

To: PhD supervisors and PhD candidates

Dear PhD supervisors and PhD candidates,

We are proud of the quality of the Wageningen PhD programme, and very much appreciate your dedication to maintain the high-quality education and research. We realise that a large part of the research output in our organisation is generated by PhD candidates in collaboration with their supervisors. In various evaluations, however, the Wageningen PhD programme has been found to contain a high workload and is often not realised within the allocated timeframe. The signals we receive regarding the high workload and delays in completion of the PhD programme by PhD candidates are the reason for this letter.

A high workload can lead to unnecessary stress and reduced mental health and can result in unwanted delays. We have also noticed that when expectations of the supervisor and PhD candidate regarding the requirements of a Wageningen PhD thesis do not match or are not in line with the Doctoral Degree Regulations, this may lead to more stress and/or delay.

At Wageningen University, the PhD programme is planned to encompass 4 years of fulltime study or the parttime equivalent of this period. The PhD programme should, therefore, be planned in such a manner that a regular, well-functioning/performing PhD candidate can meet the criteria and submit the reading version of the thesis within this allocated time. Should the project be delayed due to causes external to the candidate, it is expected that the candidate is provided a paid extension. It is not acceptable to plan a PhD project in such a way that it requires a well-functioning/performing candidate to work on a thesis beyond the normal 4 years without a paid extension.

All PhD candidates of Wageningen University, including scholarship and sandwich PhD candidates, should be able to make arrangements – always after conference with their supervisory team - for taking rest and time off in case of holidays, maternity, and illness. In addition, all PhD candidates should be able to achieve a healthy work-life balance. We expect supervisors to enable these entitlements for all candidates. Regular meetings with the supervisory team are essential to monitor progress and the well-being of the PhD candidate. Courses offered by our Wageningen Graduate Schools on PhD supervision may support supervisors in developing and implementing a realistic time plan for research and completion of a thesis which meets the requirements of the Academic Board in effectively the planned 4 years.

We do believe that the well-being of PhD candidates is of paramount importance for the generation of high-quality research and a successful PhD programme completed

Wageningen  
University & Research

DATE  
12 January 2023

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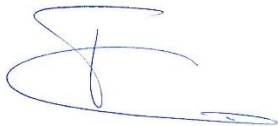
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within the allocated timeframe. We encourage supervisors and PhD candidates to view this as a mutual responsibility.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Mol', with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Arthur Mol  
Rector Magnificus

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. Hendriks', with a stylized, cursive style.

Wouter Hendriks  
Dean of Research