WIMEK PhD handbook

By WIMEK PhD council
Wageningen University & Research

Version March 2022
Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................................. 4
Welcome to WIMEK! ................................................................................................. 4
Read this first ............................................................................................................. 4
WIMEK PhD council ................................................................................................. 4
What are WIMEK and SENSE? ............................................................................... 6
WIMEK ...................................................................................................................... 6
SENSE ...................................................................................................................... 6
Roles of WIMEK and SENSE research schools ..................................................... 8
All Graduate schools within WUR .......................................................................... 8
PhD timetable & tasks ............................................................................................... 9
Zero phase of PhD (Before arrival) ......................................................................... 9
   Step 1: Get proof of acceptance from your research group (for PhD candidate not employed by WUR) ................................................................. 9
   Step 2: Register with WIMEK .............................................................................. 9
   Step 3: Register with the department and sign a PhD contract (for PhD candidate not employed by WUR) ................................................................. 10
First phase of PhD (Cognitive stage) ...................................................................... 10
   Categories of PhD Candidates .......................................................................... 10
   Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) ................................................................. 11
   Education budget ............................................................................................... 11
   Research proposal .............................................................................................. 11
   Courses ............................................................................................................... 12
   Tips and suggestions ......................................................................................... 14
Second period (Growth stage) ................................................................................ 15
   Go or no-go decision ......................................................................................... 16
   Annual monitoring and evaluation (R&O) ......................................................... 16
International scientific conferences ........................................................ 17
Tips and suggestions .............................................................................. 17
Third period (Final stage) ................................................................. 17
Tips and suggestions .............................................................................. 18
Living in Wageningen ........................................................................ 18
Before arrival ....................................................................................... 18
Applying for a visa (for non-EU PhD candidate) ..................................... 18
Finding a place to live ........................................................................ 19
Traveling to Wageningen for the first time ............................................. 20
To Arrange Before Arrival ................................................................. 20
Upon arrival ....................................................................................... 20
Municipality registration ...................................................................... 20
Opening a Dutch bank account ............................................................ 21
Picking up your residence permit (for non-EU PhD candidates) ............. 21
Applying for insurance ........................................................................ 22
Settling down ..................................................................................... 23
DigiD .................................................................................................... 23
Salary and tax (for employed PhD candidate) ....................................... 23
Subsidies ............................................................................................. 25
Dutch healthcare system ...................................................................... 27
Transportation ................................................................................... 30
Acknowledgement ............................................................................... 32
Introduction

Welcome to WIMEK!

And welcome to Wageningen University! When you start your PhD (or even when you are doing your PhD), you may encounter questions and challenges related to your academic and social life. Some of them are administrative or culturally based.

WIMEK PhD council would like to help you start (or go on) with your PhD smoothly. We compiled this handbook to share practical information about academic and social life experience with you. It provides background and snippets of information for necessary and most asked questions. We also provide some tips and suggestions based on experiences of previous/current PhD candidates.

We hope that this handbook can make your life as a WIMEK PhD candidate ever so slightly easier.

Read this first

It is important to note that this handbook is NOT the comprehensive manual for your PhD administration. All official and general information, including rules, guideline and timetable from WIMEK, SENSE and WUR (see definitions on page 5), are available on the university website and should always be referred from there; it is a matter of finding or knowing about it at the right moment. Therefore, you will notice there are a lot of weblinks in this document.

It should also be kept in mind that everyone may encounter a unique situation, depending on the type of your PhD contract and funding (e.g., employee, guest, sandwich, or external PhD), your country of origin (with regards to residence permits, etc.) and such. Therefore, do not hesitate to ask a lot of questions to your PhD colleagues, your daily supervisors, the secretary of your group/department, your human resource management (HRM) advisor, WIMEK PhD Council, WIMEK staff, your PhD buddy, and Wageningen PhD service.

We assume that you have also read the WIMEK PhD Info online (weblink), where all official information are provided and referred to.

WIMEK PhD council

The WIMEK PhD Council represents all PhD candidates involved in the Graduate School WIMEK at Wageningen University. The main aims of the council are to provide PhD candidates with all the information relevant to their work at the
University and to strongly work together on solving problems regarding education, supervision and planning that PhD candidates may encounter during their research project.

The Council actively defends the PhD candidates' interests during meetings of the WIMEK Education Committee and the WIMEK Board. On a wider range, the Council is also present at the Wageningen PhD Council (WPC) meetings with the University General Board, and in the SENSE PhD Council. In all these instances, the Council focuses attention on all work-related issues brought by PhD candidates.

In the past years, some of the issues that we have worked on are the overall rules regarding the teaching responsibilities of PhD candidates, the modification and improvement of the introductory A1 course to all WIMEK PhD candidates and the analysis of the budget for PhD courses. Other activities of the Council also include organisation of scientific and social events that encourage PhD candidates to participate in WIMEK/SENSE activities, promote the WIMEK Graduate School as a Center of Excellence in research and create a link between PhD candidates from different departments.

The WIMEK PhD Council consists of a group of motivated and cooperative PhD candidates from different chair groups and departments within WIMEK. You can find the current council member on its page (weblink). If you have any suggestions or complain regarding the Council, feel free to contact us. New members are also very welcome! You can send an e-mail to wimekpc@wur.nl to be invited to one of the monthly meetings.
What are WIMEK and SENSE?

Before we mention everything, please bear in mind that if there is anything the WIMEK PhD council can help you with, please send us an email: wimekpc@wur.nl

As you start your PhD life, you may notice that you have been registered at two graduate/research schools, WIMEK and SENSE. You may be curious what exactly they are and how they are relevant to your PhD. Here we explain them to you.

WIMEK

The Wageningen Institute for Environment and Climate Research (WIMEK) is one of the six graduate schools of Wageningen University & Research (WUR). WIMEK aims at developing an integrated understanding of environmental change and its impact on the quality of life and sustainability and offering solutions for environmental improvement.

Research themes within WIMEK include:

- Environmental contaminants and nutrients
- Environmental processes and ecosystem dynamics
- Global and regional environmental change
- Sustainable development and social change: actors, institutions and governance
- Spatial analyses

In total, sixteen chair groups participate in WIMEK, you can find more information at the webpage of WIMEK (weblink).

SENSE

WIMEK aims to support PhD candidates in their personal and scientific development by offering them a challenging scientific research environment, a national and international scientific network of environmental researchers and an advanced training and education programme. To reach these goals, WIMEK has supported the development of an inter-university network of environmental research groups at the national level. This has resulted in the establishment of the Dutch Research School of the Socio-Economic and Natural Sciences of the Environment (SENSE) in 1994. Figure 1 showed the Dutch universities and institutes that participate in SENSE.

