

The go/no-go evaluation

The Doctoral Degree Regulations (art.4) prescribe that all PhD candidates receive a go/no-go decision at least 8 and no more than 15 months after the registered start date. This decision of the Academic Board is based on an evaluation of the academic skills of the candidate by the supervisors. A 'go' decision is not a guarantee that the candidate will graduate; with a go decision, the supervisors express the expectation that this PhD candidate has the required academic skills and knowledge, and that the PhD candidate can reasonably achieve successful completion within the duration of the programme. Employed PhD candidates need a go decision to receive a contract extension for the rest of the PhD project.

The go/no-go evaluation form is part of the PhD system Hora Finita. The evaluation must be confirmed by the responsible chair holder. You can find more information about the process [here](#).

A no-go decision means that the PhD programme ends for the candidate and that deregistration from the university takes place. The PhD candidate cannot continue or re-enter the Wageningen University & Research (WUR) PhD programme. In the case of an employment contract, this will not be extended. Please contact the graduate school on how to proceed in case of an unresolvable mismatch with respect to personality or academic field. These are not reasons for a no-go decision. A go/no-go evaluation is (mainly) based on whether the PhD candidate has the required academic skills.

Hora Finita sends an invitation to the PhD candidate to react to the outcome of the evaluation. Within six weeks after receiving the official Hora Finita notification of a no-go decision, the PhD candidate can submit a request for mediation or complaint handling to the Academic Board. The appeal will be handled according to the procedures described in the Doctoral Degree Regulations of Wageningen University & Research.

Recommendations for the process

The go/no-go evaluation is a crucial step for the PhD candidate. Supervisors should be aware that it may be a major stressor for the candidate. It is therefore important that the process leading to the evaluation and the requirements are transparent. A good process means that the outcome of the go/no-go evaluation should not come as a surprise to the PhD candidate.

At the start of the PhD project, supervisors inform the PhD candidate about the purpose, the criteria, the date for the go/no-go evaluation, and if applicable, any additional tailor-made requirements, such as a Qualifying Exam. It is important that the PhD candidate is aware of the expected results and that this is also put on paper.

Right from the start, the supervisors and the candidate regularly discuss the state of affairs regarding the research project and the candidate's learning process. When supervisors think that the candidate's performance is not up to standard, they give clear warnings and propose a well-defined plan on how the candidate should improve and the targets that must be reached and when. Such intermediate evaluations must be documented and communicated with the PhD candidate.

Be open to feedback of your candidate and ask about their needs and wishes. Tackle possible mismatches between candidate and the (daily) supervisor with respect to personality or academic field timely. This may lead to a change of (daily) supervisor or research group.

In case a PhD candidate is going abroad, supervisors should preferably plan the go/no-go evaluation before the candidate leaves. In any case they should avoid a situation in which they need to announce a no-go evaluation via e-mail or Teams.

Supervisors and PhD candidates go through the table with the required academic skills for a go at least once; preferably a couple of months before the evaluation takes place. In this way, the candidate has ample opportunity to improve and change course.

Furthermore, for passing the go/no-go evaluation, the following basic criteria need to be met:

- Approval of the project proposal by the relevant graduate school
- Approval of the Training and Supervision Plan by the graduate school
- Approval of the Research Data Management Plan by the promotor
- A signed non-payroll agreement for PhD candidates not employed by WU.

The graduate school receives an automatic Hora Finita notification about the registered go or no-go evaluation. For employed PhD candidates, HR will also get an automatic Hora Finita notification of a go decision to extend the initial contract to a total contract period of at least 48 months.

In case of a no-go or a mismatch

Do not hesitate to contact the graduate school for advice in case you expect a no-go as outcome of the evaluation. Inform the graduate school about an unresolvable mismatch, or any other issue as soon as possible. Supervisors foreseeing a no-go should timely inform the PhD candidate and allow the candidate sufficient time to improve performance. Supervisors should carefully document all steps taken in the process, including agreements and correspondence with the PhD candidate.

A no-go can be stressful for the PhD candidate, but it can also influence the wider PhD community in the chair group. Hence, discuss with the PhD candidate how others will be informed about the outcome.

The graduate school can also terminate the PhD registration in Hora Finita without filling in the go/no-go form, for instance when the PhD candidate wants to stop, or there is mutual agreement about the decision to terminate the project. Please contact the graduate school in such a case. This would mean that the graduate school stops the current PhD registration but leaves the possibility for the PhD candidate to re-enter the PhD Programme at WU in the future.