from Dutch sources, especially the NWO. It is striking, however, that there has been only a limited attempt to secure funding from the European Union. The ASCL has not held any of the European Research Council Starter, Consolidator or Advanced Grants, with which one might expect a centre of this size to enjoy some success. This requires the right level of informed administrative/financial support. In this respect, the merger with Leiden University ought to present opportunities for making use of existing university structures where the relevant expertise resides. Staff are conscious of the amount of time it takes to work up research grant applications and there is a case for creating incentives, such as pump-priming resources to relieve staff of some of their responsibilities in order to work on large grant applications.

Finally, there may be a need to consider giving some staff members substantive Knowledge Exchange roles that are incentivized and reflected in workloads, in order to ensure viability in some areas.

Score: Research Quality: 2, Relevance: 1, Viability: 2

II.ii. Assessment of the LDI function of ASCL

1. Research quality

The Library is an integral part of research at ASCL. With its extensive collections, around half of which are unique in the Netherlands, it provides an unrivalled research resource within the country and one which is within the top few African Studies libraries in the world.

The book collections comprise approximately 95,000 volumes, and with 35-40% of these published in Africa, and 50% unique within the Netherlands, they constitute a very important resource for the study of Africa and in particular the understanding of

debates and scholarship generated in the continent. At present, the collections are on the open shelves, enabling browsing by users, and most are available to be borrowed.

The Library is a leader in the field of digital resources, having demonstrated a very impressive and indeed ground-breaking approach, over a number of years. It provides a number of tools to search and access African Studies' collections in the Library and beyond, ranging from web bibliographies to dossiers on particular topics and countries (the full list is: the Library's catalogue; African Studies Abstracts Online; web dossiers; AfricaBib; Connecting-Africa; ASC Country Portal; new titles; alert service; and Kenya Coast Portal). It has also instituted a successful policy for locating and preserving online-only publications from Africa, and works increasingly to connect users to full-text online content. Library staff members also engage actively with Wikipedia and have contributed several collections of images to Wikimedia Commons.

The importance of the Library's innovative work in this area needs to be stressed. The leadership and staff grasped early on both the importance of responding positively to the digital revolution, and the need for new ways of guiding researchers as online resources proliferate, but work of quality can become harder to locate. The Library's digital and documentation work also indicate its close involvement in the research activities and aims of the ASCL.

The Library's research tools are visible in a number of ways; the indexing of AfricaBib by Google Scholar, in particular, is noteworthy. In some respects, promotion could be improved (for example, via the arrangement of the Library's web pages). We recommend a continuing focus on promoting web resources in order to ensure visibility and the best possible search engine optimisation.

In general terms, the library should continue to innovate in the digital field.

The Library's foregrounding of open access, in line with that of the ASCL as a whole, is also an important part of its digital innovation work. Open access for library resources helps to ensure that these are widely accessed; (full-text) works in the ASCL Repository were downloaded 349,755 times in 2016, a six-fold increase on 2011).

We recommend that the Library continues to build its open access content.

The e-first/e-only policy recommended by the 2011 evaluation has been implemented with regard to serials, where electronic versions exist. This is still not, however, the case for many African serials.

The Library's collections are concentrated in the disciplinary fields of the ASCL (social sciences and history); they are less extensive with regard to literature and cultural studies, while African languages and linguistics have historically been handled by the Leiden University Library. The main languages of the collections are English, French, Dutch, Portuguese and German. The ASCL Library holds scholarship relating to North Africa, but material in Arabic is handled by Leiden University Library and NINO (the library for the study of the Near East).

The Library's collections consist mainly of modern printed books and journals, including grey literature and some ephemera. There is also a significant collection of film on DVD, as well as some radio recordings and some archival and photographic material. Issues relating to collections in these formats are dealt with under viability.