Find more information at the webpage of SENSE (weblink).
Table 1. Overview of the universities and institutes that participated in SENSE graduate school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR)</td>
<td>Wageningen Institute for Environment and Climate Research (WIMEK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU University Amsterdam (VU)</td>
<td>Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groningen University (RUG)</td>
<td>Institute of Ecological Sciences (IES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leiden University (UL)</td>
<td>Center for Energy and Environmental Studies (IVEM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radboud University Nijmegen (RU)</td>
<td>Institute of Environmental Sciences (CML)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Amsterdam (UVA)</td>
<td>Department of Environmental Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utrecht University (UU)</td>
<td>Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics (IBED)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Twente (UT)</td>
<td>Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open University (OU)</td>
<td>Faculty of Geo-information science and earth observation (ITC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO-IHE (Delft)</td>
<td>Water Management Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institute for Water Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles of WIMEK and SENSE research schools

WIMEK office is part of the SENSE office. Therefore, WIMEK office also performs tasks on behalf of SENSE. Currently, WIMEK staff is responsible for the SENSE website, SENSE newsletter, and the WIMEK secretary also has the same position (one of two) at SENSE. WIMEK staff also take care of the SENSE diploma applications for all SENSE PhD candidates.

For WIMEK PhD candidates: WIMEK is your graduate school and therefore as part of WUR, you must follow WIMEK PhD procedures. You can contact if you have questions regarding your administrative concerns (e.g., admission, registration and contract). The approval of your TSP and your proposal is handled by WIMEK. You can also contact WIMEK if you have issues, suggestions and great ideas for courses.

As a WIMEK PhD Candidate, you should be registered at SENSE, which happens automatically after your registration at WIMEK. The main activities that are shared with the SENSE network are the compulsory A1 course and A2 project, where you will meet PhD candidates more other institutes, and expand your expertise in an interdisciplinary manner. SENSE also strives to organise a symposium each year. Therefore, SENSE can be used as a great way to increase you network; to organise things when you want the target audience to be bigger than just at Wageningen; and to share best practises.

In addition, SENSE also has its own PhD council (SPC), which represents all PhD students involved with the different research institutes that make up SENSE. The main aim of the council is making sure the PhD candidates are represented within all parts of SENSE, connecting students with each other and with the different research institutions, and supporting students during their PhD by facilitating access to relevant academic networks. The SPC consists of a group of motivated and cooperative PhD candidates that represent the PhD fellows at the different institutes within SENSE.

All Graduate schools within WUR

- Experimental Plant Sciences (EPS),
- Wageningen Institute of Animal Sciences (WIAS),
- Food Technology Agrobiotechnology Nutrition and Health Science (VLAG),
- Production Ecology and Resource Conservation (PE&RC),
- Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS),
- Wageningen Institute for Environment and Climate Research (WIMEK)
PhD timetable & tasks

A PhD programme within WIMEK usually takes 4 years. (Some PhD candidates have more than 4 years, depending on their contracted working hours.). You can find a indicative Timetable online via WIMEK (weblink) and WUR (weblink) websites. However, considering the uncertainty a PhD student will encounter, the time could be slightly shorter (rarely happens) or longer (in most cases). Hence, in this handbook, we divide the PhD timetable into three phases. The first phase is generally referred to as the cognitive stage, the second period as the growth stage and the third period as the final stage. Before that, we add phase zero, where formal issues at the university and WIMEK have to be dealt with before arrival.

Zero phase of PhD (Before arrival)

There are tasks to be complete for the university and graduate school admission before you officially start your PhD. International PhD candidates, especially non-EU citizens, have a few more tasks to prepare regarding immigrations. As the lawful procedures may take a few months, it is recommended to complete the required applications as soon as possible. To assist your preparation, we suggest the stepwise preparation below.

Step 1: Get proof of acceptance from your research group (for PhD candidate not employed by WUR)

After you and your supervisor(s) come to an agreement on your PhD project, your supervisor(s) is responsible for providing you the letter of acceptance. This letter is required for the registration to the WIMEK graduate school.

Step 2: Register with WIMEK

The registration with WIMEK requires (i) a completed WIMEK registration form and (ii) supporting documents, including passport, education diplomas, and (if applicable) certificate of proficiency in the English language (check out whether they are applicable to you here (weblink).) If you are a PhD candidate not employed by WUR (e.g., guest PhD), you also need the letter of acceptance (from Step 1).

See full information on WIMEK registration and download the registration form here (weblink).

When your registration is approved, you will receive a letter of acceptance from WIMEK. For international PhD candidate, this letter of acceptance is necessary for your visa application.
If you have questions or encounter difficulties regarding registration, contact your supervisor(s) or WIMEK office (wimek@wur.nl).

**Step 3: Register with the department and sign a PhD contract (for PhD candidate not employed by WUR)**

Your supervisor has the responsibility to proceed with your registration and PhD contract with the ESG (Environmental Sciences Group) department. For guest and sandwich PhD candidates with external funding, tuition fee must be paid. The contract/agreement cannot be signed without prior validation of diplomas and check of proficiency in English (Step 2). If the requirements are not met, the contract/agreement must specify at what moment these requirements should be met (usually within 18 months from the start of the PhD program).

**First phase of PhD (Cognitive stage)**

In the starting period, a PhD candidate familiarizes themselves with the new environment, including both academic and social life side. We aim to provide the overview of important administrative information and tasks that a new PhD candidate should know in order to kick off their PhD programme smoothly.

**Categories of PhD Candidates**

WUR classifies PhD candidates into five categories.

- Employed PhD candidates
- Scholarship PhD candidates (Sandwich Fellow PhD, Sandwich PhD and Guest PhD)
- Externally Financed PhD candidates
- External PhD candidates
- Employee in PhD track

The candidates within these categories have different rights and positions within the organisation. Distinctions between the PhD categories are employment and the location/organisation where the research is conducted. The tasks, tuition fee, sports right subscriptions are also varied according to different PhD categories.

The latest update on the categories of WUR PhD candidates can be found [here](#) (weblink).

The PNN, the network of PhD candidates in the Netherlands representing the interests of PhD candidates in the Netherlands also has a description of the different types [here](#) (weblink).
Training and Supervision Plan (TSP)

The Training and Supervision Plan (TSP; weblink) is drawn up by you and your supervisor(s) in consultation with your graduate school. It contains individual agreements and tailor-made plan on your personal development to become an independent researcher in your field. This includes educational activities, teaching duties and supervision. The TSP is to be signed by your supervisor(s) and submit to the chair of your Graduate School Education Committee for approval via Hora Finita, generally within six months after the start of your PhD.

