

P.O. Box 9101 | 6700 HB Wageningen | The Netherlands

PhD supervisors  
CC to: PhD-office, General Directors,  
PhD council, Graduate Schools, Emeriti with *ius promovendi*

Dear PhD supervisors,

Please find below a list of major changes to the doctoral degree regulations and policy that the Academic Board has implemented to further improve the quality of the Wageningen University PhD regulations and programme.

#### **Go/no-go decision included in doctoral degree regulations**

For each PhD candidate at Wageningen University, a go/no-go assessment has to be taken between 8 and 15 months after the start of the PhD project. For clarity, the go/no-go procedure is now described in article 4 of the doctoral degree regulations.

#### **Relationship between supervisors**

The Academic Board of Wageningen University appoints at least two (co-)promotors for the supervision of a PhD candidate. This ensures more effective supervision and training of the PhD candidate as supervisors can hold each other accountable. A personal/family relationship between supervisors is here undesirable because a close relationship may affect the objectivity with regard to the functioning of the PhD candidate. This would be disadvantageous for the PhD candidate. Therefore, article 5 paragraph 7 and article 6 paragraph 4 have been added to the doctoral degree regulations, which state that the promotors/co-promotors may not have a (familial) relationship.

#### **Inclusive language**

WU strives for the use of inclusive language in documents and regulations. Inclusive language has been used in the new doctoral degree regulations and the dress code in appendix 6 is made gender-neutral. Article 1.3 has become redundant and has been omitted.

#### **Clarification of the role of defence in the conferral of the doctoral degree**

The doctoral defence ceremony is to a large extent ceremonial and the written acceptance of the manuscript by all thesis committee members is by far the most determinative in conferring the degree of doctor. However, the defence does have the function to ascertain if the candidate is indeed the (main) author of the doctoral thesis and masters the PhD thesis content. Hence, when fraud is detected during the defence ceremony there should be an option for not passing. Therefore, it is now specified what voting result in relation to the defence would lead to withholding the diploma. Article 17.2 and appendix 6 now state that there should be a negative judgment (unacceptable) of three of the voting thesis committee members to withhold the conferral of the degree based on the defence. The (co-) promotors together have one vote like each opponent, with the chair having no vote (see article 7.5). It is the responsibility of the promotor to ensure that the thesis of the PhD candidate is checked for plagiarism.

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SUBJECT  
changes doctoral degree  
regulations

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### **Clarification of the role of the paranymphs**

Although paranymphs mainly have a ceremonial function, in exceptional cases and directed by the chair of the thesis committee, the PhD candidate may consult them. The role of the paranymphs during the doctoral defence has been further clarified in appendix 6 of the doctoral degree regulations. With the exception of the chair, committee members are only allowed to address the PhD candidate. Also, this has been added to appendix 6.

### **Appendix 7 joint PhD programmes regulations for conferring a joint, double or dual doctorate**

The Academic Board has amended the regulations for conferring joint, double or dual doctorates. Appendix 7 has been revised accordingly. The following changes have been made:

- A format for the proposal for the joint doctorate programme to be approved by the Academic Board before the intended start of the joint doctorate programme has been included.
- An even distribution of the defence ceremonies reflecting the input of the institutions in the supervision of PhD candidates over the different locations should still be strived for. Deviation from an equal distribution can be approved by the Dean of Research when there are legitimate reasons to do so.
- A minimum stay of the PhD candidate of at least one year at both institutions is now required.
- In the joint doctorate proposal, the effect of the programme on the balance of nationalities for the WU PhD population should be included.
- The Academic Board discerns three types of joint doctorate programmes: strategic collaborations of WU(R) with a partner institute laid down in an MoU with the wish to make it possible to confer joint doctorate degrees; collaborations that need an approved joint doctorate programme to apply for funding; and collaborations of one (or a few) chair groups with one (or a few) research groups at a partner institute. In the proposal for the joint doctorate programme, the type of joint doctorate programme should be indicated.
- When the doctoral defence ceremony takes place at WU, the WU standard procedure is followed. However, on request of the partner university, the composition of the thesis committee may deviate as long as the minimum requirements of WU are met. For example, some partner universities require an additional chairperson or an extra opponent. This has been clarified in the doctoral degree regulations under article 7 paragraph 3.

### **Definition of "promotie" and English translation**

We have improved the English translation of the (leading) Dutch doctoral degree regulations. For example, the word "promotie" was translated inconsistently throughout the English document. Therefore, we have added a definition to the word "promotie" in article 1 of the Dutch doctoral degree regulations and corrected inconsistencies in the English version.

### **Doctoral defence ceremonies transferred to Omnia**

As of May 2022, all doctoral defence ceremonies take place in Omnia. The formats of the title page in appendixes 3 and 7 of the doctoral degree regulations have been adjusted accordingly.

