



International  
education  
for a better  
quality of life

Vision and policy on education  
at Wageningen University



WAGENINGEN **UR**

*For quality of life*



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# The Wageningen vision on education 1

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Wageningen University delivers education of high quality in the domain of healthy food and living environment, at a bachelor, master and doctorate level. In this document, we explain our vision on education, as an elaboration of our strategic plan. Our vision on education has three pillars: relevance for society and industry, international orientation and the will to inspire students. We focus in this text on the current situation while the boxes and the last chapter indicate themes or aspects which require our attention and action in the near future.

## Relevance for society and industry

Wageningen University is part of Wageningen UR (University & Research centre) which has the mission: "To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life". We connect fundamental scientific theory with practice, to find solutions for real life problems in our domain. We want to contribute to both science and society and we are inspired by the issues within the Wageningen domain of healthy food and living environment. These issues are rarely, if ever, related to a single discipline, whether it is natural sciences, technology or social sciences. There are always multiple perspectives and multiple solution paths, often with synergistic effects. That is why Wageningen University fosters open connections between disciplines in the natural sciences and social sciences, both in education and research.

## International orientation

Wageningen University has been an international university for many years. Among our 8.000 students we count 120 nationalities. Over forty percent of our MSc-students and sixty percent of our PhD-candidates are non-Dutch. In the master's phase we have truly international classes. We offer double degree programmes and exchange programmes with many universities abroad.

Our international character is rooted in the global challenges in our domain like food shortage, threats to the environment, or climate change. These challenges require high quality research and education with staff and partners all over the world. We have national and international government bodies and companies as research clients, we participate in many EU-projects, and we have partnerships with knowledge institutes all over the world. We welcome international staff and guest lecturers.

## Inspiring students

We want to offer our students an inspiring environment: education on a relatively small scale, approachable staff, and ample opportunities to choose an individual learning track, to participate in extracurricular activities and to develop individual talents in an international atmosphere. Our teaching staff are equally responsible for the education of students and research. We strive for teaching excellence, inspiring teachers who stimulate student learning.

We expect and challenge students to participate actively in courses, to interact with lecturers and with each other. We also expect them to share responsibilities for the quality of programmes. We stimulate students to become sound academics, with a problem-solving and open-minded, multidisciplinary attitude, contributing to the quality of life, to a better world.

# Educational policy outlines

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Chapter 1 described the three pillars of our vision: (1) relevance for society and industry, (2) international orientation and (3) inspiring students. In this chapter we discuss how each of these pillars influences the goals of our educational policy.

## 2.1 Relevance for society and industry

To contribute to the solution of issues of today and tomorrow in our domain, we strive for graduates with state of the art scientific knowledge, social awareness and a sound problem solving competency.

### State-of-the-art scientific knowledge

The key to embedding state-of-the-art knowledge in our study programmes are good scientists with a high publication impact, who consider their educational duties to be as important as research. Good education requires a strong link with research. In essence, our approach is that a person needs to be a good researcher to become a good lecturer. We stimulate full professors to participate in all phases of the study programmes (BSc, MSc and PhD). Recent developments in science are incorporated in courses and programmes.

### Impact and social awareness

We expect our students to develop social awareness. Similarly, Wageningen University and its staff should have this awareness too. Every four years the university develops a strategic plan describing the developments in society and science and the way they relate to our own strategic goals like contributing to the quality of life and

sustainable development. These developments can influence the palette of chairs (the chair plan) or cause a change of focus in research programmes and study programmes.

On the level of the study programmes, programme committees discuss developments in the field that may lead to changes in the study programmes. Chair groups and staff have an open eye for developments in society and they gather relevant information through research projects and the supervision of internships, theses and the Academic Master Clusters (where students study a real life problem in a multidisciplinary group). In the study programmes we frequently confront students with real life problems. In addition, we stimulate them to perform extracurricular activities, both at or outside the university.