Note that an approved WIMEK TSP is compulsory for receiving reduced course fees for courses of Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) and several SENSE courses.

Approval of your TSP is also one of the conditions to be formally admitted to the WUR PhD programme, unless you are an external PhD and your supervisor(s) has indicated you won't need a TSP. If you think this might apply to you, please discuss this with your supervisor(s).

Take in mind that the TSP is a plan. Plans can change through time, and therefore your TSP is not fixed, and you are allowed to adjust it to your new preference whenever your plan needs change to effectively continue your PhD trajectory. However, make sure that you meet the TSP requirements and are on the same page with your supervisor(s).

When you have fulfilled all TSP requirements at the end of your PhD, you can apply for the WIMEK/SENSE Diploma, which is compulsory for graduation.

The WIMEK TSP template can be downloaded here (weblink).

The WIMEK/SENSE TSP requirement can be found here (weblink).

Education budget

All PhD candidates of WUR who are registered at one of the six graduate schools (WIMEK in your case), receive an education budget of € 2,500 for the 4-year period. This budget is to support you in financing your training and education activities (i.e. courses and conferences). If you think you need more budget to complete your TSP, discuss with your supervisor(s) when designing your TSP.

More information on the WUR education budget can be found here (weblink).

Research proposal

Apart from the approval of your TSP, a full PhD project proposal also needs to be handed in within 6 months after the start of a new PhD project to be formally admitted to the graduate school WIMEK. This proposal needs to be written by the PhD candidate and signed by the candidate, their promotor, and the head of the chair group. To ensure that all aspects of the proposed research are being dealt
with, a WIMEK PhD project proposal form must be used. In the past few years, writing a rebuttal to the reviewers is also a part of getting the proposal approved. WIMEK doesn't send the rebuttal to the reviewers, but the skill of writing a rebuttal is required to approve the PhD proposal.

More information on the WIMEK research proposal, including the aim, procedure and the proposal template, can be found [here](#) (weblink).

**Hora Finita**

Hora Finita is the new PhD registration system from the 21st of March 2022 ([https://horafinita.wur.nl/](https://horafinita.wur.nl/)). Hora Finita is a one-stop system containing all the available information for your PhD trajectory and where you upload your TSP, project proposal, PhD thesis manuscript, title page etc. The timeline to upload all the documents in Hora Finita from the start till the end of your PhD is given in ([https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Overview-of-Procedures-along-a-timeline.htm](https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Overview-of-Procedures-along-a-timeline.htm)). As a PhD candidate, be aware that your supervisor must approve the uploaded documents before it gets finally accepted by the graduate school. So, do not hesitate to send reminders to your supervisor if they did not approve your documents. Also remember that this is a new system and if something is not clear, please ask others or send an email to [hora.finita@wur.nl](mailto:hora.finita@wur.nl) for clarification, in the format given in [https://www.wur.nl/en/education-programmes/phd-programme/hora-finita-help-and-information.htm](https://www.wur.nl/en/education-programmes/phd-programme/hora-finita-help-and-information.htm).

**Courses**

As a PhD of WIMEK, you will need at least 30 credits on your TSP before you defend your PhD. You can get credits for many activities such as taking courses, approved PhD proposal, conference presentations, published articles and teaching activities (e.g., assisting BSc and MSc courses, and co-supervising BSc and MSc theses). In this part, we focus on PhD and relevant courses.

All graduate schools at WUR have education programs focused on their disciplines and fields of study, and they regularly organize relevant/in-depth PhD courses, summer schools and seminars. PhD courses by other universities, both Dutch and internationally can also be followed and credited on the TSP. Once you have discussed the relevance of a course with your supervisor(s) you can enroll them on-site or online.
PhD Courses organized by SENSE and WIMEK

SENSE collects relevant courses in the domain of Environmental sciences and climate. Most of the listed courses are organized by universities/institutes both in the Netherlands and abroad (and therefore not by SENSE).

You can find the SENSE course portal [here](#) (weblink).

In addition, you will also receive email letters of some upcoming courses from course coordinators. In-depth courses of WIMEK are often organized together with PE&RC, so you probably often get emails from following the course coordinators. Make sure to check their email.

- WIMEK coordinator: Peter Vermeulen: peter1.vermeulen@wur.nl
- PE&RC coordinator: Claudius van de Vijver: claudius.vandevijver@wur.nl
  & Lennart Suselbeek: lennart.suselbeek@wur.nl

PhD Courses organized by Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS)

Together with the other 5 Wageningen Graduate Schools, WIMEK organises competences, skills and career-oriented courses (i.e. communication, project and time management, and scientific writing) via Wageningen Graduate School (WGS).

You can find the list of all WGS courses [here](#) (weblink).

For the details of each course, including scope, dates, availability, and costs, and for course registration, take a look [https://wgs.crs.wur.nl/](https://wgs.crs.wur.nl/)

MSc courses

WUR MSc courses are free of charge for PhD candidates of WUR. The academic year at WUR is divided into 6 periods, starting in September and end in June. Most courses are only given in one period once per year. You can check the calendar and the courses online. You can find how to register for MSc courses [here](#) (weblink).

SENSE A1 course

SENSE A1 course (2ETCS) brings together SENSE PhD candidates who have the ambition to work on environmental issues, and who have just started their journey within SENSE, including WIMEK. During the course, you will discuss the need for interdisciplinary research and start to think about what role you would like to play as a scientist in solving environmental issues. The course will also be partly an introduction to personal leadership, exploring what is important to you, and hence what broader skills and competencies you will want to develop during your PhD trajectory. You will meet other PhD candidates with whom you will share a lot of similar experiences.
The course usually take place twice a year (around March and October). We recommend taking the course within 1.5 years of your PhD.

The information about the course is available [here](#) (weblink).

**SENSE A2 project**

After attending the SENSE A1 course, the PhD impact incubator, so-called SENSE A2 project is another compulsory course for all SENSE PhD candidates to complete. This course aims to bring your research to be communicated within the scientific community and in its larger societal context. As knowing how to link your research to society is becoming a required skill to have as a researcher, WIMEK encourages you to use the A2 project for this purpose. This includes, for example, organizing a workshop related to your research or a related recent theme that links to stakeholders; organizing activities/meetings for other researchers to work on a specific societal relevant topic; or informing the general public about your research by creating a short video.

