

To the Board of the Faculty of Engineering Technology
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear members of the Board,

In October 2020 Mechanical and Industrial Design Engineering (MIDE) was evaluated by an international panel as part of the research evaluation in accordance with the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015 – 2021 (SEP) for research reviews in the Netherlands. The review included the four departments: Biomechanical Engineering (BE), Design Production and Management (DPM), Mechanics of Solids Surfaces and Systems (MS3), and Thermal and Fluid Engineering (TFE). The committee consisted of prof. dr ir Patrick De Baets (chair, Ghent University), prof. dr Paulo Jorge Da Silva Bartolo (University of Manchester), prof. dr-ing. Bernhard Peters, (University of Luxembourg), prof. dr-ing. habil. Marion Merklein, (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), prof. dr Jenny Dankelman, (Delft University of Technology), ir. Vincent Ritman, (Tata Steel) and Jeroen Knippenberg MSc., (former PhD student Mechanical Engineering, TU/e).

The Executive Board has read the report and its recommendations with great interest, and has a number of observations and recommendations for the Faculty of ET. The Board is pleased to see that the panel observed enthusiasm and pride amongst the staff and that the Faculty has resolutely opted for a great deal of academic freedom and consistently acts accordingly. With equal delight, the Board notices the enthusiasm of the committee concerning the sustained effort of the Faculty to focus on applicable and applied research. The Board encourages the Faculty of ET to continue along this course.

The Board highly appreciates the Reflections written by the MIDE Management Team, which puts forward a clear path to address the recommendations made by the evaluation committee.

For instance, the committee has observed and values a relatively large amount of academic freedom and degree of autonomy for the chairs but warns that this may also hinder the deployment of the faculty strategy. It is argued that the departments can be used as organizational units with a strategic role. The Faculty Board has the intention to reconsider the position of departments with respect to the separate chairs and is elaborating on a new “way of working”, defining responsibilities at the level of Department Boards. This also would mean that department chairs would be appointed longer than two years, to guarantee continuity of leadership.

Also, the committee noted that the attention sometimes tilts towards applied research. It is seen as a challenge to keep fundamental research up to level, in line with the mission to translate fundamental research into applications. The committee recognizes the efforts in investing in journal papers and personal grants and urges the faculty to keep up its efforts. The Faculty Board is aware of the importance to keep supporting fundamental research and gives this topic high priority. It wishes to focus more on personal grants for fundamental research and an increased output in academic journals to achieve this, for instance by installing a ‘personal grants committee’, and actively inviting and supporting grant candidates by this committee and the Grants Office.

It could be helpful to see how the path that is put forward in the Reflections develops in practice. The Board suggests that a midterm review could help the Faculty to keep on track in addressing these recommendations.

The Board wishes the Faculty of ET good luck in the follow-up of the recommendations of the evaluation. On behalf of the Executive Board,

Tom Veldkamp
Rector Magnificus