### Problem analysis and problem solving

We want our students to learn a multidisciplinary, integrative approach to analyse and contribute to the solution of problems in our domain. The profile of the study programmes should reflect this goal. In each programme, students are confronted with more than one scientific discipline and with the integration of knowledge from different disciplines.

An everlasting focal point is the balance between disciplinary knowledge and multidisciplinary and integration skills in the study programmes. Our strength lies in this integration without neglecting the value of disciplinary knowledge.

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## 2.2 International orientation

We expect our alumni to be able to work on global challenges, to compete for jobs in an international environment and to function in a multicultural setting. Our study programmes focus on an international context, we welcome students and staff from all over the world and as a university, we are and want to continue to be an international player.

### International content

Traditionally the Wageningen study programmes are oriented towards global issues: food and health, environment and climate do not stop at our border. All programmes have an international perspective to confront students with the international issues in their field. This is achieved through the content of courses, international staff and guest lecturers, (international) excursions or field work, and an internship or thesis abroad.

### International students and staff

One of the best ways to be aware of international issues is to have an international classroom, where the experience of students from different countries can be shared. We recruit master and PhD-students from all over the world and all our master's programmes are taught in English. We inspire students to interact in multicultural groups by giving them special assignments. Dutch students are encouraged to conduct part of their study abroad. We welcome international staff and international guest lecturers at Wageningen University. In our chair groups we find a multi-national staff and PhD-candidates. Many of our staff have international work experience and operate in networks with international colleagues.

The international classroom is not easily achievable in the current bachelor's programmes. A current issue is whether we want to change the teaching language of the bachelor's programmes into English. The advantages and disadvantages have to be discussed and weighed.

### International quality

All our study programmes are accredited by the Dutch Flemish Accreditation Board (NVAO). In addition, we want our programmes to be of a high international standard. Traditionally, we rely on the quality of our staff in an international scientific context. Recently, we started to introduce a "peer review" system in which an international peer group comments on the content and design of a course or a sequence of courses. Generally peers are staff of foreign universities.

### International relations

We have partnerships with universities all over the world: to cooperate in scientific research and to exchange students. We participate in several double (or joint) degree programmes and we consider them an important contribution to our international character. They enrich the range and the content of programmes, facilitate the recruitment of international students, increase the mobility of our Dutch students and enhance our international reputation. However, we have experienced that these programmes are often associated with practical, legal, and financial obstacles which drive a wedge between the ideal combination of practice and theory.

### Internationalization at home

Our university is an international organization. We welcome students and staff from all over the world and we



support them as well as possible. We pay extra attention to multicultural communication skills for students and staff, and English is our main language.

Internationalization is such a natural quality of Wageningen University that we do not always feel the need to work explicitly on it. This might easily lead to negligence and place us behind other universities which started internationalization more recently (dialectics of progress).

## 2.3 Inspiring students

We inspire students by offering them high quality education that matches their individual talents. The relatively small academic community promotes contact between students and staff and enables individual learning tracks.

### Education of good quality

Our education aims to combine state of the art domain knowledge with high-quality academic and scientific skills and attitude. Motivated teachers and excellent facilities support this aim. Students value our education. Since 2005, Wageningen University has ranked first of the thirteen Dutch universities in the *Keuzegids Hoger*

*Onderwijs* (Selection Guide for Higher Education).

We aim to maintain this position.

## An academic community

Part of our attractiveness is the relatively small scale of our university: we design our courses for small groups, students have many contact hours and our staff are approachable. We encourage students to become engaged in the academic community and to be responsible for the quality of their education. Additionally, Wageningen is a small town; staff and students meet each other on the campus, as well as in social and cultural activities.

An important challenge is to retain the small scale and the quality of our education, given the recent growth in student numbers and the decreasing governmental budget per student.

## Individual learning track

We encourage students to partly design their own learning track. Depending on their interests and talents, they are given many opportunities to choose from courses and specializations throughout the whole university. Students are stimulated to develop extra-curricular activities in student organizations and participatory bodies. We support the students in their learning process by providing continual and thorough study advice.