Here, you have to get both an approval of organizing your activity as an A2 project and an approval of your reflection report to complete your A2 project from the A2 coordinator. The approval of organizing your activity is no final approval yet.

The information of the A2 project can be found [here](#) (weblink).

**Tips and suggestions**

- Design your TSP with supervisor(s) and submit it to WIMEK as soon as possible, so that you can take WGS courses with reduced fees.
- Consider the education budget (and additional budget needed) when designing your TSP with supervisor(s).
- Always update your TSP when the plan changes or new activities are added before you forget.
- Create an overview (e.g. in excel sheet) of the courses and activities you take according to your TSP (including course/event name, credit, time, duration and location) to make it convenient when you need to track and submit your credits for the Training and Education Certificate for graduation.
- The best time to start the SENSE A1 course is personal, but within 1.5 years is recommended.

On one hand, WIMEK strongly advices PhD candidates to take A1 as soon as possible. This is because you quickly meet other new PhD candidates, and the course is meant to give you some tips and trick on starting your PhD. (and thus, if you take the course after you already quite settle with your PhD, it may be less useful). You will have to make and present a poster of your PhD, where you can introduce your research topic to others. You can make the poster even if you have only started for
two weeks, using the general idea of your topic and receive feedback from others. SENSE will also be organizing SENSE symposia day, where you can present a more concise poster again.

On the other hand, it can be beneficial to take A1 at least after you have a plan of your PhD research project that allows you to discuss with other candidates (at least after 3 months). It can also be better to have a conceptual idea or a proposal (draft) for your PhD project in the poster presentation. There is no rush to take it immediately when you just started your PhD if you don’t feel like that.

• SENSE A2 project should be done when you are at the state of ‘knowing what you are doing’ in your PhD project and before you prepare for your defence. You can always do this alone or by cooperating with your colleague(s). We recommend you start A2 during your third year or when you have some solid results of your research since this will allow you to have a more valuable talk with other researchers and put your research in a broader and interdisciplinary context.

• Talk to your supervisor(s) and PhD colleagues about relevant and interesting courses. They have realistic suggestions and experiences in your field.

• Look for PhD-level courses if you can as the MSc-level courses usually take a longer time. If your supervisor agrees that taking MSc courses is the best way to go, WIMEK advises to see if you can discuss with the MSc course coordinator whether they allow you only follow specific parts of the course to limit the time spend. The credit allowance then would have to be carefully discussed with the course coordinator in that case.

• Many conferences organize short courses before or after the conference, which can also count for your TSP.

• The courses relevant to writing when you are actually writing will benefit you the most.

Second period (Growth stage)

After one year of staying in Wageningen, you probably fit yourself in the academic and social life here. From this point, most PhD candidates have started taking courses, join conferences and of course, perform research and write scientific papers for publications. However, if that is not in your case, don’t worry too much because every PhD project has its own pace and is rarely comparable. We do wish you good luck with everything in this period; it will be over before you know it! There are a few things that we would like to mention so that you can assure yourself on the right track.
If there is anything the WIMEK PhD council can help you with, please send us an email: wimekpc@wur.nl

**Go or no-go decision**

WUR admits new PhD candidates for an initial period of 12–18 months. The supervisor(s) decides within the first year (or 18 months at the latest) whether the candidate may continue the PhD programme under their supervision. It is one of the criteria that must be fulfilled to be formally admitted to the PhD Programme. The decision for the performance evaluation is so-called the go or no-go decision. After a go decision, the university admits the candidate to the PhD programme of WUR. With a go decision, the supervisors express the expectation that the PhD candidate will be able to obtain their PhD degree. It is a vote of confidence and shows the commitment of the supervisors to guide the PhD candidate towards the PhD defence.

You supervisors should have instructed you about the procedure that your chair group uses when you started the PhD; make sure you understand the procedure, and have gone through it with your supervisors at least once before the real Go/No Go!

Information about go/no go can be found on [here](weblink).

**Annual monitoring and evaluation (R&O)**

Once a year, every PhD candidate and their supervisor(s) and promoter(s) have a formal discussion about the progress of the PhD programme; called the Performance and Development Evaluation (PDE) or the “R&O” meeting. This aims at clarifying how the PhD candidate and the supervisor(s) are functioning in their respective roles. This discussion is bilateral, since the performance of both parties is analysed. It offers an opportunity to reflect on the working environment and to voice concerns. However, if issues arise in the meantime, a candidate should not wait until the evaluation meeting: it is important to discuss concerns when they occur so that they can be dealt with in a timely fashion. When needed, WIMEK can assist when issues do occur. You can find what WIMEK and WUR expects from your supervisors in the [Guide for PhD supervisors](weblink).

The university has built a system to help both parties guide this meeting, via the R&O form in the MyHR environment. However, there is a specialized document for WIMEK PhD candidates, which is more focussed towards the PhD program. Feel free to use this document, though we would recommend discussing this with your supervisor(s) prior to your R&O meeting.

The WIMEK R&O form can be downloaded [here](weblink).
International scientific conferences

WUR encourage and support PhD candidates to join international conferences to facilitate high quality knowledge transfer. As a WIMEK and SENSE PhD candidate, you are required to give at least one oral presentation at an international conference (of your research results). Make sure to keep track of the conferences you joined for your TSP. Besides the oral presentation, you can always present posters of your research results to an international audience. Poster presentation allows you to quickly spread your findings and ideas. According to instant responses, you can also see if your “messages” are efficiently received. We highly recommend PhD candidates, especially who at the earlier stage of their research to present a poster of their research proposal/idea.

Joining international conferences will offer you the opportunity to engage with other researchers that interested in the same topic. By discussing with the attendees, it may bring you new inspirations and even lead to future collaborations.

Tips and suggestions

- Take a look at the Guide for PhD supervisors (weblink) to get an overview of what your supervisor(s) generally expect from you.
- Have an informal evaluation meeting with your supervisor(s) around 6-8 months after starting your PhD. Discuss your performance so far based on the R&O form. This helps to assess whether you are performing well and meet their expectation or whether there are somethings you can improve before the formal go or no-go decision meeting.
- Talk to your supervisor(s) and PhD colleagues about scientific conferences in your field. The global-scale international conferences for many WIMEK PhD candidates are the EGU (European Geosciences Union) and AGU (American Geophysical Union). However, attending a more specific conference directly related to your field/research topic is also valuable in a different way.

