

MSc Internships at Wageningen University

Requirements and criteria for internship-providing organisations

This information document describes the requirements that organisations have to meet in order to provide internships to students from Wageningen University. It also provides additional information on aspects such as formalities, roles, activities and assessment.



wur.eu/studentcareerservices

Context

Some general outlines:

- In general, most students of Wageningen University need to do an internship during their second year of the Master program to finalize their study. Some Bachelor programs also offer internship options to students.
- The internships start mostly around March/April or September/October, but formally students can do an internship during the whole year of the study.
- The duration is 4-6 months, the student and the host organisation can decide together how long the period will be.
- The fee and other compensations for travelling, housing etc. is the responsibility of the host organisation and to be discussed with the student.
- Wageningen University uses the [standard contract for Universities of the Netherlands \(additional explanation\)](#) which is signed by the student, university and the host organisation. In addition, student and university supervisor agree on a [learning agreement](#).

The students:

We educate students to become academic professionals, who can contribute to sustainable solutions for existing and future complex issues in the domain of “healthy food and living environment” all over the world, and who take their social, personal and ethical responsibilities seriously.

Our [master students](#) have the following general competencies:

- In-depth knowledge and skills in their study area and the ability to integrate that with other disciplines
- Practically oriented, theoretically strong, trained in applying acquired knowledge
- Self-managing and independent
- Experienced in teamwork
- Functional in multicultural environments

The internship is an important part of the Master study program to gain above mentioned competences.

Requirements/Criteria

The internship at Wageningen University (WU) needs to be an **academic internship**. This means that an internship should have certain characteristics that fit an academic career path. During an academic internship, students put their acquired knowledge and skills into practice while gaining relevant work experience at an academic level. The aim of the internship is to apply knowledge and perform skills in a potential future work field, for example in a company, a public institution, a research organisation, another university, or a non-governmental organisation.

The **academic internship** needs to meet the following requirements:

- a) The student's tasks during the internship require academic level of thinking (i.e. the internship needs to include a content driven assignment, such as working on a research project, a policy document, a communication plan, an evaluation report, a design, or education materials).
- b) The student's internship reflects the desired level of a Wageningen graduate (i.e. it needs to be at an assignment at the level of a first job after graduation)
- c) The student's supervisor at the host organization works at an academic level (at least MSc level).

Credits and duration

24-39 ECTS. Most study programmes require a minimum of 24 credits for the internship. Students are expected to spend 28 hours for each EC; 672 hours for a 24 EC internship (fulltime workweek according to the host supervisor working times, in total 16-17 weeks). The start date of the internship is determined in consultation with the host supervisor and student.

Different types of internships

Wageningen University distinguishes between two categories of internships:

- a) **Research internship**
The research internship is appropriate when the student's task is or resembles an academic research project. In a research internship, students work on a single research project that is completed with a research report and an oral presentation.
- b) **Professional internship**
The professional internship is appropriate when the student's tasks are (contributions to) one or more projects that require an academic level of knowledge and skills, yet do not have a strong research component. In a professional internship, student contribute to different projects. The student completes the professional internship with a set of deliverables, a context report and an oral presentation. The context report should contain a description of the assignments, the scientific context of the internship, an overview of the internship activities and a reflection on the products vis-à-vis the list of requirements, the usability for the organisation and academic relevance.

Additional information

Formalities before the start of the internship

- a) **Internship contract**
Before starting an internship, the student, the host supervisor and the internship coordinator need to agree on the formalities of the internship. These agreements need to be stated in the internship contract. Wageningen University uses the standard [UNL \(Universities of the Netherlands\) contract](#) ([explanation](#)) used by all universities. If the host organisation wants to use their own contract, or make amendments to the UNL contract, this needs to be discussed with the legal department of the university.
- b) **Learning Agreement**
In addition, the student and the WU supervisor have to make agreements related to the students learning process during the internship. These agreements are written down in the learning agreement.

c) **Internship plan**

Finally, the student, the host supervisor and the WU supervisor have to make agreements concerning the content of the internship that need to be written down in an internship plan. Usually, the Internship Plan is attached to the Learning Agreement.

Approval for starting the internship

The internship is approved when:

- a) The internship coordinator (in the chair group of the supervisor) approves the internship. This includes checking that the internship is at an appropriate academic level (see the criteria for an academic internship).
- b) The student has agreed to and signed the internship contract.
- c) The student agrees to remain registered as an MSc student at Wageningen University for the duration of the internship.

The Learning Agreement is often not signed before the start of the internship, but will be completed during the first two weeks, especially when information from the host supervisor is required.

Roles during the internship

a) **Student (intern)**

For the student, the internship is a learning activity. The activities (at MSc level) that the student employs during their internship form the core. Through those activities, the student can evaluate their career interests and ambitions in relation and reflect on professional ambitions and capabilities. Furthermore, they will learn how to transfer knowledge, acquired during their MSc education, to a professional context and conduct work tasks and projects at the level of an MSc graduate. Finally, the internship allows them to evaluate the scientific and societal context and relevance of the internship project tasks. Apart from these general goals, the student also defines a set of personal learning goals, which could include domain-specific skills.

b) **Host supervisor; internship supervisor (internship-providing organization)**

The host supervisor is the (daily) supervisor on behalf of the internship provider. They will guide the students through their daily activities and give feedback on their performance. The host supervisor is a university graduate. The host supervisor will have an advisory role in the assessment of the internship, at least regarding the performance of the student, but usually also regarding report and oral presentation. In case the supervisor meets the Wageningen University requirements for assessors (possessing a PhD or equivalent research experience to be decided upon by the examiner of Wageningen University) the supervisor can also be a formal assessor. The examiner makes the final decision on the grade.