## Study success

Study success starts with a conscious choice for a study programme. We provide prospective students with realistic information about our study programmes and we are available for personal advice. We organize our education and examinations in such a way that the study load is

spread evenly: over periods, over years and over the whole study programme. We guide students in choosing options in their learning track that fit their talents and interest.

Another important challenge is to ensure the development of the talents of individual students, despite the growing student numbers and the strong emphasis on the prevention of study delay.

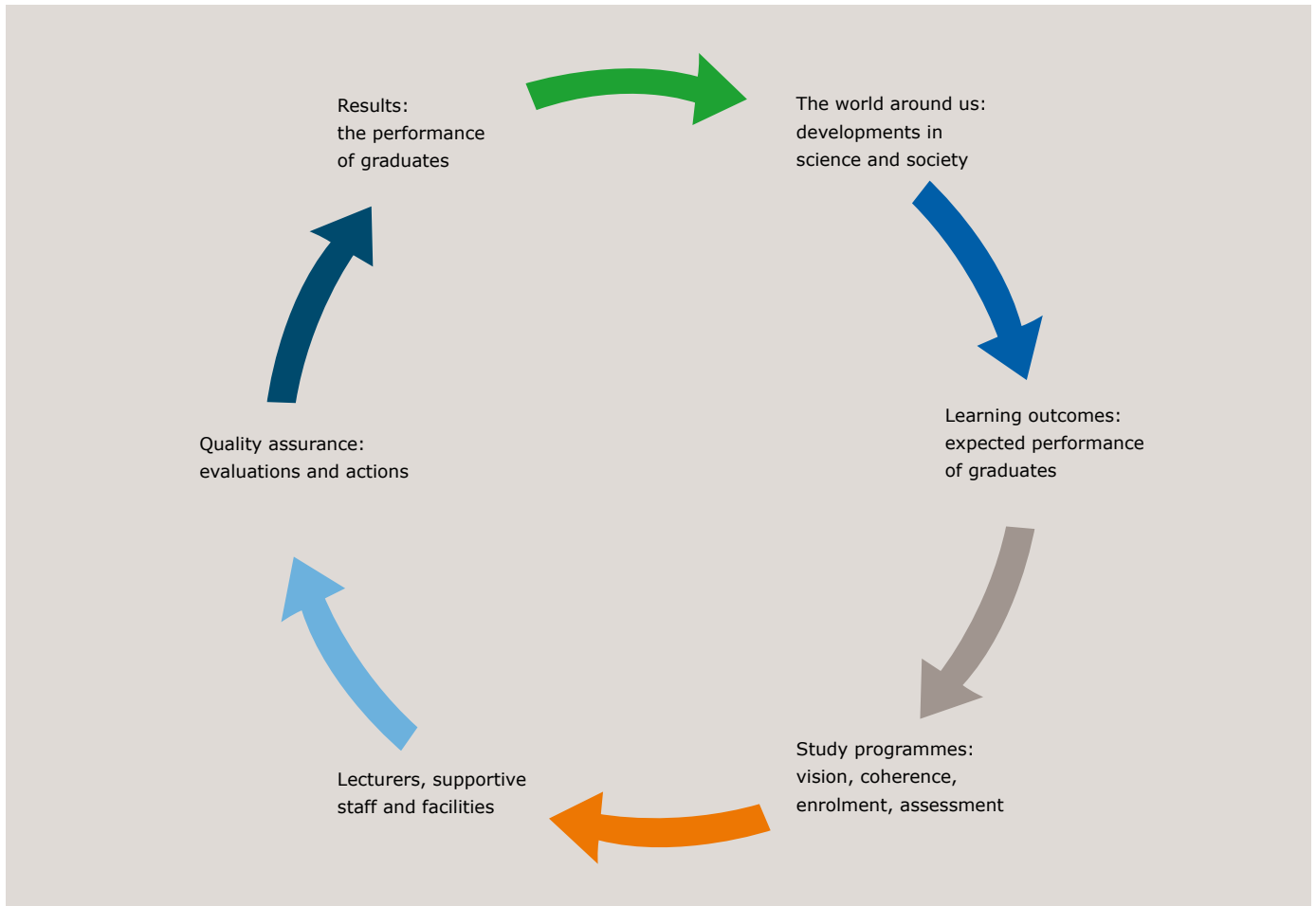
## 2.4 Our quality cycle for education

In the process of reaching our goals we follow a cycle that starts with gathering information on the world around us leading in several steps to results. Then the cycle starts again with gathering information. For education the (simplified) results are: the performance of alumni in their profession, benefiting from the education they received. The cycle in the figure below represents a long term version of the Deming cycle: plan-do-check-act. In the medium or short term, each of these steps has its own cycle.

The first step, a view on the relevant developments in the world around us, is described in the strategic plan. The strategic plan is based on research and discussions with many stakeholders at and outside the university. For education, the strategic plan can lead to concrete intentions like the creation of new study programmes or changes in the structure of education. In the 2007-2010 strategic plan, the analysis of the world around us led to a proposal to investigate the desirability of fewer but broader bachelor's and master's programmes, and the introduction of a major-minor system. We chose not to