Third period (Final stage)

Once in this period, you have (almost) finished your research and have become an independent researcher. To collect you diploma, you need 12 to 6 months in advance to prepare for that. During that period, you need to make sure that:

- You have read the Rules and Regulations for Doctoral Degree (weblink).
- A check on completion of the TSP is made when the thesis is sent to the thesis committee for evaluation (at least 15 weeks prior to thesis defence).
• Your application for a WIMEK-SENSE diploma is submitted to wimek@wur.nl or to sense@wur.nl. Form can be downloaded here (weblink).
• On completion of the thesis, a thesis committee evaluates it and states whether it may be defended in public. This is done together with your supervisors. You will find the Rubric the thesis committee members use in Appendix 6 of the Wageningen Doctoral regulations. See Rules and Regulations for Doctoral Degree (weblink)
• You get ready for a public defence of your thesis, after which you can be awarded a doctorate degree!

Tips and suggestions
• Consider taking the course Last Stretch of the PhD Programme (weblink).
• Take a deep breath. There may seem to be quite a lot of administrative tasks to do apart from finalizing your dissertation. You may feel like it is a very busy an intense period. But you are almost there!

Living in Wageningen

Starting a PhD in Wageningen for many people means moving to this small town, and for several people this even means moving from abroad to the Netherlands. There are several perspectives to be dealt with for such a life change. We hope that this practical information will give you some ideas of what to expect and that it can assist you in settling down and enjoying your social life outside the working hours.

Before arrival

Applying for a visa (for non-EU PhD candidate)

After your WIMEK registration is completed (Step 2), WUR assists Non-EU PhD candidates to obtain a visa and residence permit. The Expat Centre Food Valley (weblink) assists PhD candidates that are employed by WUR, or those that bring family members with the visa application procedure. Should a PhD candidate wish to come to the Netherlands with a spouse or partner and/or children, this needs to
be discussed beforehand with the supervisor from WUR to avoid uncompleted and delayed application.

For other PhD candidates, a WUR contact person/supervisor can request PhD Office (weblink) to assist the application.

The Expat Centre Food Valley or PhD Services will request approval from the Dutch Immigration Office (Immigratie- en naturalisatiedienst; IND). After IND has approved your request, you can apply for a visa at the Dutch embassy in your home country.

More information regarding visas for international PhD candidate can be found here (weblink).

**Finding a place to live**

Housing in Wageningen has been a big challenge as the university has grown, especially for people coming from abroad. Searching for a place to live in Wageningen is not easy, particularly at the start of the academic year (August-September). Therefore, it is suggested to start looking for a place as soon as possible.

**Idealis** is the main housing provider for students and PhD candidates in Wageningen. To search and apply for Idealis accommodation, you must register at ROOM.nl (weblink) and follow the procedure there. Priority arrangements for Idealis exist for sandwich and scholarship PhD candidates coming to the Netherlands for the first time. Your supervisor can register this priority by completing the urgency form and sending it to the PhD office via phd.services@wur.nl. The priority is valid for 2 months.

Other reliable platforms to find long-term and short-term places to (sub)rent in Wageningen are listed here (weblink). They are frequently used by local people looking for a renter, or by other students that need someone to sub-rent their room for a short(er) time.

If you cannot find a place with the above resources, there is also temporary housing and bed and breakfasts. Information on B&B and hotels in Wageningen can be found here and here (weblinks). Airbnb (weblink) also offers several rooms in the area.

If you hold a long-stay visa (MVV) or a resident permit, it is obliged to search for a place that allows you to register your resident address with the municipality in the long-term. Before you sign a (sub)renting contract, ensure that the landlord/room owner can provide you this requirement.

Due to the accommodation shortage, many PhD candidates arrange a short-term room of a few weeks/months when they first arrive to Wageningen to give themselves a chance to find something more permanent once they are already
here. Informing the secretary of your chair group and your supervisor(s) that you are looking for a place to live is also wise, as they may hear of suitable housing that may not be advertised broadly.

Please be aware that some people try to take advantage of the tight housing situation by advertising fake offers and scamming. Never transfer the money before signing a proper contract or if you are in doubt of the reliability of an offer.

**Traveling to Wageningen for the first time**

If you come to the Netherlands from abroad by plane, you will be likely to arrive at Schiphol Airport. From there, you can take the train to Ede-Wageningen train station and then take the bus C3 or 86 to Wageningen.

Watch this [YouTube video](weblink) that show you how to get to Wageningen

More information on public transport and tickets can be found in Section Public transport.

**To Arrange Before Arrival**

For practical information about preparing to move to Wageningen, especially from abroad, check out the [To Arrange Before Arrival article series by the Wageningen International Students blog](weblink). The information includes

- Things to do in advance
- How to pack your life into the suitcases
- Money
- Preparing yourself

**Upon arrival**

**Municipality registration**

When you decide to move to Wageningen from abroad and you know that you will reside in the Netherlands longer than four months, you are considered as a resident and must register your living address in the Municipal Personal Records Database (Gemeentelijke Basisadministratie, GBA) by the Dutch law. The registration at the municipality must be done within **five days of their arrival**, otherwise you risk getting fined. If you move within Wageningen, your address must also be changed within 5 days of moving. The registration must be done by yourself; you have to [make an appointment online](weblink) and then visit the municipality to register in person.

You need to bring the following documents for the registration:
• Passport
• International birth certificate (also called ‘long form’ birth certificate)
• Work visa (if you are from outside of the EU)
• Housing contract (or, in case you do not have a contract: agreement for registration from the person you are living with)

For more information on the required documents and making the appointment, visit the [Wageningen municipality webpage](weblink).

Wageningen Municipality (town hall) address: Markt 22, Postbus 1, 6700 AA, Tel: 031749 29 11, gemeente@wageningen.nl

If you will live in another city/village, you need to register at the municipality in that city. See more information [here](weblink).

It may take a few weeks before you are legally registered. After being registered, you will receive a unique Citizen Service Number (BSN, in Dutch: Burger Service Nummer) that you will need for other Dutch administrative issues (e.g., opening a Dutch bank account).

**Opening a Dutch bank account**

When you are employed in the Netherlands, or when you receive a scholarship and will stay for a long period, you may consider opening a Dutch bank account. You can visit a bank office for direct assistance in opening an account (although many banks have closed their offices in Wageningen, but you will still find them in bigger cities) or you can do it online by yourself. When you want to open a bank account, you must prepare the following documents:

• Your passport with visa sticker or your Dutch residence permit
• Your invitation letter of your host organisation, or your employment contract.
• Your rental or sub-rental contract.
• Your BSN number (see previous section).

