

May 2025

Evaluation of the Research Part of the University of Luxembourg: Evaluation Report

**Department of Education and Social Work
(DESW), LUCET**



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John Furlong (Chair), Maija Aksela, Umut Erel, Erkki Huovinen

Executive Summary

Together, the Department of Education and Social Work (DESW) and LUCET (the Luxembourg Centre for Educational Testing) form a research entity characterised by considerable synergy and strong integration between research and teaching. Much of the research of these units centres on practice and is responsive to the needs of both policymakers and practitioners.

DESW aims to provide new insights into educational research, lifelong learning, and social interventions that arise in the national context of Luxembourg, and which have implications for policy, practice, and research internationally.

LUCET forms a separate unit outside the department. It undertakes research commissioned by the Ministry of Education, complemented by relevant original research in the areas of educational measurement and development. LUCET is highly effective as a research organisation, and it serves the Ministry of Education effectively, not least via its important school monitoring programme.

Opportunities for research are good, and the quality of the research output seems strong. Some of the work is published in leading international journals, and a scientometric data analysis suggests that publications in the unit typically obtain above-world-average levels of citations, although the number of publications is somewhat lower than might be expected. At best, the quality of research is equivalent to or better than one would expect to find in comparable universities internationally though questions remain as to whether all staff are able to achieve this level of success.

Both DESW and LUCET have excellent records for knowledge transfer and impact – indeed this is one of the major strengths of the unit.

In terms of resources, funding for research is sound, though there would seem to be considerable potential for additional funding through more effective collaboration internationally and with industry. LUCET would seem to be particularly well placed to develop its work in both these ways.

So far the entity has not been particularly successful in leveraging internal university funding either from initiatives to support industry sponsorship such as BRIDGES or for interdisciplinary work through the Institute for Advanced Studies. The Panel felt that with stronger University and Faculty support, there was considerable potential for innovative initiatives in both of these areas.

In its recommendations, the Panel makes a number of proposals including: that DESW/LUCET should work both internally and with their external partners to clarify their aims for the next phase of their joint development; that this should include the aim of further diversifying research funding, especially international funding and the promotion of interdisciplinary research; that the University and Faculty jointly consider how DESW/LUCET can be supported in developing more industrial funding, through for example the BRIDGES initiative and increase their interdisciplinary collaborations so that they might attract future funding under the Institute for Advanced Studies initiative. The Panel also makes a number of specific recommendations on the internal organisation of the unit, particularly the DESW 'institutes', and on a number of staffing issues.

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1 Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction to the evaluation

The Ministry of Research and Higher Education (MESR) of Luxembourg mandated Technopolis Group with the evaluation of the research part of the University of Luxembourg. This evaluation was conducted from May 2024 to June 2025. According to Art. 50/2 of the modified law on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg of June 27th, 2018, based on the original law of 2003, the University is subject to external evaluation every four years. The present evaluation assesses both the research and institutional aspects of the University. The main time period to be covered by this exercise is 2018-2023. Next to a retrospective assessment of achievements, the evaluations' prospective elements include the evaluation of the strategies and plans of the University as well as the evaluators and the panel assessment of challenges and opportunities ahead.

The University's mission, as defined by law, is threefold: to offer higher education courses leading to degrees, diplomas and certificates; to conduct research; and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of Luxembourg.

This report is part of the assessment of the research performance of the Universities' 13 research departments and three interdisciplinary centres and covers the Department of Education and Social Work. The evaluation is based on an international external peer review and covers the performance of the research department, taking into account various aspects such as inputs (e.g., finances, human resources, infrastructure, strategy) and outputs/impacts (e.g., research outcomes, innovation activities, services). A separate report covers the assessment of organisation, management, and governance matters.

The observations and recommendations presented in this report are based on a peer review by the following experts working in the research entities' research fields:

- Prof. John Furlong, University of Oxford, Panel Chair
- Prof. Maija Aksela, University of Helsinki, Panel member
- Prof. Dr. Umut Erel, The Open University, Panel member
- Prof. Erkki Huovinen, Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Panel member

The assessment is based on a self-evaluation report submitted by the department, background information on the Luxembourg research system information provided by Technopolis Group, and an on-site visit of the entity in January 2025. The hearing, which was organised and moderated by Technopolis, consisted of a self-presentation by the research unit and its research institutes, as well as group interviews with external partners and clients.