start broad bachelor's programmes but decided to increase their flexibility by introducing a major-minor structure (Towards Flexibility). A more content-related analysis led to plans for the transition of several master's programmes in the domain of earth sciences into new master's programmes, for a new bachelor's programme in Tourism, for the change of the Health and Society 'specialization' into an independent study programme, and for more education on bio-based economy. Most of these intentions have been achieved in the past years.

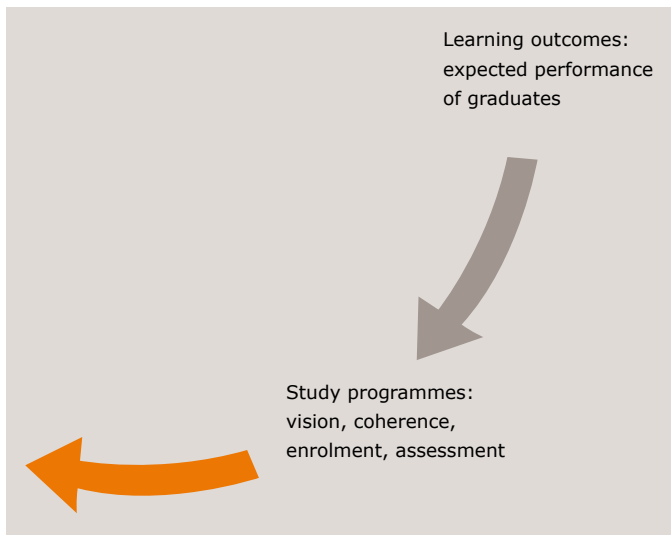
The current strategic plan (2011-2014) describes the direction for the near future. The following chapters are based on parts of the quality circle: Chapter three elaborates on step two and three, our policy on the learning outcomes and study programmes. Chapter four describes step four and five related to personnel, facilities and quality assurance. Chapter five looks at the future: what will be the main focal points of our educational policy in the coming years?



# Learning outcomes and study programmes

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### 3.1 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes have been defined for each of the Wageningen bachelor's and master's programmes. Every programme has generic and specific learning outcomes, all meeting the requirements of the Dublin descriptors for bachelor's or master's levels. To achieve our goal of producing graduates with state-of-the-art scientific knowledge, social awareness and a sound problem-solving competency, the learning outcomes of all Wageningen programmes cover the following general aspects:

#### Academic skills and attitude

Academic skills include analysis, translation and communication of research results, and critical reflection on a student's personal role as a scientist, specialist and learner. Academic skills are interwoven with knowledge in all courses. The academic skills are learned through the interaction between lecturer and students, the interaction between students, and from extracurricular activities. The reflection on the personal learning process is provided

in the context of study advice and is explicitly addressed in the Academic Master Cluster.