Here are some well-known banks in the Netherlands:

• [ABN AMRO](weblink)
• [Rabobank](weblink)
• [ING](weblink)
• [SNS](weblink)

**Picking up your residence permit (for non-EU PhD candidates)**

If you come to the Netherlands from a non-EU country, you will first come with a (long stay; MVV) visa (see more information [here](weblink)). The next step is to
change the visa into a residence permit (in Dutch: Verblijfsvergunning) when you are already in the Netherlands. You should have been informed about this by now after you have received the visa as part of the procedure by IND.

Be aware that it is not possible to change a short-stay (VKV) visa into a residence permit while in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to apply for a long-stay visa instead, unless you are certain that your visit will be less than three months.

If there are changes during your stay which influence your residence permit, you must communicate to IND. Examples of changes are:

- Change in financial support and/or income position
- Change of employer
- Work contract termination
- Change in residence purpose (e.g., staying with spouse, permanent residence, search year)
- Changes in your marital status and in the family (e.g., birth of a child, family members leaving)
- Leaving the Netherlands for a period >6 months
- Leaving the Netherlands before or on the expiring date of the residence permit.

Keep in mind that your residence permit has an expire date, depending on individual conditions. You should proceed the prolongation of your residence permit on time.

**Applying for insurance**

**Health insurance**

In the Netherlands, the healthcare system is well organised. By Dutch law, you are obliged to have a health insurance (in Dutch: zorgverzekering) if you are living here. For the comprehensive information of health insurance within the Dutch healthcare system in the Netherlands, visit this site (weblink).

In general, if you are in paid employment with a Dutch employer, you qualify for the Dutch social security system, and consequently you must have the Dutch basic health insurance. There is a collective health insurance with discount for employees of WUR, including PhD candidates with a WUR contract, at AON insurance company (weblink), but you are free to choose from any other insurance company. The choice can also depend on the length of your stay and type of PhD.

If you do not qualify for the Dutch social security system and thus do not have to apply for Dutch basic health insurance, you can find another adequate insurance (e.g., student/PhD insurance) whilst staying in the Netherlands. The organization that assists your immigration (Expat Center Food Valley or PhD Services) can
arrange insurances for you (and your family members) with one of companies. However, you can also apply for the insurance by yourself based on your own preference.

An overview of other health insurance agencies can be found here (weblink).

Note that if you are obliged to take the Dutch basic health insurance, you may be eligible for compensation for your insurance costs, depending on your salary. This compensation is called healthcare allowance (in Dutch: zorgtoeslag).

**Reliability insurance**

It is wise to arrange a liability insurance (in Dutch: Wettelijke aansprakelijkheids verzekering), but it is not compulsory. If you unintendendly injure someone else or damage their property and this person wants a refund, the insurance can cover the expenses. This can be arranged when you open the bank account but also later via internet banking.

**Household Contents Insurance**

Another good but not obliged insurance is for your valuable household contents (in Dutch: Inboedelverzekering). It covers damages caused by, for example, burglary and fire. This can be arranged when you open the bank account which covers things like burglary from your home and fire. This can be arranged when you open the bank account but also later via internet banking.

**Settling down**

**DigiD**

DigiD (weblink) is a means of identifying yourself when accessing Dutch formal services online. It allows you to identify yourself, access and use these services securely. You can use your DigiD to log in and make arrangement online with Dutch government, public services, healthcare institutions, educational institutes, pension fund, as well as tax arrangements and subsidy applications.

It is advised to applied for DigiD as soon as possible and have the app installed in your mobile phone.

**Salary and tax (for employed PhD candidate)**

**Salary & benefits**

When you are employed by WUR, you are subject to the collective labour agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO NU) or Wageningen Research (CAO WR). Both almost similar agreements include agreements on terms and conditions of employment, personal development, leave, occupational health and safety, employment contracts and pensions. Read more about CAO here (weblink).
In general, you can specify your own employment benefits with several exchange options. What you should be aware of for your own benefits are:

- Salary, holiday allowance & year-end bonus
- Flexible working hours
- Leave
- Dutch pension
- Group insurance schemes
- Group insurance schemes
- Additional benefits of employment contract: e.g., by using sources such as your salary, holiday leave hours or the end-of-year bonus, you can opt to purchase a bicycle at a discounted price, additional holiday leave, or extra salary.
- Benefit of 30% tax ruling: The Netherlands has beneficial regulations for employees who are recruited or hired from abroad. The 30%-rule means that 30% of the gross taxable salary can be reimbursed free of tax.

Read full information about salary, tax and pension at WUR [here](weblink).

**Tax**

If you are an employed PhD at WUR, taxes are automatically subtracted from your income. Depending on your salary (including from other jobs), there is a possibility to get some tax refund back at the end of the year. You have to ask for the appropriate form at the Dutch tax office (in Dutch: Belastingdienst), if you haven’t got it from them already. Taxes need to be tackled between January 1st and April 1st of the following year. **If you get a form from them, you are obliged to return it.**

Taxes can be filled in by hand or online, and the latter is recommended. You should have a DigiD code for it.

Here are some basic rules for tax declaration in the Netherlands:

- Tax forms are there to be filled. Always fill them in and submit them unless you are certainly sure that they do not apply to you.
- Be in time! Often there is an expiry date. If you are late, you can get into serious troubles. If you happen to be late, call the tax office to explain and send it anyway.
- Make a copy of every official or important form you hand in. Do not throw anything away.
- As soon as anything turns wrong, contact the tax office which has sent you the form. Find the phone number or address provided on the form/letter.
• Be aware that the tax office may not be allowed to give information in English because of legal issues. In this case, ask someone who is proficient in Dutch and English to assist you.

**Subsidies**

The Dutch government provides several types of financial benefits and allowances for citizens and residents in the Netherlands, mostly via the Dutch tax office (Belastingdienst). The benefit (in Dutch: toeslagen) system is designed to support people on low incomes by helping them cover basic living costs such as rent, health insurance, childcare and raising children.

You can apply for subsidies online (weblink). On the tax office website, go to 'mijn toeslagen'. Log in with your DigiD and you can find the information and forms you need.

For most benefits and allowances, you will have to take action and apply for them by yourself as they are not automatically taken into account by the tax office.

**30% tax ruling (for international employed PhD candidate)**

(see also section Salary and tax)

The 30% tax ruling (also known as the 30% facility) is a tax advantage for highly skilled migrants moving to the Netherlands for a specific employment role. When the necessary conditions are met, the employer can grant a tax-free allowance equivalent to 30% of the gross salary subject to Dutch payroll tax. This is intended as compensation for the extra costs that international employees can incur when moving to a new country for their work (e.g. higher living expenses compared to your home country, costs for health insurance and medical tests, and travelling costs).

