# UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

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COPY TO
Dirk Heylen
Haico te Kulve / Floor Meijer
via mail

SUBJECT
Position paper Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science (EEMCS)

Dear members of the Faculty Board,

On 26 January 2022, the Department of Computer Science of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Sciences (EEMCS) was visited by an international committee. The site visit was part of the national research evaluation Computer Science 2015-2020, in which nine universities and three research schools participated. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021–2027 (SEP) for research evaluations in the Netherlands. The committee consisted of prof. Jos Baeten (chair, Centrum Wiskunde en Informatica, the Netherlands), dr. Christine Morin (National Institute in Digital Science and Technology, France), prof. Ann Nowé (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium), prof. Paola Inverardi (University of L'Aquila, Italy), prof. Karl Bringmann (Saarland University and Max Planck Institute for Informatics, Germany), prof. Laurie Williams (North Carolina State University, USA), prof. Alan Smeaton (Dublin City University, Ireland), prof. Ero Hyvönen (Aalto University, Finland) and Tim Gubner MSc (PhD candidate, Centrum Wiskunde en Informatica, the Netherlands).

The Executive Board has studied the committee's report with great interest. The Board was pleased to read that the committee characterizes the Department of Computer Science as 'very well inserted in its research ecosystem', thereby acknowledging the department's efforts to increase collaboration between its own groups and with other EEMCS departments and UT faculties. This is duly recognized as helping to strengthen the five focus areas of research and ultimately contributing towards the department's mission of establishing a seamless integration of ICT into the modern digital society. The report also reflects a clear appreciation of investments made in regional and national ecosystems. There is praise for the department's connections with other research organisations, with industry, government and societal organisations. The report confirms that forging strategic partnerships paves the way for real impact.

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The report also indicates important points of improvement, mostly related to the decreased academic production and diminished external funding that was a result of the rapid growth of the department's teaching efforts. Over the reporting period, the number of students increased fivefold, significantly adding to the teaching load and perceived workload of staff, and to some extent distracting them from research activities. The Board was pleased to note that the committee's report contains valuable recommendations for dealing with such issues and for strengthening the department's viability in general. An overall point of improvement that emerges from the report, is the need for increased analyzing, planning, strategizing and monitoring, which will help the department to get a firmer grasp on where it currently stands and where it wants to go in the future. The Board supports this as a welcome opportunity for further improvement.

In response to the report, the Department of Computer Science has written a position paper in which it reflects on the committee's main recommendations. The department describes actions that have already been taken, as well as measures that will be further explored and (potentially) implemented in the coming period. Three interlinked goals receive particular emphasis:
    (1) Increasing the academic production;
    (2) Improving the funding situation, particularly the income from grants and contract research;
    (3) Improving lead times of PhD projects and reducing dropouts.
In addition, the position paper also reflects on recommendations made regarding tech support, diversity and open access, but without naming concrete actions.

With respect to the first abovementioned goal, the department identifies the need to increase research productivity by alleviating teaching loads, hiring additional staff, providing support in proposal writing and improving information sharing practices within the department to ensure that the availability of such support is known amongst staff. These proposed measures should also contribute towards the second goal, to increase the revenue received from the second and third funding streams. To this same end, the department will continue to invest in strategic partnerships that offer opportunities for acquiring consortium funding. The department further proposes to develop a department wide acquisition strategy for grants and contract research, which is thought to help overcome the current heterogeneity in production between different groups. The Board recommends putting emphasis on collaboration with other disciplines as stimulated and advocated by the Digital Society Institute (DSI). Thirdly, the department aims to improve PhD productivity, initially by getting a better understanding of why PhD candidates drop out or need more time to complete their projects. It is suggested to do this jointly with Twente Graduate School (TGS), which can provide relevant data and good practice examples.

An overarching outcome of the evaluation process is that the department intends to organize a series of strategy days, the first of which has already taken place. According to the position document, this session has led to more insight into the needs and positions of different groups of staff members. In the opinion of the Board this is a very valuable result of the evaluation. In general, it encourages the department to work more in teams on societally relevant issues (team science).

The Board wishes the department every success in following up on the recommendations of the evaluation. As stipulated in the UT Research Evaluation Protocol (2021), the follow-up of the evaluation will be discussed as part of the Planning & Evaluation cycle during meetings between the Executive Board and the Board of the Faculty, as well as in meetings of the Discipline Council.

The Executive Board,

Prof. Dr. Ir. A. Veldkamp,
*Rector Magnificus*