The evaluation team would like to thank all those who helped prepare the evaluation, those who provided information and those who were interviewed during the consultation.

1.2 The Unit

The evaluated Unit consists of the Department of Education and Social Work (DESW) and the Luxembourg Centre for Educational Testing (LUCET), both part of the Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences. The Department of Education and Social Work research focuses on how educational and social assessments and policies can be developed to respond to the challenges that educational and non-formal education systems face to deal effectively with the increasing diversity of individuals and their environments. LUCET is a research and transfer centre which pools research and development in educational

measurement and facilitates evidence-based decision-making in education. They work synergistically, and DESW/LUCET are committed to understanding transformations and their impact on educational and social contexts while also examining critical issues of equality, justice, participation, and life-span perspectives.

At DESW research is organised in four institutes:

- Teaching and Learning
- Musicology and Arts
- Social Research and Interventions
- Lifelong Learning and Guidance

LUCET has three research portfolios:

- Diagnostics Portfolio
- Monitoring Portfolio
- Development Portfolio

State endowments and FNR funding are a significant source of income for the DESW. Over the evaluation period, DESW has diversified funding sources, which now include also European funding. LUCET mainly obtains funding from the Ministry of Education for commissioned research projects that are linked to its main missions. LUCET also applies for competitive FNR funding schemes and participates in European funding schemes (H2020), mainly in collaboration with researchers from other departments.

2 Research strategy and organisation

This research entity is made up of two distinct but complementary bodies – the Department of Education and Social Work (DESW) and LUCET (the Luxembourg Centre for Educational Testing). It is clear that there is considerable synergy between research undertaken by DESW and LUCET. Overall, the aim is to contribute to the Sustainable and Social Development strand of the UL research strategy, with a significant number of studies relating to education, social work, career paths, and guidance. Although academic staff have considerable freedom to pursue their own intellectual research interests, across both units there is a strong and strategically supported commitment to pursue research that centres on practice and is responsive to the needs of both policy makers and practitioners. This is evidenced in a range of different ways, including a strong commitment to research integrity and to Open Science.

Since the last review, much of the strategic focus of both units has been on the consequences of the reorganisation that came about as a result of the University's departmentalisation and a new agreement with the Ministry of Education. Although reorganisation was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the changes required now seem to have settled into a structure that can support both teaching and research.

In terms of research capacity, the size of the combined Unit is relatively small. The self-evaluation report (SER) reports around 20 permanent academic posts and 20 research staff, 13 of whom are employed in LUCET, though there appear to have been a number of additional appointments recently. In general, DESW/LUCET seem adequately staffed to undertake research across the broad range of areas they address. Recent appointments in the area of Teaching and Learning have strengthened this aspect of their work considerably. However, there would appear to be some weaknesses in staffing in areas relevant to social work, and

during the visit the Panel became aware of the considerable discrepancy in staffing between education and social work. The Panel also learned of difficulties within the University in ensuring replacements of staff who had left, even when they were essential to ongoing teaching and research programmes. This position could become acute if numbers of social work students increase as is apparently planned. The Panel recommends that both the Faculty and the University review staffing for social work and review the consequences of current procedures for replacing staff who have left or retired from the University.

In their Self Evaluation Review, DESW state that their overarching goal is to provide new insights into educational research, lifelong learning, and social interventions that arise in the rapidly changing national context of Luxembourg, and which have implications for policy, practice, and research internationally. The Department's strategy to achieve this goal has been to establish four separate institutes, which are intended to be synergistic. These are: Teaching & Learning; Social Research and Interventions; Musicology and Arts; Lifelong Learning and Guidance.