Find more specific information, requirement, and evaluate if you are eligible here (weblink).

**Child and childcare allowance**

If you are employed by WUR, you can benefit from the childcare allowance (in Dutch: Kindertoeslag) under some circumstances.

For official information by the tax office, read here (weblink in Dutch, please use online translation or ask someone to help you) or consult the financial contact person at your chair group/department.
Rent allowance

If you live in a rented house in the Netherlands, you may be entitled to the rent benefit (in Dutch: Huursubsidie, Huurtoeslag), depending on your income and conditions. This is a contribution towards your rental costs.

These are the conditions for you (and your benefit partner):

- You are 18 years old or older.
- You rent an independent accommodation (you have your own house number).
- You, your possible benefit partner, and co-occupants, aged 18 years or older, are registered at your living address with the municipality.
- Your rent, (combined) income and capital are not too high.
- You have the nationality of an EU country, Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland or Switzerland.
- If you are from a non-EU country, you need a valid residence permit or work permit.

For official information by the tax office, read here (weblink in Dutch, please use online translation or ask someone to help you).

A non-commercial housing agency, HousingDesk Wageningen, provides assistance for rental subsidy applications at some cost. See here (weblink) for more information.

Healthcare insurance allowance

If you are obliged to have the Dutch basic health insurance and/or if you are registered with the Central Administration Office (CAK; weblink), you may be entitled to the healthcare insurance benefit.

These are the conditions for you (and your benefit partner):

- You are 18 years old or older
- You have the compulsory Dutch basic healthcare insurance. (Healthcare insurance is compulsory if you work in the Netherlands or do a paid internship here. You are also eligible for healthcare benefit if you are registered with the CAK. If your partner has no Dutch healthcare insurance, only you will be entitled to the healthcare benefit. Students are not eligible for the benefit if they only have a non-compulsory student insurance.)
- Your (combined) income and capital are not too high.
- You have the nationality of an EU country, Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland or Switzerland.
- If you are from a non-EU country, you need a valid residence permit or work permit.
For official information by the tax office, read [here](weblink in Dutch, please use online translation or ask someone to help you).

**Dutch healthcare system**

If you are international, the Dutch healthcare system is likely to be different from the healthcare system in your home country.

The comprehensive guide to the healthcare system in the Netherlands can be found [here](weblink). WUR also provides some information about the Dutch healthcare facilities and services in Wageningen [here](weblink),

**General practitioner**

The first point of contact when you have health problems is a general practitioner (GP; in Dutch: huisart). If necessary, the GP will then direct you to other medical specialists or transfer you to the hospital. Even if you want to go to the hospital or if you want to contact a specialist, you have to call your general practitioner first. If you need prescribed medicines, the GP will order them, and you can pick them up at the registered pharmacy.

While it is not mandatory to register with a GP, we strongly recommend it, because it may be difficult to find a suitable doctor when you are in urgent need. Our advice is to register with a GP as soon as possible after your move and receive your residence permit. Another important thing to note is that you must have health insurance (see also section Applying for insurance).

The choice of a GP is a personal matter. List of all general practitioners in Wageningen is provided [here](weblink). After making a choice, you can request registration at the chosen GP practice. Keep in mind that GPs also have a choice; they may not be taking new patients as there is no more room for new clients at their practice. Visiting a GP is always covered by the Dutch health insurance.

GP Appointments for patients are normally scheduled for 10-15 minutes. The assistant will ask you the reason for consultation when you call for appointment. This is necessary in order to determine the urgency. It is also possible that the assistant will give you a medical advice without booking an appointment. Indicate if you may need more time to explain your medical condition or if you want to discuss other health concerns.

If you need to cancel a GP appointment, you have to give 24-hrs notice before the appointment otherwise you can be charged for the appointment, which is not refundable by your health insurance.

If you reside in Wageningen or Bennekom, there is also the possibility to register to the Student Medical Center (SMC) Wageningen, which is located right on WUR campus. The address of the SMC is Nexus gebouw 117, Akkermaalsbos 14, 6708WB. You can call to make an appointment between 8.00 to 10.00 hrs, 11.00
to 12.30 hrs and 14.00-16.30 hrs (Tel: 0317-466 600, for emergency: dial 1). More information here (weblink).

Note that GP practices in Wageningen usually open on the weekdays during office hours (Monday to Friday 08.00 – 17.00 hrs) on close on the weekend. After office hours (weekend/evening/night/national holidays) you can go to the GP center Gelderse Vallei in Ede. This is only for medical problems which are emergencies only and cannot wait until the next day. Note that you always have to call first for an appointment (Tel: 0318-200800).

You can find the GP station at the emergency room at Hospital Gelderse Vallei in Ede, together with the Emergency Department, the service pharmacy and the dentist post. The address of the hospital is Willy Brandtlaan 10, 6716RP. Follow the signs to the emergency room. The hospital can be reached by bus (bus stop ‘Ziekenhuis Gelderse Vallei’).

**Dentists**

Similar to GPs, you have to register at the dentist practice (in Dutch: tandartsen) before you can receive dental treatments. You can find the list of dentists in Wageningen here (weblink).

Dentist practices in Wageningen usually open on the weekdays (Monday to Thursday 08.30 – 17.00 hrs, Friday 08.30 – 12.00 hrs). After these hours (weekend/evening/night/national holidays) you can go to the dental center Gelderse Vallei in Ede. This is for dental problems which are emergencies only and cannot wait until the next day. Note that you always have to call first for an appointment (Tel: 0318-611888).

**Pharmacies**

If you are given a prescription by the GP, you need to collect the medicine from one of the pharmacies in Wageningen. Please ask your GP which pharmacy you are registered at (usually the one close to your living address).

If you would like to purchase medicines without prescription, you can visit any pharmacies. Here (weblink) is a list of some pharmacies in Wageningen.

Please note that:

- Medicines bought without prescription are usually not covered by your insurance.
- Not all medicines (even if prescribed by a doctor) are covered by your insurance.
- Insurance only covers medicines for the duration of the policy.
**Hospital in Ede**

The nearest hospital from Wageningen is Hospital ‘Gelderse Vallei’, located in Ede. It is important to carefully read the following information to make sure you know what to do and how to get there, in case you need to go to the hospital.

The address of the hospital is Willy Brandtlaan 10, 6716RP. The hospital can be reached by bus (bus stop ‘Ziekenhuis Gelderse Vallei’).