The Library's staff, the services they provide and their responsiveness and helpfulness to their users constitutes one of the Library's most important assets, and help to explain the high regard in which the library is held throughout the ASCL. One researcher described it as 'open, unique, accessible and a direct gateway to knowledge'. New users receive an induction on research tools, and all users are actively assisted in their research by the staff. We found an extremely positive attitude to the Library in all parts of the organization, as well as a recognition of its importance in attracting visitors to the ASCL.

The ASCL Library has seen a decline in usage of hard-copy materials. This is of course universally the case, and has been more pronounced in some disciplines than others, with many scholars continuing to favour using paper books. At the same time, many items, especially those published in Africa, are not available digitally. Visitor numbers and book loans have seen a decline (from 3,876 in 2011 to 3,838 in 2016, and from 5,436 in 2011 to 4,052 in 2016, respectively), but both nevertheless remain strong. (It should also be remembered that users of subscription e-resources, or free e-resources located through ASCL Library services, are also using the Library, even if they do not physically go there.) The ASCL Library thus has to continue to balance its digital and hard-copy collections.

The Library has analyzed usage of its collections, but has not carried out a user survey since 2008, a point made in the documentation presented by staff. We support the library's intention to carry out such a survey in 2017.

The Library also has an impressive capacity to respond quickly and flexibly to external circumstances, whether events in Africa (for example, through creating web dossiers on topical themes) or in the Netherlands (absorbing 3,000 books from the Netherlands Royal Tropical Institute when its library was dissolved, and making them available within a week of arrival).

With regard to collection development (acquisitions) policy, the Library has implemented the recommendation of the 2011 evaluation to cooperate with libraries within the Netherlands, with the result that it does not buy the full range of scholarly literature published internationally, but relies on inward inter-library loans to fulfil some user requests. In cases where a copy of a particular work is not available, the Library makes every effort to locate and purchase one. The aim is to be 'patron-driven' in this respect; a fairly small number of requests (up to 10 per month) is received, which are almost all fulfilled. The major part of the acquisitions effort and budget is concentrated on obtaining books from Africa.

We note that the collection development policy has not been reviewed since 2011 and that a review is planned for 2017. We believe that the emphasis on procuring African publications is commendable and has led to the creation of a first-class research library. Nevertheless, it might be a good idea to carry out some analysis of the publishing field to ensure that the library's current strategies are providing sufficient access to the full range of scholarship on Africa.

2. Relevance to society

The Library is, and should be, an integral part of the ASCL's wider appeal to stakeholders in the Netherlands and beyond. As one member of the team put it, the Library 'is there for everyone'.

Particularly important in this regard are the online tools and resources and the open access collections (described above), which can be freely accessed from anywhere in the world and for

which there is, as far as analysed to date, significant take-up from Africa. 15-20% of downloads from the ASCL Repository are from Africa. The Library also makes inter-library loans within and beyond the Netherlands, including some loans to African university libraries; staff also help African colleagues to gain access to journal databases.

A proportion of items in the hard-copy collection are also acquired for general, rather than purely academic, users.

The Library's response to current events in Africa, for example through creating web dossiers, and the creation by Library staff of web resources such as the country portal (<http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/>), which was developed for users such as diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and annotated bibliographies for that Ministry, and for the various Knowledge Platforms linked to that Ministry, show direct engagement with stakeholders. Library staff have also participated in recent events with NGOs, and created information resources in this context.

Together with the ASCL support staff, the Library has also acted as the coordinator of ASCL community (country) meetings that are valued by both ASCL staff and external actors.

The Library's policy on open access and digital resources described under research quality is, of course, equally important and equally commendable in terms of relevance to society.

The Library has made very effective use of social media.

The 2011 evaluation recommended better links with African and European libraries. In Africa, there has been contact in particular with libraries in South Africa and Morocco (and some information skills training), although these contacts seem to be at a fairly preliminary stage. International scholars from Africa and elsewhere, including visiting fellows, are regularly welcomed at the library.