### **Introduction of Hora Finita: Changes in the doctoral degree regulations and practicalities**

Due to this year's introduction of the PhD registration system Hora Finita, some procedures have changed. For the Hora Finita instruction manuals check [this site](#)<sup>1</sup>. This has led to the following changes to the doctoral degree regulations:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wur.nl/en/education-programmes/phd-programme/hora-finita-help-and-information.htm>

- Article 7 "Application for the PhD defence" and appendix 3 "Application letter for the public defence" of the former doctoral degree regulations have become redundant and were omitted.
- Articles 8, 9, and 11 have been amended.
- Amendment of appendix 5 "Thesis evaluation form as sent to the thesis committee".

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Also please note that:

- Every month Hora Finita updates the WUR employer's affiliations based on the HR registration system. For the registration of the affiliation of external opponents, the (main) promotor or chair group is responsible.
- When registering a joint doctorate in Hora Finita of candidates that have their defence at WU as well as candidates that have their defence at the partner university, please provide the Academic Board-approved proposal for the joint doctorate programme and the individual joint supervision agreement by uploading these documents in Hora Finita under "upload new documents" after the double or joint degree option has been selected.
- Because of the introduction of Hora Finita, there is no longer direct communication between the opponents and the PhD office. Promotors should, therefore, ensure that the opponents will indeed be present during the doctoral defence ceremony.

#### ***Ius promovendi* for UHD1 after an honourable discharge**

In our new regulations, associate professors 1 in tenure track and others fulfilling the relevant criteria that have been granted *ius promovendi* by the Academic Board, will retain their right to act as promotors for candidates for whom they were already appointed as the intended promotor, for five years after an honourable discharge. This new rule has been elaborated in article 5 of the doctoral degree regulations.

#### **EngD programme**

In September 2022, WUR started the Engineering Doctorate Programme "Designs for Agrifood & Ecological Systems". The objective of the designer programme is to train students in utilising scientific knowledge and methods and create high-value, creative, and innovative designs. More information can be found on this [website](#)<sup>2</sup>. The Academic Board will be the body that grants the title Engineering Doctor and has established the regulations for the Engineering Doctorate which can be found [here](#).

#### **Agreements for PhD candidates without a WU employment contract:**

As of 1 January 2023, it will be mandatory to sign an agreement with a PhD candidate without an employment contract and upload it in Hora Finita to ensure acceptance of e.g. the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and to arrange (other) legal issues. The legal departments of the Science Groups have agreed upon using model agreements for scholarship and externally financed PhD candidates and for PhD projects in which an agreement with both the PhD candidate and the funding agency is requested. These model agreements will be made available via Hora Finita, but are also available via the liaison office or legal department of your Science Group.

#### **Propositions**

We would like to remind promotors that they are expected to approve propositions and revised propositions before they are submitted to the Academic Board in Hora Finita. Information regarding the criteria of acceptance can be found in the doctoral degree regulations and in the document "criteria of acceptance of propositions" which can be found on the [internet page](#)<sup>3</sup> of the Academic Board. Also, make sure that the propositions are submitted in the right format as indicated in appendix 3d of the doctoral degree regulations.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wur.nl/en/education-programmes/engineering-degree.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wur.nl/en/wageningen-university/About-Wageningen-University/Academic-board.htm>

### **Dress code**

The dress code as stated in appendix 6 contributes to the formal and festive character of the doctoral defence ceremony. The chair of the doctoral defence ceremony will be stricter to ensure that people adhere to the dress code.

### **No minimal number of articles or chapters**

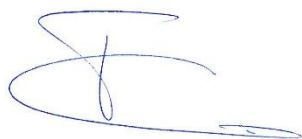
The Academic Board often receives questions on the minimum number of required chapters or articles of a PhD thesis. Except for the rules specifying the design and format of the thesis (appendix 3 of the doctoral degree regulations), there are no rules specifying the quantity of the PhD thesis. It is up to the promotor to ensure that a thesis constitutes a sufficient body of original scientific work that demonstrates to reviewers (i.e. opponents) that the PhD candidate has shown to have the ability to conduct independent scientific research within the limited time of four years. As such, there is no set minimum to the number of original research chapters a thesis should contain.

### **Backpack for PhD candidates**

Since 2020, the educational budget (rugzakje) of PhD candidates has been increased to €3500,-. Please include this amount when drawing up new budgets for PhD projects.

Unless otherwise stated, the above-mentioned changes/additions will take effect on 1 January 2023.

With kind regards,



Prof. dr Arthur P. J. Mol  
Rector Magnificus Wageningen University



Prof. dr Wouter H. Hendriks  
Dean of Research