#### Scientific attitude and skills

Scientific skills are, more than the academic skills, focused on the design and performance of research. We connect scientific attitude and skills very strongly with sound scientific practice. Students are involved in two ways. First, we ensure that lecturers are active researchers and teachers, and embed their research experiences in their teaching. Second, as part of the overall study programme, we offer course modules and assignments for research methodology and experimental design, information literacy, scientific writing and reporting, etc.

#### Domain specific knowledge

In the learning outcomes we describe the graduate's command of knowledge, theories and concepts of the relevant domain. A high percentage of the lecturing is related to domain specific knowledge, including both relevant scientific disciplines and relevant sector knowledge. External advisory committees and surveys among graduates provide feedback to evaluate and maintain the correct balance in the programme.

#### Multidisciplinary

We aim at multidisciplinary education for all our students. The multidisciplinary approach varies across study programmes. A number of study programmes, which may perhaps be called thematic, have an explicit multidisciplinary design. Others combine the knowledge of two or more disciplines in one programme. The awareness of the fact that different disciplines have different attitudes and approaches towards a problem is addressed naturally by the fact that a number of study programmes share courses, especially in the BSc.

In most study programmes special course modules aim at a multidisciplinary analysis or solution of a problem. The Academic Master Cluster is part of all master's programmes, where students from different study programmes work together on a real life problem.

### Problem analysis and solving

Study programmes vary in the degree to which problem-solving has a prominent role. Problem solving implies that the scientific process does not end with analysis but continues with finding an answer to the question 'what to do next?'. In general, it can be stated that study programmes with a relatively applied nature tend to recognize problem solving more dominantly, while study programmes with a stronger emphasis on fundamental science focus stronger on analysis and understanding.

### International orientation and multicultural communication skills

All our students develop an international attitude and acquire international knowledge. Some of our domains are intrinsically international (like International Development Studies or International Land and Water Management); others are international due to the fact that the professional field of the alumnus will be a multinational organization. All programmes operate in an international scientific community.

Cultural diversity and multicultural competency are part of 'the way Wageningen University operates': we aim to treat all students equally. Most of the international orientation and multicultural communication skills are internalized through 'learning by doing' in student life inside and outside the classroom.

At Wageningen University we aspire towards an international orientation which is larger than the scientific community alone. All our alumni are expected to be able to function in an international and multicultural setting and have knowledge of international developments in their domain.

### Learning outcomes per programme

Each study programme has its own learning outcomes, depending on the domain and the level of the programme. The learning outcomes are designed by the programme committee and approved by the OWI-Board. The learning outcomes form an important topic of conversation with the external advisory committee and other stakeholders. External advisory committees point out whether they support the learning outcomes and whether they consider graduates to be well trained. Graduates are regularly questioned on their view regarding achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme.

### Learning outcomes per course

The learning outcomes of a programme are built up from the individual elements like courses, thesis and internship. The intended learning outcomes have been described for each of these elements, and are subject to assessment.

## 3.2 Bachelor and master's study programmes

Each Wageningen bachelor's or master's study programme has been designed in order to help students attain the learning outcomes. The programmes are evaluated





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annually as part of the education modification cycle which allows the programme committee to propose changes in the programme for the next study year. These can be changes in content (science or society driven), learning outcomes (input of the external advisory committee), structure (order of courses, scheduling), teaching methods, facilities etc. Finally, the OWI Board has to approve the changed study programmes. The Wageningen bachelor's and master's programmes have common properties regarding the structure and elements of the programme. In this section we mention the most important common properties.

## Size and structure

All our bachelor's programmes are three-year, 180 credit programmes. Common elements in all the bachelor's programmes are the bachelor thesis of 12, 18 or 24 credits, and a semester for a minor or free choice courses.