Although working relationships across DESW as a whole seemed strong, the Panel were not convinced that organisationally the notion of four separate 'institutes' actually facilitated collaborative or interdisciplinary work. The Panel recommends that over the course of the next year, DESW reviews its strategy to promote interdisciplinary research, and in particular the working of its institutes in supporting this objective.

LUCET is very different from DESW both because of its funding and because it does not have a major role in teaching. The unit mainly undertakes research commissioned by the Ministry of Education, which is complemented with relevant original research in the areas of educational measurement and development. Organisationally it is divided into three portfolios: the Monitoring Portfolio, the Development Portfolio, the Diagnostics Portfolio.

There is strong evidence that LUCET is highly effective as a research organisation. Its annual school monitoring programme *Épreuves Standardisées (ÉpStan)* is particularly important in providing extremely powerful data for the Ministry of Education on a wide range of educational issues. During the review period LUCET has been able to build on that success, forging a wide range of collaborative arrangements with other research and policy bodies both within UL and beyond. It has also been able to extend its research by working collaboratively with the Ministry on the research agenda and by accessing funding from other sources.

Much has changed for both DESW and LUCET over the review period, particularly as a result of departmentalisation. However, despite the evident strengths of research in DESW/LUCET, the Panel found it difficult to identify the Unit's explicit strategic aims for its future development. It therefore recommends that as a matter of priority, the Unit should work both internally and with its external partners to clarify its aims for its next phase of development.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that both the Faculty and the University review staffing for social work and review the consequences of current procedures for replacing staff who have left or retired from the University.
- The Panel recommends that over the course of the next year, DESW reviews its strategy to promote interdisciplinary research, and in particular the working of its institutes in supporting that objective.
- The Panel recommends that as a matter of priority, DESW and LUCET should work both internally and with their external partners to clarify their aims for the next phase of their joint development.

3 Quality of Research

The research programme

DESW/LUCET have an ambitious programme of research. In their SER, they suggest that the primary aim of their research is to address the dynamics and challenges of modern societies. They argue that globalisation, together with massive demographic shifts and the emergence of new media, is intensifying socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic heterogeneity. DESW/LUCET state that they are committed to understanding these profound transformations and their impact on educational and social contexts while also examining critical issues of equality, justice, participation, and life-span perspectives.

In order to achieve these important ends, DESW/LUCET have adopted a comprehensive research strategy that integrates the study of formal, non-formal, and informal education processes alongside psychosocial interventions. These are explored in conjunction with organisational structures and technological advances, applying a comparative lens to generate theoretically and empirically-driven evidence. The DESW-LUCET collaboration, they argue, enables cutting-edge scholarship and expertise that informs and benefits communities, social, and educational sectors, and national and European policy landscapes.

The research undertaken by DESW and LUCET covers empirical, applied, and theoretical research. While DESW research tends to be more qualitative in design, LUCET's work is more frequently quantitative. All of their work has a very strong commitment to public engagement and to practical outcomes.

Research quality

The Panel had the opportunity to consider a wide range of different sorts of evidence in assessing the quality of the Unit's research.

First there were the five papers submitted for review all of which were highly rated by the Panel. Between them they illustrated the range of different approaches to research undertaken in the Unit. For example, the paper by Colling et al on the 'Need for Cognition' provided an excellent example of the power of LUCET's work in combining empirical findings from its national monitoring research with rigorous theoretical analysis. The result is a paper that is important both academically and in terms of educational policy. The paper by Schiavio and Nijs, though based on a very small-scale study, provides highly original insights on the role of creativity, interaction, and bodily movement in learning a musical instrument through an on-line course. Pignault, and Houssemand's theoretically informed literature review of 'unemployment normalisation' was also highly original and authoritative; as such it makes an important contribution to the field. Siry and Gorges' paper on meaning-making in science again demonstrated the value of careful ethnographic work in trying to understand young people's multiple modes of communication in multilingual contexts. Finally, the paper by Traue et al highlighted the role of theory in social analysis. Based on strong scholarship, the paper makes a powerful theoretical case for visual sociology in the context of the today's increasingly visual culture.

Overall, these papers demonstrate that at its best the unit is capable of producing high-quality innovative research, equal to that produced in highly rated university departments in other countries.

