

PhD supervisors

CC to: PhD-office, General Directors, PhD council, Graduate schools,
Emeriti with IUS promovendi

Dear PhD supervisors,

Please find below a number of recent changes which will be implemented by the Academic Board to further improve the quality of the Wageningen University PhD programme.

English proficiency test

The Academic Board reminds promoters of the importance of providing evidence of proficiency in the English language for enrolment of PhD candidates. PhD candidates requiring an English language test need to provide an internationally recognised Certificate of Proficiency in the English Language, (see Appendix 2 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations for the requirements) before being able to be admitted to the Wageningen University PhD programme. Without such a certificate of proficiency, the PhD candidate cannot be admitted to the PhD programme. Potential PhD candidates have the possibility to follow an online language course via In'to languages in order to pass the language test before travelling to Wageningen. Only in exceptional cases, e.g. a calamity, the promotor can make a reasoned official request to the Dean of Research for exemption. After permission from the Dean, the candidate will be provisionally admitted to the Wageningen University PhD programme for a period of three months. Within these three months the candidate needs to obtain an internationally recognised Certificate of Proficiency in the English Language to the required standard for admission to the Wageningen University PhD programme. If no certificate is provided within three months, the candidate will lose her/his provisional registration and can no longer be considered for the Wageningen University PhD programme.

Qualifying Exam

The Academic Board would like to emphasize that, to be admitted to the Wageningen University PhD programme, PhD candidates must have a degree comparable to a Dutch university Master's degree. A Dutch Master's degree is automatically recognised while all other diplomas are subject to an evaluation by NUFFIC on a case-by-case basis. If NUFFIC evaluates the programme (with the exception of a programme in social sciences) as being equivalent to a programme of a one-year Dutch Master's, the candidate is expected to pass a qualifying exam (QE) within one year after admission (full time study) to the Wageningen University PhD programme. In case of a QE, the promotor will be asked to recommend courses up to 12 ECTS. The promotor can request an exception for a QE. In this case, the relevant graduate school will assess the courses followed by the candidate for the Master's degree on the basis of an extended report requested from NUFFIC by the PhD office. This evaluation can take up to four weeks. The graduate school will determine whether

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the one-year Master's programme of the potential candidate corresponds to a Dutch two-year Master's programme and will send its assessment and recommendation for requirement of a QE to the Dean of Research. Based on the various documents, the Dean of Research will make a final decision.

Promis

The Academic Board reminds the promotor of her/his responsibility to provide accurate details for all external thesis committee members, including their field of expertise and their affiliations, positions and titles in Promis. Too often, the data are incomplete or out of date.

Amended thesis evaluation forms and rubric

As of June 2020, the assessment form of PhD theses by members of the thesis committee and external experts (in case of a cum laude procedure) have been amended. In the form sent to opponents, the question (yes/no) regarding eligibility for a cum laude has been removed. In case of an excellent (or very good/excellent) overall assessment by all four opponents, the thesis will automatically enter the cum laude evaluation procedure. In the form for external experts (cum laude procedure), the question (yes/no) regarding whether the thesis can be defended has been removed.

In criterion 5 of the "Rubric for evaluation of a PhD thesis", a sentence has been included stating that a score "excellent" means that a cum laude is recommended for the thesis. Appendix 6 of the PhD regulations has been updated accordingly.

Amended article 18.2 and 18.3: proposal promotor cum laude

The promotor can submit a written proposal to the Academic Board to confer the degree with the designation cum laude only concomitantly with submission of the thesis. In case the promotor did not file a cum laude proposal but the thesis evaluation committee's assessment warrants a cum laude procedure, the PhD office will contact the promotor with the request to provide a letter in support of the assessment by the thesis committee that the thesis is eligible for cum laude and the names of two external experts. This proposal will be forwarded to two external experts. Article 18.2 and 18.3 have been amended to clarify the timing of submission of a written proposal from the promotor to the Academic Board to confer the degree with the designation cum laude.

Assessment defence included into final decision designation cum laude

The Academic Board would like to remind you that the final decision whether or not to award a cum laude is made in the private consultation meeting of the thesis evaluation committee that takes place after the defence, as described in article 17.1 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations, and is based on the quality of the thesis as well as the quality of the defence.

PhD ceremony: one opponent can attend via video connection

Also after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Academic Board will allow for one of the four opponents to question the candidate via a video connection during the public defence. This opponent should reside in a country other than the Netherlands. The PhD office must be notified no later than three weeks before the public defence. Only in exceptional cases, and with the specific permission of the Dean of Research, a second opponent may be allowed to question the candidate via a video connection. Appendix 7 of the Doctoral Degree Regulations has been amended to include this option.

Addendum appendix 7 public defence ceremony in line with COVID 19 guidelines

An addendum has been added to Appendix 7 so that the temporary guidelines applied during the COVID-19 pandemic are included in the Doctoral Degree Regulations.

We would like to refer to the [intranet page^I](#) for PhD candidates and supervisors on COVID-19 for the latest updates and frequently asked questions in relation to PhD defences and PhD research in general.

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Judicium and laudatio


We would like to remind the (co)promotor(s) that the time for the judicium and laudatio together should not take more than 5 minutes, also if two persons address the candidate. This is approximately 650 words. Thanking the committee members is the duty of the (deputy) Rector Magnificus, and should not be included in the laudatio.

Thesis, propositions and authorship statement in PDF

At least fifteen weeks before the desired provisional date of the public defence, the promotor should submit PDFs of the thesis, the approval letter, the propositions and the authorship statement (all in separate files) to the PhD office. As of June 2020, hardcopies of these documents are no longer needed.

Unless stated otherwise, the above-mentioned changes/additions will take effect on 1 January 2021. The changes will be implemented in the [Wageningen University PhD policy in general and when applicable in the Doctoral Degree Regulations^{II}](#).

Kind regards,



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



Prof. dr Wouter H. Hendriks
Dean of Research

^I <https://intranet.wur.nl/Project/PhDandcorona/Pages/jhNwcCdb3k6jZKszLPeWSw>

^{II} <https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Regulations.htm>