All Wageningen University master's programmes both in life sciences and social sciences are two-year, 120 credit programmes. Common elements in all master's programmes are the thesis (generally 36 credits), an academic internship (24 credits) and the Academic Master Cluster (12 credits).

In the light of changing arrangements in funding and study finance, the university is reconsidering the length of the master's programmes in the social sciences. A decision on one- or two-year programmes is expected at the end of 2011.

## Programme elements: courses, internship, AMC, thesis

In the courses, we work with a large variety of teaching methods like group work, lectures, practicals and

excursions. We do this to enhance the attractiveness for students: variety is the spice of life. We encourage lecturers to develop e-learning elements in courses or to use modern media to attune to the new ways in which the students learn and live.

The internships in the MSc, meant for acquiring relevant knowledge and skills for the future professional practice, are supervised by staff from the chair groups and monitored for their academic content. In the MSc, the Academic Master Cluster explicitly aims at multidisciplinary real-life problem solving in consultancy groups.

By writing a thesis at the end of the bachelor's and the master's programme, students prove that they master the scientific and academic skills at the corresponding level. We do not see the thesis as the only proof of reaching all the learning outcomes of a programme, many of our learning outcomes are assessed by other elements of the programme.

## Logical and achievable learning tracks

Based on the learning outcomes, courses are scheduled in a logical order to build up knowledge and skills and to realize achievable learning tracks. The logic is checked annually as part of the education modification cycle. In the course evaluation, students can comment on the degree to which a course logically follows or shows overlap with previous courses. From 2011 we have performed a routine analysis for all programmes on factors causing study delay. Courses causing delay for specific groups of students have been identified and have been or will be modified.

## Options for individual learning tracks

In the programmes we offer the students a number of options to follow their interest or talents. All bachelor's



programmes give students a choice between different majors or of courses characterized as 'restricted optional'. Each bachelor's programme has at least 30 credits free choice, scheduled in one semester, to facilitate students to study one of the WU-minors or to study at other Dutch universities or a university abroad. From September 2010, the university has offered about 50 different minors. Beside these minors, students can choose their own package of courses from practically all courses of the university, in close consultation with the study advisor.

We are seeking ways to bring minors at other universities to the attention of our students

All the master's programmes offer a variety of options in terms of free choice, restricted optionals, specializations and several chair groups under whose responsibility theses and internships can be fulfilled.

We encourage students to study any intermediate or advanced course offered by the university as a whole, provided that students make motivated choices for their learning track, in consultation with their study advisor.

Some but not all our master's programmes are focused on research. As a special learning track we are currently offering Research Master Variants within broader MSc-programmes, with special courses on advanced research combined with a second thesis instead of the internship. We plan to evaluate these variants in 2012.

### Talent programmes

Given all these options in free choice, and combined with the small scale and the intensity of our education, until recently we did not feel the need to start a special programme for talented students, for example an honours programme. We expected talented students to define their own challenging learning track (possibly combined with

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extracurricular activities) or to be stimulated by lecturers or study advisors to perform extra tasks or to take advanced courses. Nevertheless, governmental policy and students urged us to reconsider this decision. We are now experimenting with two new approaches. First, in the domain of environmental science, a BSc-honours programme is being developed to connect talented students to staff in tenure track for increased participation in science and policy development. Second, for the university as a whole, we are developing a set of criteria that provide for the designation 'honours' on the BSc-diploma. This set of criteria should stimulate individual students to further develop their talents.

### Scheduling courses and examinations

In all study programmes, courses are scheduled so that a student participates in a maximum of two courses at the same time. This choice for block scheduling (called 'periods' in Wageningen) was introduced in 1998 to improve study success.

In general, examination of a course takes place at the end of the period it is taught. Many lecturers experiment with several partial tests during the period. The course design includes a study week before the week when exams are taken. In total, there are at least three exam options per academic year, one directly in the period, a resit in the following period and during the general resits in August.

