



NUTRIM Self-Assessment (2015-2020)

Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences
NUTRIM School of Nutrition and Translational Research in Metabolism



7. Summary

NUTRIM School of Nutrition and Translational Research in Metabolism aims to contribute to health maintenance and personalised medicine by unravelling lifestyle and disease-induced derangements in metabolism and by developing targeted nutrition, exercise and drug interventions. We cover the whole spectrum from maintenance of a healthy lifestyle and disease prevention to disease management, with a strong focus on prevalent chronic metabolic and inflammatory disorders across the lifespan. This is facilitated by a combination of fundamental, interventional, clinical and population based translational research, a state-of-the-art infrastructure and close interactions between scientists, clinicians, PhD and master students. NUTRIM, embedded in the faculty of Health Medicine and Life Sciences, has a strong collaboration with the clinic, as part of the strategic partnership Maastricht UMC+, and with the (EU-)region, and various (inter)national academic and corporate partners.

After the previous external review (2009/2015), NUTRIM and Wageningen University decided not to continue as one National Graduate School VLAG. Further, in 2017, NUTRIM's 4 research lines were re-organized in 3 disease-driven divisions (1. Obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular health; 2. Liver and digestive health; 3. Respiratory and age-related health) to provide ample critical mass and optimise synergy. We also strengthened our link and alignment with the clinic and with the theme of Health Promotion, prepared an inventory on 'big data handling' and started a core group sharing expertise, and increasingly adopt tailored and personalised approaches. It is our mission to mentor scientists at various stages of their academic career, facilitated *e.g.* by Kootstra fellowships, the Tenure Track and Top Talent Program, and a dedicated grants officer and support staff. The NUTRIM PhD council and PhD coordinator took the lead to develop a new NUTRIM PhD program, including introduction days, lectures, courses and social activities. In addition to the high end Metabolic Research Unit and analytical facilities, a Clinical Research Unit was built and collaborations were strengthened with other school/institutes and within the EU-region.

The NUTRIM research portfolio is well balanced with an average funding of 10M € (2015-2020) and is in line with the funding landscape, as notified by our strategic interaction with several companies facilitating TKI-benefit and the involvement in various EU-funded project. In 2020, NUTRIM employed 190,9 fte and has ~250 PhD candidates. Of these, about 60% are external PhD candidates, merely due to the close collaboration with the hospital. Our research results in about 39 PhD-graduations each year and a CNCI of 1.7, showing that NUTRIM publications are cited 70% more often as compared to publications in the same area, over the same years and document types. In line with a pro-active policy, the number of open access publications is increasing and various databases and tools developed are used by others. That the NUTRIM community is highly appreciated can also be observed by a high number of invited lectures given and media attention, various editorship, and relevant roles in scientific, professional and societal organisations. The involvement of assistant, associate and full professor, illustrates that NUTRIM also has leading scientists at the mid-career level.

The next six years, we will continue the current strategy to maintain our leading position on Nutrition and Metabolism, amongst others by further joining forces with the clinic, other schools/institutes and in the region and will pro-actively strengthen international collaborations and strategic partnerships. The slight downward trend in PhD candidates and financial prospect warrants close attention, also given COVID-19, but we have no concrete signals to expect lower levels of funding in the upcoming period. It is important to maintain a cutting edge infrastructure, to further improve our personal and career development policy and to provide support in prestigious personnel grant and large consortia applications.