A more broad-ranging picture of publications by all current members of DESW was made possible by an examination of the DESW's CV and publications data base (similar evidence

was not made available for LUCET). This showed that a majority of members of staff have sound publication profiles; some of them are very strong indeed. There is evidence of international publication, some of it in leading international journals. However, in many cases, a significant number of 'publications' (sometimes as many as 50% of those listed) were in fact conference papers and or poster presentations. While conferences are a very important avenue for the dissemination of research findings, the Panel recommends that DESW considers whether an appropriate number of them are being submitted for more formal publication and whether this indicates that some more junior members of staff need further support in improving their research and publication profiles.

Further evidence on overall research quality was provided by the scientometric analysis provided by Technopolis. Overall, of the publications included in the Technopolis analysis, most have above world average levels of citations, including policy citations and a good proportion are classified as 'highly novel'. At the same time however, the report suggests the unit has a somewhat lower than expected number of publications – an average for the unit as a whole (DESW+LUCET) of 46 per year, equivalent to an average of one publication per member of academic staff. This could be for a number of reasons: a significant number of publications with no DOI were excluded from the analysis (some of these may have been practice oriented reports); a number of relatively recently appointed colleagues were not included in the evidence; the large number of 'publications' listed in individual CV's which are in fact conference papers or poster presentations. Once again, the Panel recommends that DESW/LUCET consider whether some members of staff need additional support in improving their research output, particularly in terms of how they turn findings from applied research reports into more formal academic papers. Such support could include appropriately timed short sabbaticals.

A final source of evidence on research quality emerged during the site visit when Panel members learned of the importance of collaboration and innovation in research. This was particularly apparent in the work of the SciTeach Lab where research is designed and undertaken with teachers, but there were also many other examples of collaboration and innovation in other areas of work.

Overall, the Panel concluded that the quality of the research undertaken by both DESW and LUCET is good. At its best, it is high quality, equivalent to or better than one would expect to find in comparable universities internationally. However, questions remain as to whether further support is needed in order to ensure that all colleagues are able to achieve their full potential. The Panel therefore recommends that senior colleagues in both DESW and LUCET undertake a careful review of the research profiles of all of their staff and consider whether and what form of further support is needed.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that both the Faculty and the University review staffing for social work and review the consequences of current procedures for replacing staff who have left or retired from the University.
- The Panel recommends that over the course of the next year, DESW reviews its strategy to promote interdisciplinary research, and in particular the working of its institutes in supporting that objective.
- The Panel recommends that as a matter of priority, DESW and LUCET should work both internally and with their external partners to clarify their aims for the next phase of their joint development.

4 Resources

4.1 Financial Resources

DESW has a range of funding sources to support its teaching and research. The evidence provided in the SER suggest that its state endowments for teaching have slightly reduced over the review period. For research funding, in line with the recommendations of the last external review, the department has moved away from its dependence on internal FNR funding and significantly increased its EU funding. As a result, overall research funding levels have remained broadly stable over the last 6 years. While the increased EU funding is to be welcomed, the Panel failed to understand why that had to be at the expense of competitively won internal funding.

During the on-site visit, the Panel became aware of an imbalance of funding between different DESW institutes. In its future review of the institutes, the Panel therefore recommends that DESW considers how funding is distributed internally and how it can be more effectively monitored in the future.

LUCET's state endowments slightly increased over the review period. Like DESW, it has reduced its FNR funding but at the same time has substantially increased its public sector funding. However, the self-evaluation review did not report any international funding. Given the strength of its work, this seems a serious omission. The Panel therefore recommends that as a matter of priority, LUCET considers how it might increase its international collaborations with a view to procuring funding both from the EU and other bodies.

Neither DESW nor LUCET currently has any industrial funding. The Panel was of the view that given the strength of its educational monitoring work, LUCET in particular could be well placed to attract such funding with support from BRIDGES and other innovation funds held at university level. The Panel therefore recommends that the University, Faculty and LUCET work together to consider how LUCET might in the future attract such industrial funding.