Please note that **it’s not allowed to visit the hospital without an appointment unless it is an emergency.**

During the night, when there is no public transport, it may be necessary to take a regiotaxi. The costs vary between € 2 and € 10. (Tel: 0900 55 11 551, € 0.10 per minute. website: www.valleihopper.nl)

In the event of hospitalisation, inform your insurance company immediately. During your first visit to the hospital, the information desk officer will issue you a hospital identity card with your personal data, insurance information and the name of your GP. You will need to show this card each time you go to hospital.

Dutch hospitals generally have emergency rooms for first aid. However, hospital staff is allowed to refuse help in a non-life-threatening emergency if you are not referred by your local GP. Therefore, always call your GP first. They will help you decide what you should do and arrange an ambulance if necessary. Just going to the First Aid post (EHBO) at the hospital may result in long waiting times or in not being helped at all.

**Emergencies**

In an emergency, there are several options to get in contact.

**Life-threatening emergencies**

Phone **112 EMERGENCY NUMBER** for life-threatening emergencies. Please note that this number is for life-threatening emergencies only. Inappropriate use of this number will result in a considerable fine.

When you dial 112, the information desk will ask you the following questions:

- Where you need help
- Name - address - phone number
- What the problem is
- Which service you need: police, ambulance or fire brigade

**Non-life threatening emergencies**

In case of a non-life threatening medical emergency, call your own GP/dentist or the emergency number of the practices (see section General practitioner and section Dentist)
Other non-life threatening emergency numbers:

Police: 0900-8844
Fire Brigade: 0317 412237

For emergencies at work, please follow the instructions for your specific building, which should be posted in labs and rooms.

**Transportation**

**Cycling**

Wageningen is a rather small town and buildings on WUR campus are at relatively short distances from the student accommodations and can be easily reached by bicycle (in Dutch: fiets). It is a typical Dutch way of a daily commute.

Cycling is fun, efficient, easy and safe if you always watch out for all other traffic and follow the rules. The system of traffic control and, more importantly, the motorists themselves, take cyclists into account and accidents are rare. For safe cycling, both for yourselves and others on the roads, we strongly suggest you to take a look at the Dutch traffic rules for cycling [here](#) (weblink). Disobeying the rules could cost you a fine of at least €90.

Basic Dutch cycling rules:

- Use the bicycle lane or a track on the right-hand side of the road, marked with white lines and bike symbols.
- Do not cycle on footpaths, shopping streets, pavements, roundabouts and motorways.
- Always give right of way to taxis and buses.
- Yield to all traffic approaching from the right, unless otherwise indicated. This also means that traffic from your left-hand side should give you right of way. But this shouldn’t be taken for granted.
- Stop for red traffic lights.
- Always follow instructions given by the police.
- Disobeying the rules could cost you a fine of at least €90.

Tips for biking:

- Small bikes are rare. Ask the shop keeper for assistance if you wish to buy a small bike
- When buying a bike, always check if the lights, tyres and brakes are in good order
- Reverse (pedal) brakes are fine once you get used to them; handbrakes may cost more
- A non-attractive and/or second-hand bike has less chance of being stolen
- When buying a bike, also buy a good lock
• Never leave your bike unlocked, even if you leave it alone for just a few minutes. Always lock your bike to something unmovable, preferably a bike rack using two locks: one through the rear wheel and one around the frame through the front wheel.
• Do not leave anything of value behind on your bicycle.
• If you have never biked before, ask a friend to help you and practice in a safe open place.

There are many bicycle shops in Wageningen to buy a new or second-hand bicycle. A list of addresses is collected here (weblink), with some tips and tricks in choosing a bicycle.

If you prefer to rent a bicycle, take a look at the options here (weblink).

It will not be uncommon if your bicycle needs some repairs once a while. Check the repair shops here (weblink).

**Pedestrians**

The most unexpected traffic rule for the foreign pedestrian (or cyclist) is that all traffic approaching from the right has priority, unless there are signs or markings to indicate otherwise. In other words, a driver will expect nearly everyone to his left to yield to him. This is true even when a car is turning out of a small side street. Cars have to stop for pedestrians only when they are on a zebra crossing or when the car is turning across their path, but even then, be careful. Trams have priority over everyone, no matter where they are coming from. As a pedestrian you should also become accustomed to the network of bicycle paths (in Dutch: fietspaden), which at first you might mistake for pedestrian paths.

**Public Transportation**

Dutch public transports, including trains, buses, trams and metros, are as punctual as the inhabitants of this country. They nearly always run on time.

The main available public transports in Wageningen is buses. From Wageningen bus station, there are regular bus services to towns such as Ede, Arnhem and Utrecht.

The Netherlands has an extensive railway network (NS) with regular train services. The nearest train stations from Wageningen are Ede-Wageningen (with connections to Arnhem, Nijmegen, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague) and Rhenen (with connections to Utrecht). The stations can be reached by bus from Wageningen bus station.

Information about tickets and special arrangements at reduced prices and about departure/ arrival times may be obtained on NS website (weblink) and the Dutch travelling planning service, 9292 (weblink).
It is highly recommended that you download both NS and 9292 applications on your mobile phone to plan your journey conveniently.

**OV-chipkaart**

The OV-chipkaart (chip card) is an easy way of payment for travelling by public transports in the Netherlands. With the card, you will have access to all public transportation: train, bus, tram and metro. The card contains a chip that can be charged with a balance in Euro that allows you to travel everywhere in the Netherlands, or with a single fare, return ticket or season ticket.

There are two different types of OV-chipkaart from which to choose: **Personal OV-chipkaart** and **Anonymous OV-chipkaart**. Which OV-chipkaart best suits your needs depends on your travel habits. If you often use the public transport services, the personal OV-chipkaart is the most convenient as it can provide discounts from different type of travelling packages. If you do not use the public transport system regularly or would like to share the OV-chipkaart with a family member, the anonymous OV-chipkaart is the best option for you.

To purchase a personal OV-chipkaart, go to the [OV website](#) (weblink). If you want to choose the travelling package with discounts to be used on your OV-chipkaart, visit the [NS page](#) (weblink) to see the offering options that may suit you.

An anonymous OV-chipkaart can be bought at train stations.

Note that you **need to check in** with your OV-chipkaart at the device when you enter a public transport. Not checking in can result in a fine. You also **need to check out** when you leave the transportation unit of use, otherwise you will pay more than necessary.

**Acknowledgement**

We would like to acknowledge information from the PE&RC PhD handbook, VLAG PhD Pal handbook, WUR student guide booklet, and HWN PhD guideline. We also thank for practical information, experiences and tips shared by PhD fellows.