In line with recommendations elsewhere in this report, we favour the creation of partnerships with clearly defined objectives and outcomes, established on a more concrete basis than has been the case to date.

The Library continues to play an active role in ELIAS (European Librarians in African Studies), a network of which it was one of the founders, and to inspire colleagues across Europe with its work. It has also provided a service to the wider community by taking on responsibility for valuable resources (AfricaBib, Library of Congress Quarterly Index of Africana Periodicals), which others were no longer able to maintain.

3. *Viability*

The Library has not escaped the pressures experienced by the rest of ASCL. The acquisitions budget has remained static at around € 82,000 since 2011, while staff numbers have been cut from 9.4 to 8.6 fte.

The key issue affecting the Library's future is the proposed merger with Leiden University Library. We see this as presenting considerable opportunities *and* risks.

Kurt de Belder, the Chief Librarian of Leiden University Library, has expressed very positive views

about the ASCL Library and the potential for creating a new Africa Library within an area studies hub in the planned new Humanities area of the campus, which is soon to be built. Such an Africa Library would include the existing collections of the ASCL Library in addition to parts of the University Library collections (to be negotiated). He is also willing to make the case for a substantial increase in the acquisitions budget (which is controlled by the faculties), and is in support of continued acquisitions' trips to Africa. He agrees that the documentation function of the ASCL Library, which is not a function carried out by the rest of the University Library, is an asset and should be continued.

Another issue raised (by ASCL Library staff) with regard to the future was whether, in the new university context and on the assumption of future budget constraints, the Library should be developed primarily as a teaching or as a research library.

In our view, the Library should not have to make this choice, but should follow the path of other comparable libraries (e.g. SOAS), which fulfil both demands. ASCL Library is already an invaluable research resource, and downgrading this aspect would be detrimental to the future of African Studies at Leiden. At the same time, provision must clearly be made to provide teaching resources; the need to fulfil this new function strengthens the case for an increased acquisitions budget.

A further overarching development affecting the future of all libraries is the switch from paper to digital. To date, the ASCL Library has dealt exceptionally well with this change, in the ways described above. The Library sees part of the solution in future as making more material available online, and has already made significant progress on this front. The Library's embracing of the digital revolution, of which its documentation activities are an essential part, and its continued willingness to innovate, make it a leader in this field and place it in a very good position for continuing to deal with this change. For the future, it is vital to preserve this focus and flexibility. Joining forces with the University Library will also provide a stronger digital infrastructure.

There are considerable potential opportunities in a merger with the University Library, which include:

Private papers and other archival items. The ASCL Library has started to collect these, and the University Library can provide better storage (temperature and humidity controls) as well as expertise in archival cataloguing. Conversely, a merger would offer the University Library a new opportunity to develop archival acquisitions relating to Africa. The Chief Librarian has expressed willingness to work with the proposed Africa Library to develop an archival acquisitions policy. Such a move would greatly enhance resources for the study of African history at the university, as well as having the potential to support the development of records management policies for researchers' data.

Moving image. The University Library has the infrastructure to digitize the ASCL's significant film collection, while restricting access to digitized content to library premises in order to ensure that copyright is not violated. Such digital storage is vital to ensure long-term preservation of the collection.

Increased storage space for the core collections. The current premises are almost full.

Robust digital storage. We suspect that in the long term the ASCL Library's data will be more safely stored on the university's servers.

Greater visibility of the ASCL Library's collections. To this end, the ASCL catalogue is already being ingested into that of the University Library. Inclusion in the catalogue may also assist the ASCL Library to deal with global changes in the world of cataloguing (e.g. the move to the Resource Description and Analysis system).

The University Library has agreed to accept and maintain the ASCL Library's subject thesaurus, which the latter uses in preference to the standard system of Library of Congress Subject Headings. There are advantages to both systems and we recommend that, in due course, research is carried out into the desirability of maintaining the thesaurus or moving to LCSH.