From an examination of the University's SER, it became apparent that DESW/LUCET has only been awarded one project funded by the University's prestigious Institute for Advanced Studies initiative. (Only two other Departments in the UL had a similarly weak profile). Given the strategic significance of DESW/LUCET's educational work, both for Luxembourg and for the future of the University itself, the Panel felt that this should be a matter of concern for the Faculty and for the University. In principle it seemed to the Panel that there was considerable potential for a wide range of interdisciplinary projects involving Education (for example between subject specialists in education and colleagues in STEM subjects, Languages, Humanities etc). The Panel therefore recommends that the University and Faculty actively consider how DESW/LUCET can be supported in developing more interdisciplinary collaborations that will attract funding from the Institute for Advanced Studies Initiative in the future.

Overall, the Panel felt that research funding levels were sound. However, given the strategic significance and quality of the research undertaken by this unit, they felt that there were likely to be further opportunities for research funding both nationally and internationally. They also felt that both the Faculty and the University could perhaps do more to support DESW/LUCET in leveraging both internal and external funding. The Panel therefore recommends that that for its next strategic plan, LUCET/DESW, with Faculty and University support, actively consider further diversifying and thereby increasing its research funding sources.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that the University, Faculty and LUCET work together to consider how LUCET might in the future attract industrial funding (e.g. through BRIDGES) to support its research.
- The Panel recommends that as a matter of priority, LUCET considers how it might increase its international collaborations to attract funding both from the EU and other bodies.
- The Panel recommends that the University and Faculty jointly consider how DESW/LUCET can be supported in developing more interdisciplinary collaborations (for example with those working in STEM, Languages and Humanities) that will attract future funding under the Institute for Studies initiative.
- The Panel recommends that for its next strategic plan, LUCET/DESW, with Faculty and University support, actively consider further diversifying and thereby increasing its research funding sources.

4.2 Human resources

In terms of human resources, it is positive that a number of new professors have recently been funded by the Ministry of Education to strengthen work in Teaching and Learning. If plans to increase the numbers of students studying social work are forthcoming, then further nationally-funded posts will be needed in this area of work as well. Given that these are primarily teaching-led initiatives, the Panel was concerned that these new employees should be able to devote 40% of their working time to research. This would help to diversify the department's field of research and increase possibilities for further funding.

DESW/LUCET appear to have good strategies for fostering the early stages of researchers' careers with a significant number of colleagues moving from doctoral to postdoctoral positions and then on to research scientist positions. However, progression beyond that point is, it seems, often problematic as a result of the university's 5-year rule for temporary employment. Given that there is only one university in Luxembourg, the Panel recommends that the appropriate body at university and or government level reviews the impact of this rule on the careers of its research staff.

The Panel was not made aware of any specific plans for succession planning. Again, the Panel recommends that this is an issue that is explicitly addressed in a new DESW/LUCET strategic plan.

The Panel had some concerns as to whether current administrative staffing was sufficient to support bids for international funding (e.g. Horizon Europe). The Panel recommends that DESW/LUCET in collaboration with the Faculty, review this aspect of its staffing.

The department collects and monitors data about the gender and nationality of staff. Overall, the representation of women and Luxembourgish nationals, as well as international staff is good. Yet, the share of women in the lower grades of employment and among postdocs is higher than among the full professors. DESW/LUCET, the Faculty and the University therefore need to develop more explicit policies to ensure that women are represented equitably among these higher levels of staff. The University currently does not monitor ethnicity or disability, yet this is important in order to monitor, prevent or rectify any possible discrimination on this basis. This is particularly important in light of the increasing diversity of Luxembourgish and European society. The Panel recommends including these data and ensuring that ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are equitably represented among all levels of staff.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that DESW/LUCET continue to monitor the gender imbalance at more senior levels of staffing and take active steps to ensure the equitable representation of women among all levels of staff, including full professors
- The Panel recommends that the University Includes monitoring and equality policies for ethnic minority and disabled staff

5 Contribution to teaching

During the on-site visit, the Panel learned that the research and teaching within DESW are well integrated, and there is a good feedback loop between teaching and practice. In particular, the Institute of Teaching & Learning conducts research in collaboration with working teachers, thus developing evidence-based theories of effective teaching and learning. Such co-development of teaching is especially evident in the in-service teacher course and pedagogical resources developed at the SciTeach Centre. It also became clear in the interviews that all researchers within DESW teach in the teacher education programmes, although their involvement in teaching varies, e.g., due to language proficiency. The tight connection between research and teaching is also evident in how DESW students are encouraged to design research and implement it within their internships. The panel thus sees the integration of research and teaching as one of DESW's clearest strengths.