The scheduling of examinations has been designed to enhance study success. In Fall 2011 a working group will revisit some of these design aspects, for example the number of resits and the study week, which can lead to procrastination by students.

### Quality of assessment

Programme committees relate the learning outcomes of the programme to the assessment of the courses and thesis in order to make a programme assessment strategy. We are in a process of developing a matrix relating learning outcomes of a programme to the assessment in courses. Each course (or thesis, internship) has to have its own intended learning outcomes and assessment strategy ('toetsplan'). The assessments (interim examinations) have to be valid, reliable and transparent. We believe that most of our lecturers are well aware of these requirements. Nevertheless, we started a campaign in 2011 to support lecturers in making assessments to meet these three demands. We developed a guidance document that describes our assessment policy and documents, to assist lecturers to enhance their assessments. We organized meetings or lecturers in all the science groups to explain these documents and the underlying reasons. Centrally offered courses (by Edusupport) support lecturers in designing good exams. The questions in the course evaluation that relate to the quality of the assessment will be reviewed.

## 3.3 PhD-education

The education of PhD-candidates is arranged through an individual Training and Supervision Plan (TSP). This plan contains at least 30 credits of courses, focused both on research methodology and on the subject of the thesis. The TSP is agreed on by the thesis supervisor (the professor). Courses focused on research methodology are, in general, organized by Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS). Courses related to the subject of the thesis are organized by individual graduate schools or chair groups. WGS is responsible for the quality of the PhD-education.

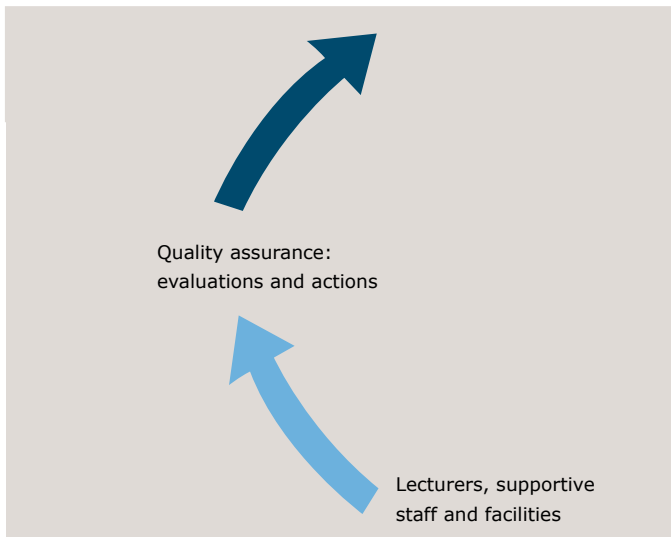




# Personnel, facilities and organization

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To achieve the desired quality and goals of learning outcomes and study programmes, we need good personnel and facilities. In this chapter we describe how these facilities contribute to and support our philosophy and policy.

## 4.1 Lecturers

### Balance in research and education

Our lecturers are the most important factor for the successful delivery of a study programme. Our main starting point is that we strive for good lecturers who combine research and education. Although there are, in particular in the early BSc-years, some dedicated lecturers who do not combine lecturing with active research, we prefer the combination. We stimulate full professors to perform in the BSc-programmes, just as in the MSc- and PhD-programmes. The combination of research and education is a long-standing tradition in

Wageningen. Education is funded in a correct and transparent way, related to the input we expect from lecturers.

There are a number of other measures which stimulate a balance between research and education:

- The annual bonuses for excellent research and education are of equal size (M€ 1 per year).
- The selection procedure for chair holders weighs both education and research.
- The tenure track procedure emphasises the combination of research and education.
- In the yearly performance and development interviews ('R&O-gesprekken'), the performance in both research and education are discussed.

Most study programmes are characterized by an increasing level of specialization from BSc to MSc (and PhD). Consequently, the relation between students and the staff of a chair group becomes stronger over time.