Better integration of resources for the study of Africa which are currently divided by language, discipline and geographical area (e.g. Arabic material at NINO; language, linguistics, literary and cultural studies at the University Library).

The merger also carries significant risks. Possible dangers if optimal agreements are not made, may include:

Demoralization and loss of staff, who form one of the ASCL Library's chief assets; possible loss of the personal service which staff offer on-site to users. We note considerable anxiety among Library staff about the merger at present.

Loss of a dedicated Africa library, should current plans for an Africa Library not come to fruition

Loss of a collection available for browsing on the open shelves and easily accessed by researchers, a valued feature of the Library, should much of the collection be out-housed

Loss of flexibility in loan policies (e.g. for DVDs).

Loss of the ASCL Library's ability to act quickly, flexibly and innovatively.

Loss of independence in acquisitions, particularly buying trips. It is possible that the ASCL Library will come within the sphere of EU tendering rules and be forced to buy through a contracted supplier. ASCL acquisitions from Africa at the moment are extremely well handled, and any such move would lead to a diminution in quality of the collection in future.

Score: Quality: 1, Relevance: 1, Viability: 2

II.iii. Assessment of Leiden African Studies Assembly

The TOR requests a qualitative assessment of Leiden's African Studies Assembly (ASA) in relation to the ASCL's fulfilment of its targets. The newly established AS Assembly is the nucleus of a network of scholars of African Studies from Leiden and with linkages across the Netherlands (and with the intention to develop a strong LDE [Leiden-Delft-Erasmus/Rotterdam] network, with a joint LDE Africa policy and joint activities in teaching, research and visibility). It has the potential to strengthen the research profile of the ASCL, which is at the centre of this effort. This is because the Assembly provides the potential for research collaboration and enables the Centre to venture into regions it

does not have a strong presence in, using the knowledge and networks of other members of the ASA. For example, in the self-assessment, there is an expressed interest in working more seriously in North Africa, and one of the Deans pointed out during the interaction with the assessment team that

ASA would make this goal much easier to achieve. The committee did not feel it had enough information to make highly detailed comments. However, it is very evident from an inventory conducted across the University, as well as from the Benchmarking exercise that there is a wealth of Africanist expertise across Leiden University, from the Humanities to Medicine. It is also apparent that there is an appreciation in ASCL and within Leiden ASA of the potential benefits to all parties of working more closely together. Being part of a much larger pool of Africanists within Leiden ASA than would be the case for ASCL alone, can be considered to hold distinct advantages. It is certainly tenable to maintain that Leiden ASA as a whole falls within the top flight of institutions worldwide.

It is important that during the transitional phase, €1.2 million has been provided for the first four years to facilitate a series of activities on the way to full integration. Leiden ASA is building on some of the existing operations of the ASCL, such as the visiting fellowship scheme, and has also come up with a series of initiatives including a PhD network and periods of sabbatical leave. An organizing structure has also been established in the shape of four committees that are mandated to develop an agenda relating to teaching, research, the library and valorisation activities. The evaluation committee considers that there is genuine goodwill amongst Africanists in the ASCL and ASA and that there is an opportunity to consolidate an area of strength at Leiden University. However, it is also apparent that there needs to be a stable source of long-term funding to enable these collaborative relationships to achieve their full potential. This wider network of Africanists linked to Leiden University might play the role of ensuring the societal relevance and valorisation of the research production of an even larger group of researchers than those within the ASCL, if the current positive interest is sustained. As is often the case with networks, ASA needs to produce some tangible benefits and incentives to those who invest time and effort in it. The sustainability of ASA will become apparent after the elapse of some time. It is more difficult to encourage and manage the outputs as well as attribute the results of a relatively loose network. The ASA network is currently based on voluntary activities that are often difficult to plan, manage and report.

It is doubtful that the ASCL could take up the slack if the bridging funding was to end after four years. Establishing the sustainability of Leiden ASA should therefore be considered a priority because it is in many respects the future of African Studies as a trans-disciplinary field of study in Leiden.

