Mid-term Review of
ICLON research programme ‘Teaching and Teacher Learning’
2015 – 2017

February 2019

Review Committee:
Prof. dr. Paulien Meijer (Radboud University)
Prof. dr. Marc de Vries (TU Delft)
Secretary: dr. Frans van Steijn

Regarding a mid-term assessment the review committee payed a visit to the research group of the Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON) on January 11 2019 and interviewed representatives of the scientific staff, the management team and PhD candidates. The site visit programme is added to this report.
The committee thanks ICLON for its clear and detailed self-assessment report on the ICLON Research Program ‘Teaching and Teacher Learning’ 2015 – 2017 that constituted the basis for the discussions during the site visit. These were conducted in an open and very agreeable atmosphere. That enabled the committee to attain a convincing assessment.

25 Years after its start, ICLON appears to the committee in a flourishing phase of its existence. ICLON is a dynamic and well-organized research center that contributes significantly to the knowledge and practice of training academic teachers. The assessment of the previous (international) review committee in 2015 confirmed that ICLON achieved ‘very good’ with respect to research quality, relevance, viability and PhD training programme. The committee concluded that this respectable achievement was successfully continued.

This mid-term report follows the formal chapters of the Dutch research assessment protocol: research quality, relevance, viability, PhD programme, research integrity and diversity.

Research quality
ICLON’s broad range of disciplinary and methodological approaches is widely appreciated, within the research group and outside. The previous focus on teaching and teacher learning is now further expanded to include student learning—in both domains of secondary and higher education—and to the purpose domains of qualification, socialization and personal development. The committee endorses this development, but found that the explanation of ICLON’s research profile (in paragraph 1.4 of the self-assessment report and the multi-faceted list of research projects in Appendix 8a) made it difficult to identify that profile unequivocally for all ICLON researchers. The committee found it hard to recognize the profile in the large variety of publications and theses. The
committee therefore recommends to further develop ICLON’s ‘distinguished profile’ into a clear mission and strategy to improve the focus in writing grant proposals, personnel policies and identifying key publications. As the committee understands, this process has already been initiated.

ICLON’s researchers publish often in leading international journals and contribute significantly to theory development in their field. Consequently ICLON participates in the international networks of leading groups in teacher training research. The committee advises ICLON to stimulate their PhDs to make more use of these international relations. ICLON’s staff could even perform better as first authors of publications when they better balance their (heavy) involvement in the PhD projects with their own research topics. ICLON receives many applications for PhD positions, but their acceptance policies seem well designed.

ICLON’s management style of participating leadership is endorsed by the entire team and results in a well-led and coherent research community. This is also recognized by the ICLON Board, formed by three deans of Leiden University faculties. Decision making is therefore to a large extent confidently delegated to the director and research director of the group. One of the next crucial decisions will be fulfilling the vacancy of the chair in higher education teaching. The committee recommends to integrate this chair well into the programme and profile of ICLON.

Relevance
ICLON’s relevance approach of promoting practical applications that are firmly based in theory on teaching and teacher learning works out very well. This approach could be worked out more explicitly. That would invoke more recognition for ICLON’s leading role in the development of teacher training in the Netherlands. ICLON’s contributions in the research blog ‘Didactief’ are exemplary for this leading role.
The previous committee’s recommendation to try to have more impact on the national teaching policies was successfully taken up. The regional cooperation with schools for secondary education also functions well. Further steps could be taken there, also to distribute ICLON’s approach as a good—if not best—practice. The cooperating with Leiden’s faculties to enhance the quality of their teaching could be made more explicit and systematic.

Viability
ICLON’s future looks solid with respect to the quality of its staff and its well-balanced financial resources from direct funding and research grants. As said above, ICLON withstands the temptation to attract more PhD candidates than it is able to accommodate in order to increase the basic funding. Also the policy of applying for external grants seems sensibly based on the profile and capacities of ICLON.
ICLON’s personnel policy ensures that staff and PhD candidates are very pleased to be employed in the institute. New colleagues are quickly incorporated in the welcoming collegial culture. Of course the workload of teaching and publishing is often demanding, also because of researchers’ own ambitions, but the open atmosphere makes possible obstacles clear and often solvable. Individual careers are discussed and helped forward.

