



**WAGENINGEN**  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

# **Annual Report of the Academic Board**

Academic year: 2020-2021

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## **1 Academic Board**

### **1.1 Tasks of the Academic Board**

The Academic Board is authorised to grant the title of Doctor upon the successful achievement of a doctorate, in accordance with Articles 7.18 and 7.19 of the Higher education and Research Act (WHW) and the Doctoral Degree Regulations Wageningen University. The Academic Board establishes the doctoral degree regulations, which include handling the course of affairs with regard to granting a doctorate. The doctoral degree regulations must be approved by the Executive Board. Furthermore, the Academic Board is consulted by the Executive Board on requests for the establishment of special chairs and provides requested and unsolicited advice and recommendations to the Executive Board regarding education and the performance of scientific research. The members of the Academic Board can serve as deputy rector for the purpose of chairing public PhD defence ceremonies.

Every academic year the Academic Board creates an annual report of its activities and sends this report to the Executive Board. The current annual report reports the activities of the Academic Board in the academic year 2020-2021; 1 September 2020 to 29 August 2021.

### **1.2 Members of the Academic Board**

The Academic Board comprises eleven members and the Rector Magnificus as chair. The members of the Academic Board are appointed, suspended and dismissed by the Executive Board. The members are all full professors at the Wageningen University and are appointed for a period of three years. They can be reappointed once.

During the academic year 2020/2021 the membership of the Academic Board was as follows:

- Prof Arthur Mol (chair)
- Prof Edith Feskens
- Prof Katrien Termeer                      until 1-7- 2020
- Prof Petra Hellegers
- Prof Frits Mohren                          until 1-3-2021
- Prof Marc Naguib
- Prof Hans van Trijp
- Prof Han Zuilhof
- Prof Marcel Zwietering
- Prof Martin van Ittersum
- Prof Huub Savelkoul

The board met 9 times during the reporting year.

### **1.3 The Dean of Research and the Dean of Education**

The Dean of Research has executive, advisory, and facilitative tasks related to conducting research within Wageningen University. Among other things, he/she is responsible for implementing and executing policy with regard to PhD programs and candidates. The Dean of Education is responsible for the education (for MSc and BSc) policy and for the implementation of that policy. Both deans have an advisory role in the Academic Board and are not members.

Wouter Hendriks is the Dean of Research and Arnold Bregt is the Dean of Education.

## 1.4 Appointment of former members of the Academic Board

In addition to the members of the Academic Board, any of its former members may be appointed to serve as deputy rector for the purpose of chairing public PhD defence ceremonies. The following former members of the Academic Board were appointed to serve as deputy rector during the reporting year:

- Prof Tiny van Boekel
- Prof Pim Brascamp
- Prof Erwin Bulte
- Prof Martien Groenen
- Prof Wouter Hendriks (now advisor)
- Prof Bert Holtslag
- Prof Carolien Kroeze
- Prof Herbert Prins
- Prof Paul Struik
- Prof Richard Visser
- Prof Just Vlak
- Prof Niels Anten
- Prof Cees Leeuwis
- Prof Francine Govers
- Prof Frits Mohren (now advisor)
- Prof Arnold Bregt

## 2 PhD graduations: key indicators

During the reporting year 289 PhD candidates have earned their doctorate at Wageningen University, of whom 9 were nominated for designation cum laude. Of these candidates, 8 were awarded the designation cum laude (2.8%).

A total of 138 graduation ceremonies were executed completely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of PhD defences had one or more opponents online.

The distribution across the departments of PhD candidates who graduated in this reporting year was as follows:

Agrotechnology and Food Sciences Group (AFSG)	88.5
Animal Sciences Group (ASG)	36.5
Social Sciences Group (SSG)	47.16
Environmental Sciences Group (ESG)	71.34
Plant Sciences Group (PSG)	45.5
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 289

The distribution across the graduate schools of PhD candidates who graduated in this reporting year was as follows:

Production Ecology and Resource Conservation (PE&RC)	38
Experimental Plant Sciences (EPS)	28
Food Technology, Agrobiotechnology and Health Sciences (VLAG)	78
Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES)	1
Wageningen Institute of Animal Sciences (WIAS)	31.5
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)	55.5
Wageningen Institute for Environmental and Climate Research (WIMEK – SENSE)	57
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 289

The PhD graduations occurred as follows during the academic year 2020-2021:

September	30
October	45
November	34
December	28
January	24
February	20
March	17
April	24
May	17
June	40
July	4
August	6

A total of 192 foreign nationals (66%) graduated during the reporting year and a total of 151 graduates were women (52%).

One PhD WU graduation occurred at IHE Delft Institute for Water Education in Delft and four WU PhD graduations occurred at Wetsus location. A total of five PhD graduations were part of a joint PhD degree programme, one of these joint degree graduations occurred outside of Wageningen.

### **3 Doctoral Degree Regulations**

The board decided to make the following amendments to the doctoral degree regulations:

- Appendix 6 has been amended: instead of one, two rubrics for the assessment of PhD theses by members of the thesis committee will be available. The new rubrics were developed to do justice to multi-, inter-, trans- and disciplinary dissertations in the evaluation process. To this end, a rubric for disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research and a rubric for inter- and trans-disciplinary research were developed.
- In the letter to opponents, also part of appendix 6, the rebuttal procedure has been clarified and in the evaluation form in question 5 the procedure for eligibility for the judgement of excellent is better explained.
- Article 21 has been amended in line with a new procedure for the establishment of an objection advisory committee in case of objections and complaints.
- In Article 3.3 the language requirements have been clarified.
- In appendix 4 an addition has been made, so that propositions are included immediately after the cover as part of the pdf file of the thesis for the library or other purposes.