ASA is a promising innovation given the over one hundred Africanist scholars at Leiden University, who hitherto had no formal relationships among themselves. Whether the ASA lives up to this promise will depend on the robustness of its agenda, how it is managed and whether researchers see its additionality to their work.

II.iv. PhD programmes

The previous review considered that “PhD supervision is neither transparent nor well structured”. Part of the problem has been that the students were registered at a variety of institutions, which lead to a spectrum of supervisory practices. As things stand, there remain considerable variations in what PhD students can expect. The appointment of seven or eight Professors, and the anticipated creation of an ASCL Graduate School, can be expected to bring with it two advantages. Firstly, it will enable a standardisation of training and supervisory practices across the ASCL. And secondly, it will enable the ASCL to move towards greater financial sustainability. The ASCL is expecting to receive €45,000 for each PhD student who graduates, which should mean that the programme should pay for itself even with relatively low numbers. The ASCL currently aims at hosting 40 PhD students, which translates into five students for each of the Professors. This is probably the optimal number for effective supervision, but it is highly doubtful whether that could be achieved within a workload

allocation of ten per cent. In addition, the experience of Graduate Schools elsewhere is that proper training tends to be rather labour intensive. There are a couple of other issues relating to academic progression. Given that there is a Research Masters, some consideration might be given to encouraging progression into the PhD programme. At the current time, very few of the MA students seem to stay on to embark on a PhD. Finally, in addition to encouraging the PhDs to become active within the CRGs, there might be a more focused effort to assist these students to look towards securing postdoctoral funding. Although most postdoctoral researchers will ultimately look for employment elsewhere, they remain important for the overall research culture as well as for informally mentoring doctoral students.

II.v. Research integrity policy

The committee is conscious of the fact that this has become an important issue for the research community in the Netherlands. Most research funders these days insist on strict ethical procedures, and the Committee presumes there are internal procedures at Leiden University. For the most part, researchers at ASCL are engaged in the collection of qualitative data where both the incentive and the opportunity to falsify are of a different order to those in the quantitative sciences. The committee did not read or hear of specific training geared to alerting early career researchers of the underlying issues, although these are discussed within the Researchers' Assembly. It is perhaps desirable to alert such researchers not merely to the fundamental importance of conducting research with the highest levels of academic integrity, but also to maintain data in a manner that is subject to reasonable standards of verification. This does not, of course, detract from the need to maintain the anonymity of informants, especially where this has been promised. This could easily be built into the PhD training. The ASCL is very explicit about the difficulties of conducting research in environments, not least academic ones, where corruption is endemic, and the committee is pleased to note that this is amongst the subjects regularly discussed in the Researchers' Assembly.

The self-assessment report notes some risks that are linked to research aiming for societal relevance: maintaining the integrity and autonomy of the research process, ensuring openness and transparency of research results, as well as avoiding the (political) influence of the societal stakeholders in all steps of the research project. ASCL demonstrates awareness of these risks, and has designed strategies to protect its staff from external harmful pressure and influence. This awareness is important and needs to be taken forward into the future as the attitudes towards, and conditions for, knowledge production and valorisation are becoming increasingly complicated in certain parts of the African continent, as well as globally.

II.vi. Diversity

Like many academic institutions, the ASCL has faced the problems associated with an increasingly aging workforce and a gender split between academic and support/library staff, with senior academic staff tending to be male. The leadership is clearly aware of the problem, and the use of postdoctoral positions to redress the balance is a reasonable stopgap measure. The proposal to ensure that at least two or three of the new ASCL professorships will go to women is a positive step, as is the attempt to ensure that committees should have a gender balance. This applies particularly to appointment committees. What is not so clear is exactly how gender maps onto positions of seniority

and how many women serve as PI on major projects. The feeling that postdoctoral positions bring less added value unless they are connected to projects will presumably mean that this means of altering the gender profile is likely to become less easy to operationalise. In any event, there remains the issue of how female early career researchers can be mentored to become fully-fledged senior academics in their own right, rather than continuing to occupy the lower rungs of the ladder. It is not clear that there are any particular policies in place for such mentoring. Finally, the ASCL has begun to confront the fact that it has employed very few staff from Africa in the past. The significant increase in the numbers, including the appointment to the Stephen Ellis Chair, is to be welcomed as a step in the right direction.