Within LUCET, the Programme for Innovative Teaching and Training (PITT) uses evidence-based methods to develop teaching modules for secondary schools. According to the interviews, these modules are designed with a strong focus on the use of digital tools in schools, and they have been very well received by teachers in Luxembourg.

During the on-site visit, the Panel learned that in its teacher education work, DESW runs one of the largest teaching programmes in the University. We also learned of future plans to increase the size of social work teaching programmes significantly. In the SER, staff workload in teaching is noted as a particular challenge for DESW in terms of gaining international recognition in its research. However, from the on-site visit, the Panel concluded that the academic staff are not particularly over-pressured in terms of teaching time when compared with comparable universities internationally. Most of the academic staff the Panel met, appeared to have sufficient time for conducting research.

The department has relatively few PhD students. The course offerings included in the PhD programme (20 ECTS) are organised at the faculty level and are thus not specific to the field of study. For instance, the courses involve more focus on quantitative methods, whereas the PhD projects follow the general qualitative orientation of the department. It became clear during the on-site visit, however, that the PhD students see their work as being tightly integrated with other research at the department. Early-career planning by PhD candidates is made challenging by the national five-year rule (i.e., not extending non-permanent positions over five years).

Recommendations:

- The courses in the PhD programme could be re-designed or supplemented at the department level and thus be made more directly relevant to the methodological approaches at the department.
- In a country with only one university, relaxing the national law five-year rule would offer more PhD candidates possibilities for post-doc research.

6 Contribution to the third mission

The department has an excellent record of knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange and research impact. Researchers within the department are engaged in theoretically informed, empirically rigorous and application-oriented research. The successful combination of these aspects of research is reflected in the close collaboration with non-academic institutions. In particular, the department's researchers collaborate with policymakers and practitioners in science education, vocational education, teacher education, special educational needs, social work and social services. These collaborations take place on the local, national and international level and the department has close links with policy makers and practitioners on all these levels. This is reflected at all stages of research, from horizon scanning, to research planning, design, implementation and dissemination.

Methods for knowledge exchange range from close collaboration with non-academic institutions to relevant ministries. The stakeholders interviewed during the site visit attested to the strong relationship with researchers, valuing the high quality research that is responsive to policy needs. Stakeholders appreciate the timeliness of research that enables them to work with high quality data and analysis, and allows them to develop evidence based policies. Of particular note are the regular national education reports, which inform policies but are also available to the general public, as well as other regular reports on education related themes.

Research within the department has wide-ranging impact beyond academia because of these strong links and a successful two way dialogue between researchers on the one hand and practitioners and policy makers on the other. This enables research to be translated into policy decisions, including curriculum development, teacher training, and educational and vocational policies. The high quality of research was seen as 'fundamental for Luxembourg' by key stake holders interviewed during the site visit.

The variety of methods of knowledge exchange and pathways to impact is impressive, ranging for example from workshops and conferences with practitioners to a Mathematics app, to websites, YouTube videos and regular reports for ministries, resulting in educational and vocational policy making. The extent, depth, range of topics, engagement methods and continuity of impact oriented research in the department is outstanding and clearly shows successful knowledge exchange with very strong societal impact.