c) **WU supervisor (university mentor)**

The WU supervisor advises and supports the student during the full length of the internship. Before the start of the internship, they supervise the completion of the Learning Agreement (defining specific personal learning goals, etc). The student will discuss the progress of their learning process with the WU supervisor during the evaluation moments and the student can contact the WU supervisor for advice or in case of difficulties. The WU supervisor also supports the student at the end of the internship by giving them feedback on the final internship report. Finally, the WU supervisor is involved in the assessment after completion of the internship, as they are first assessor (unless the host supervisor acts as the formal first assessor: see under a).

d) **Internship coordinator coordinating task**

The internship coordinator is the contact person within the chair group. The internship coordinator needs to approve the student's internship contract in advance. They also appoint a supervisor from the chair group (WU supervisor/university mentor) and an examiner. Every chair group has its own internship coordinator.

e) **The examiner**

The examiner acts as assessor and is responsible for the final grading of the internship. The examiner will determine the final grading in consultation with the WU supervisor.

Progress evaluation and communication during the internship

For a successful internship, it is important that the student discusses the progress during the internship with both the host supervisors and the WU supervisor by:

a) **Regular meetings between student and the host supervisor**

Those meetings serve to discuss the contents of the tasks/projects the student is working on, as well as the performance of the student within the organization or team.

b) **Meetings/contact with WU supervisor**

In these meetings, the student can update the supervisor about the progress of the internship in terms of contents and discuss content-related questions. Furthermore, student and supervisor can discuss issues related to working in a new environment. The frequency of these meetings/contacts is up to the student and WU supervisor.

c) **Progress evaluation meeting between student and WU supervisor**

Between eight and ten weeks after the start of the internship, student and WU supervisor have a progress evaluation meeting. In preparation to this meeting, the student and host supervisor complete the Progress Evaluation Form, the student asks the host supervisor for specific feedback. During the progress evaluation meeting, all aspects of the internship project at that point are discussed (i.e. internship plan, supervision, performance). The principle of two-way feedback applies to the progress evaluation: if the student experiences any shortcomings in the supervision, then this is a good moment to discuss them and make agreements on potential improvements. In case of severe problems regarding the student's dedication, skills, knowledge or communication, the WU supervisor and the internship examiner, may decide to terminate the internship project.

Internship activities during / at the end of the internship

Project assignment and activities

There is considerable variety in the assignment and activities of internships. If the student has chosen to do a research internship, the assignment and activities will usually be related to one specific research assignment that the student should complete during the internship. If the student has chosen a professional internship, the student will probably contribute to a variety of projects or contribute to a single, larger project.

In either case, the internship should have characteristics that fit an academic career path:

- The tasks should be at an appropriate academic level, reflecting the desired level of a Wageningen graduate.
- The tasks require academic level of thinking, i.e. the internship needs to include a content driven assignment, such as working on a research project, a policy document, a communication plan, an evaluation report, a design, or education materials.

Most important is that the student completes the project assignment(s) and activities to the best of their abilities. Development of professional skills and attitude and the relevance of the student's contribution for the internship provider are core elements in the evaluation of the students' performance. Additionally, throughout the internship, the student should be working on their personal learning goals.

Oral presentation

During the oral presentation, the student presents their product to the internship provider. The WU supervisor will attend the oral presentation if possible. In some chair groups, it is common that students are requested to present their results to the chair group as well.

Project report

The project report should express the academic quality of the internship.

- **Research internship:** In case of a research driven internship, the report can be a research report. The research report addresses (at minimum) the description of the research assignment, the scientific context of the internship, research methods, results of the assignment, conclusions and a discussion.

-
- **Professional internship:** If the internship consists of several interlinked projects, the product can be a set of deliverables plus a context report. The set of deliverables should provide an overview of the products created during the different projects, while the context report should contain a description of the assignments, the scientific context of the internship, an overview of the internship activities and a reflection on the products vis-a-vis the list of requirements, the usability for the organisation and academic relevance (see the Learning Agreement).

In some cases, the internship provider may label the report or other products as 'confidential'. Wageningen University will not store these confidential products without prior consent from the internship provider or will not make them accessible for third parties: the report will be stored with confidential status. Wageningen University uses the reports for visitation purposes only.

Reflection report

The reflection report is a personal reflection on the academic skills that the student was able to apply or learn during the internship, the general and personal learning goals that have been achieved (or are still to be achieved) and on the contribution of the internship to the career of the student.

Oral defence

After completion of the internship, there is an oral defence of the student project and reflection report with the WU supervisor and the examiner of the internship. The discussion focuses on the contents of the internship, in which the students' knowledge, understanding, insights, as well as creativity and scientific attitude are evaluated.

Assessment at the end of the internship

The assessment of the internship is the responsibility of the Wageningen University chair group. The host supervisor will have an advisory role in the assessment of the internship, usually regarding the student's performance and oral presentation. The chair groups use a general rubric for the evaluation of the internship. The rubric contains the assessment criteria and a general guideline for the grading of the student.

Evaluation form

The host supervisor will be asked to fill out an evaluation form, which is part of the overall examination. This evaluation form focusses on:

- The evaluation of the student's tasks, delivered products and possible deviations during the internship
- The opinion of the host supervisor with regard to the relevance and usability of the main outcome(s), products and report
- The opinion of the host supervisor with regard to the scientific level of the main outcome(s), products and report
- A description of the type of presentation held at the end of the internship (subject, aim, setting, setup of the presentation)
- The judgement of the host supervisor with regard to the oral presentation
- Additional remarks

Rubrics

- Rubric professional internship: <https://www.wur.nl/en/show/Rubric-MSc-professional-internship.htm>
- Rubric research internship: <https://www.wur.nl/en/show/Rubric-MSc-research-internship.htm>