III. Recommendations

a. Quality of the research unit

We recommend:

That the ASCL takes a strategic look at its academic publication policy with a view to building the reputation of its publication series, but also to increasing visibility within international peer-reviewed journals.

That the ASCL looks at its engagement policy strategically with a view to perhaps being more selective in cognisance of the time constraints currently experienced by staff.

That the ASCL looks at its current MoUs with a view to prioritisation.

That the ASCL finds ways to showcase its societal relevance to Leiden University and asks Leiden University to recognise this work.

That the ASCL dedicates time to discuss how much time and other resources should be dedicated to the valorisation of research over the coming period in a resource-constrained environment.

That the ASCL takes a strategic look at the size, composition, function/remit and governance of both the Academic Advisory Council and the Societal Advisory Council.

That the ASCL considers ways to stabilize funding commitments beyond ODA, by the relevant Dutch ministries.

That the ASCL considers whether part of the financial administration might in the longer term be best placed under the administration of the central university.

That the ASCL develops a funding strategy to increase the success rate for EU grants such as ERC, Marie Curie and ITN and to ensure adequate mentoring of funding applicants.

That the ASCL and Leiden University look at ways of ensuring the longer-term financial viability of ASA.

That the ASCL looks at whether there is a case for encouraging Master students to stay on at ASCL for a PhD.

That the ASCL looks at ways of encouraging PhD students to become active within the CRGs.

That the ASCL includes research integrity training in its doctoral programme.

That the ASCL looks at ways of encouraging career progress for female researchers.

That the ASCL continues to look at ways of increasing the number of African scholars on its staff.

That the ASCL gives serious thought and devotes adequate resources to the development of the graduate school.

That work load issues are addressed with urgency across the board.

b. Quality of the library function

We recommend, for the present and in general:

That the ASCL Library should be ring-fenced for the present, until the negotiations on its future are successfully concluded. The timetable for these negotiations should be clarified.

That the ASCL Library should be ambitious for a new Africa Library, bearing in mind the assets it brings to the University, and the fact that African Studies within the University are being considerably strengthened. Library resources need to be at the heart of this process.

That trust should be built between the two libraries and steps should be taken to build up cooperative working where possible.

For the future:

That the ASCL Library, whether it retains its own identity or becomes part of a new Africa Library, should retain its own clearly defined, separate space and dedicated staff.

That positive consideration be given to the creation of a new Africa Library, building on the collections and profile of the ASCL Library.

That the Africa acquisitions budget should be increased in real terms.

That the ASCL staff budget should be protected and where possible increased.

That the ASCL Library/new Africa Library should be housed in close proximity to ASCL research staff and that the present staff expertise, community spirit, documentation functions, integration with the ASCL researchers and acquisitions expertise should be maintained and nurtured. Staff ability to act flexibly and innovatively should also be safeguarded, as should the openness and accessibility of the Library. This should not, however, preclude looking at forms of rationalisation that do not damage these strengths (this might, for example, include bringing accessioning and cataloguing into the University Library systems).

That the Library continues to build its open access content.

That as much of the collection should be kept on the open shelves as possible (bearing in mind that library storage space is always at a premium and that most large libraries have to out-house some material).

That a strong case be made to except acquisitions from Africa from bulk tender arrangements.

That the needs of the ASCL Library for funds to carry out non-core, but still essential, activities (e.g. digitisation) should be considered in ASCL and University Library funding applications.