The amendments have been approved by the Executive Board (College van Bestuur) of Wageningen University and communicated in the academic year 2020-2021. The amended regulations enter into force on 1 January 2022.

## **4 Professors**

### **4.1 Special and endowed chairs**

The Academic Board has been consulted on the following proposals for special chairs:

- Agricultural Climate impacts and Adaptation
- Circular Resource Based Agriculture in Africa (candidate passed away during procedure)
- Human Nature Relationships in the Anthropocene (still in consultation)

## 5 Objections and Appeals

There was one request for mediation, which was handled by an external party. The conflict has been resolved amicably.

## 6 IUS promovendi UHD1

Grade 1 associate professors (UHD1) who have a Tenure Track position are conferred ius promovendi automatically for a period of five years. The board has set up a separate ius promovendi application procedure for people other than those with UHD1 status as part of the Tenure Track programme. A special committee with members of the Academic Board assesses such ius promovendi applications twice a year in accordance with the UHD1 Tenure Track criteria for research and the supervision of PhD candidates.

In the academic year 2020-2021, there were no applications for such an evaluation procedure for the ius promovendi by the Academic Board.

Since the 2018, nine UHD1 obtained his/ her ius promovendi by following the ius promovendi application procedure of the Academic Board (reference date July 2021).

## 7 Joint degrees

Since 2016 the Academic Board is charged with the approval of any joint PhD degree programs with joint governance of PhD projects that may result in 'joint, 'double' or 'dual' degrees from Wageningen University before the included PhD candidates start their research. The Dean of Research has been mandated by the Academic Board to decide whether a proposed joint PhD degree programs meets the criteria as set by the Academic Board (as listed in appendix 8 of the doctoral degree regulations) and approve 'joint, 'double' or 'dual' degrees.

Prior to the evaluation of a proposal for a joint PhD degree program by the Academic Board, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) approved by the partner universities involved, needs to be signed at corporate level.

Two joint degree requests that did not meet the criteria as specified in appendix 8 of the doctoral degree regulations were referred by the Dean of Research to the Academic Board:

- An individual joint degree between KU Leuven and WU "Understanding turning points in dryland ecosystem functioning (one candidate with defence at WU). The Academic Board approved this joint degree.
- An individual joint degree between KU Leuven and WU "Governance for Spatial Data Infrastructures" (one candidate with defence at WU). The Academic Board did not approve this joint degree.

Two joint degree programs have been submitted to the Dean of Research and are still being considered:

- Joint doctorate with the University of Ghent on Nutrient Cycling (WUR-UGENT; at least three candidates with defence at WU)
- Joint doctorate joint degree between WU, the Universidade de São Paulo, Escola Superior de Agricultura Luis de Queiroz, and Centro de Energia Nuclear na Agricultur (USP/ESALQ/CENA and WU; number of PhD candidates and place of defence could not be indicated).



## 8 Additional advices

- The Academic Board has given feedback on the Wageningen Graduate School vision on the Wageningen University PhD programme.
- The Academic Board advises that the new rubrics needs to be assessed one year after introduction, with special attention on the effect the rubrics have on the number of cum laudes.
- The Academic Board concludes that it needs to be very critical on propositions that can be regarded as political but can approve such a proposition if the candidate shows that he/ she can defend it with scientific arguments.

## 9 Other decisions

- A document with criteria of acceptance of propositions has been developed and published [link](#).
- The procedure for arranging the defence of joint degrees has been adjusted. When the defence takes place at the partner university, the PhD office requires a registration of the promotion date in Promis/Hora finita as soon as possible. The joint degree PhD programme proposal, that has been approved by the Academic Board or Dean of Research before the start of the joint degree programme, and the relevant PhD candidate joint degree agreement need to be sent to the PhD office when registering a joint degree defence at WU or the partner university. After the defence has taken place at the partner university the assessment forms and final thesis have to be sent to the PhD office and the PDF and hard copy of the final thesis need to be sent to the library.
- When propositions are not judged unequivocally and time is running out for the candidate, the dean of research has the mandate to make the final decision on approval or not.
- In exceptional cases, a joint PhD degree program proposal may be sent to the dean up to six months after the start of the first PhD candidate.
- A framework PhD joint degree program involving several chairs and departments is permitted. As long as it is delineated and constitutes a real program in subject and time.
- A minimum number of PhD candidates must be indicated in a proposal for a joint PhD degree programme, but this number may be slightly extended.
- QR codes are permitted on the (back of the) cover of the thesis, when the code refers to the thesis as a whole (with propositions included in the Pdf).
- Because candidates have indicated that they preferred the presence of the thesis committee during their presentation of the PhD research (*lekenpraatje*) in order to have a visible audience, the Academic Board allows this for online defences. The deputy rector needs to make clear to the candidate that this is a deviation of the protocol and that the candidate must give his/ her explicit permission.