Yet, there are some areas where this outstanding impact work can be further developed. The excellent work of SciTeach Centre should be widened to include secondary schools. Further, while knowledge exchange with policymakers and practitioners is well established, the department can further enhance its research impact by including a focus on marginalised, vulnerable or grassroots groups as collaborators and co-producers of knowledge. This requires different pathways and methods of impact, but would strengthen the work of researchers in the department. This is particularly important for areas of research such as social work, where the inclusion of clients and user groups in research planning, design and research co-production is key to addressing contemporary ethical and methodological requirements in this field.

Recommendations:

Knowledge exchange and transfer is an area of excellence in the department. Non-academic partners are involved in all stages of the research process and dissemination. Because of this and the close relationship with policy makers, there is a high level of impact on policy and practice. However, the Panel recommends that there is scope:

- To extend current excellent work in curriculum development in primary science to secondary science.
- Particularly in the area of social work research, to extend the notion of collaborative links to include grassroots organisations, end users, marginalised and vulnerable groups.

7 Overall assessment and recommendations

Together, the Department of Education and Social Work (DESW) and LUCET (the Luxembourg Centre for Educational Testing) form a research entity characterised by considerable synergy and strong integration between research and teaching. Much of the research of these units centres on practice and is responsive to the needs of both policymakers and practitioners.

DESW aims to provide new insights into educational research, life-long learning, and social interventions that arise in the national context of Luxembourg, and which have implications for policy, practice, and research internationally. The department includes four separate institutes which cover different fields related to education and social work. The institutes are intended to be synergistic, but there is some lack of clarity about whether the organisational structure actually facilitates collaborative or interdisciplinary work.

LUCET forms a separate unit outside the department. It undertakes research commissioned by MESR, complemented with relevant original research in the areas of educational measurement and development. LUCET is highly effective as a research organisation, and it effectively serves the MESR, not least via its important school monitoring programme.

The academic staff members of these units typically devote 40% of their working time to research, and a majority of them have sound publication profiles. Some of the work is published in leading international journals, and a scientometric data analysis suggests that publications in the unit typically obtain above-world-average levels of citations, even though the number of publications is somewhat lower than might be expected. At its best, the quality of research is equivalent to or better than one would expect to find in comparable universities internationally.

Both DESW and LUCET have excellent records of knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange and research impact. Researchers work in close collaboration with policymakers and practitioners in science education, vocational education, teacher education, special educational needs, social work and social services. Outstanding societal impact is reflected in the impressive range of methods of knowledge exchange. Of particular note are the regular national education reports, which inform policies but are also available to the general public.

Recommendations:

1. As a matter of priority, DESW and LUCET should work both internally and with their external partners to clarify their aims for the next phase of their joint development.
2. For its next strategic plan, LUCET/DESW, with Faculty and University support, should actively consider further diversifying and thereby increasing its research funding sources.
3. The University, Faculty and LUCET should work together to consider how LUCET might in the future attract industrial funding (e.g. through BRIDGES) to support its research.
4. As a matter of priority, LUCET should consider how it might increase its international collaborations to attract funding both from the EU and other bodies.
5. The University and Faculty should jointly consider how DESW/LUCET can be supported in developing more interdisciplinary collaborations (for example with those working in STEM,

Languages and Humanities) that will attract future funding under the Institute for Studies initiative.

6. Both the Faculty and the University should review staffing for social work and the consequences of current procedures for replacing staff who have left or retired from the University.
7. Over the course of the next year, DESW should review its internal organisation to promote interdisciplinary research, and in particular the way its institutes work in supporting that objective.
8. DESW/LUCET should continue to monitor their gender imbalance at more senior staff levels, and take active steps to ensure the equitable representation of women at all levels of staff, including full professors.
9. The University should adopt and monitor equality policies for ethnic minority and disabled staff.
10. Courses in the PhD programme should be re-designed or supplemented at the department level and thus be made more directly relevant to the methodological approaches used at the department.
11. As Luxembourg is a country with only one university, UL should consider relaxing the internal five-year rule in order to offer more PhD candidates possibilities for post-doc research.
12. Colleagues should consider extending current excellent work in curriculum development in primary science to secondary science.
13. Colleagues, particularly in the area of social work research, should extend the notion of collaborative links to include grassroots organisations, end users, marginalised and vulnerable groups.