A special compliment for the supporting staff was brought forward during the panel discussions with the committee.

**PhD-programme**
The PhD’s in ICLON enjoy proficient and attentive support by the professors and by each other. The PhDs feel to be part of the institute; they are consulted on all important matters and are valued as researchers and colleagues, rather than as students.

The PhD educational programme, both within ICLON and by the national research school ICO, is first rate with respect to contents, structure and balance. In the reviewed period, PhDs have produced an impressive list of doctoral theses.

The future careers of PhDs are intrinsically uncertain, but the institute is very supportive in helping the candidates being successful in academic or outside careers. Possible transitions from PhD graduates to post-doc positions demand more attention by the institute than presently is the case. PhDs expressed a need for more opportunities to acquire (certified) teaching qualifications in secondary and higher education.

The large group of international students, many of Chinese origin, seem to warrant more specific attention in terms of social integration than presently is given to them.

**Research integrity**
ICLON’s integrity policy is in line with the national and university-wide regulations and practices. Research in the field of teaching requires special attention, because research is often carried out with minors and their parents and teachers. The committee is therefore very pleased with the institute’s own Ethical Committee that is better capable of addressing the institutes special needs than a more general faculty or university based committee could do.

**Diversity**
In terms of gender diversity and diversity in cultural backgrounds, ICLON’s position is fine.
Conclusion and recommendations
This report reflects the committee’s conclusion that ICLON is flourishing and has successfully—despite personnel changes—continued the very high quality of its research performance. In the assessment above, some recommendations were made. In short, the committee recommends:

1. to continue to develop and explain ICLON’s distinguished research profile;
2. to stimulate the PhDs to use ICLON’s international network;
3. to better balance supervision of PhD projects with the staff’s own research projects;
4. to integrate the new chair in Higher Education well into ICLON’s research profile;
5. to explore more explicitly promoting the practical applications of ICLON’s research results;
6. to take the relations with the schools for secondary education and with Leiden’s faculties one step further;
7. to pay more attention to possible post-doc positions and/or teaching qualifications for PhD graduates;
8. to pay more attention to the social integration of PhD candidates from abroad.
Program ICLON Site-visit January 11. 2019

Site visit Mid-term Assessment ICLON research program Teaching and teacher learning

Location: Room A203 Van Einthoven building

9.00AM Welcome
9.15AM Committee preparation
10.00AM **Panel 1: scientific staff**
Prof. dr. ir. Fred Janssen (research program director)
Dr. Jacobiene Meirink (assistant professor)
Dr. Roeland van der Rijst (assistant professor)
Dr. Nadira Saab (associate professor)
Dr. Dineke Tigelaar (assistant professor)
Dr. Nivja de Jong (associate professor)
Dr. Tessa Mearns (assistant professor)

11.00AM Coffee break and preparation panel 2

11.30AM **Panel 2: Management**
Professor dr. Geert de Snoo (chair of the ICLON board)
Professor dr. Wilfried Admiraal (chair of ICLON)
Professor dr. ir. Fred Janssen (research program director)

12.30PM Lunch

1.15PM Preparation panel 3

1.30PM **Panel 3: PhD students and postdocs**
Drs. Marie-Jetta den Otter (teacher SE, contract PhD: contract research)
Dr. Mayke Vereijken (standard PhD; other funding/postdoc)
Loes de Jong MSc (standard PhD; other funding)
Evelyn van Kampen MA (standard PhD; other funding)
Tessa Vossen MSc (standard PhD; other funding)
Drs. Esther de Vrind (teacher educator, standard PhD; other funding)

2.30PM Coffee break

3.00PM Committee preparation for feedback and assessment

3.45PM Committee plenary feedback

4.15PM Drinks (common room third floor)