### Experts in education and research

We expect our lecturers to transfer their knowledge successfully, and to inspire students. The lecturer triggers the curiosity of students and stimulates them to acquire knowledge and skills. We expect lecturers to be proficient in English. After each course, both the course and the lecturer are evaluated in terms of successful transfer of knowledge, inspiration, examination and – when relevant – English proficiency. Results of the course evaluations are input for the yearly performance and development interviews. To stimulate good lecturing, a part of the bonuses for education is awarded to lecturers (the other part concerns courses) and there is an annual "teacher of the year" election organized by the Student Council.

For new permanent staff and staff participating in tenure track, a BKO ('Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs', University Teacher Qualification) is required. Other, tailor-made,

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courses given by the Educational Staff Development unit, take place either if a lecturer is interested or if the course evaluation shows that it is necessary. After achieving the Teaching qualification (BKO), we prefer an individual track of advanced training to the standardized SKO (*'Seniorkwalificatie Onderwijs' – Senior University Teacher qualification*).

Almost all teaching staff (and members of the Examination Board) have a PhD degree and are member of one of our six Graduate Schools, which means that they have to meet strict demands for research performance.

## 4.2 Facilities and services

### Wageningen Campus

We have chosen to centralize our lecturing facilities. The Forum building hosts lecture rooms, practical rooms, rooms for group work, and the central university library. Forum also offers facilities for most of the study associations. Similarly, most education in the social sciences is concentrated in the Leeuwenborch building, on the outskirts of the Wageningen Campus. From 2013 on, the new Orion building will further complete this trend of centralization. Forum and Orion are the centre of Wageningen Campus, where most chair groups are based, with the exception of the social sciences. The philosophy behind this is that, through this concentration a dynamic lecturing environment of good quality will be created. The Forum and Orion buildings function as a meeting place for students and staff which is, for instance, reflected in shared restaurants or canteens.

Wageningen UR invites companies in our domain to build their laboratories or offices on or very close to

Wageningen Campus to facilitate interaction and cooperation between science and our professional field.

In the course of the study career, the relation between student and chair group and its staff becomes stronger. It is crucial that thesis work is conducted within the physical domain of the chair group. In case of lab work, BSc and MSc students work alongside PhD students and staff in the same lab. They form part of the lab community. In other types of thesis research, work space for students is expected to be available at the chair group location. In practice the workspace is often used in other ways, and we are looking for a financial stimulus to solve this tension. At the Leeuwenborch building, the work places are centralized, close to the remaining library facilities.

### Network and computers

All students registered at Wageningen University (either as a regular student or a guest) are provided with a WUR-account which offers access to the Wageningen UR-network and the World Wide Web. In most buildings both wireless and wired connections are enabled and in lecturing environments ample computers are freely available. There is an arrangement in place to stimulate students to buy a personal laptop.

We use an Electronic Learning Environment (EDUweb) to present course descriptions and learning materials and to provide a communication platform between lecturers and students.

### Library

Wageningen UR Library aims to be digital and to be available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The library is digitally open for everybody with a WUR-account, including access to full texts of online journals. A large part of the services are digitally open to the public as well, excluding most full texts. The library has an extended opening time





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policy: on working days it is open until 22 pm and in the weekend during daytime. Wageningen University has one central library at Forum with a small annex in the Leeuwenborch. In particular for non-Dutch students the library is the heart of Forum. It not only offers access to relevant literature, but also offers plenty of space to study.

## Study advice and student counselling

Study advice focuses on the planning of the individual study programme and on study progress. In the early BSc it may include reflection on the chosen programme; as the BSc progresses it includes reflection on choices after the BSc-degree. Study advisors meet individual students at least once a year, and more on the student's request. Study advice is aimed at supporting the student, serving as a sounding board, and providing relevant background for choices. The choices made remain the responsibility of the individual student. Study advisors meet on a regular basis to stay abreast of university policies. Additionally all study advisors take part in meetings aimed at reflection on the profession and the exchange of best practices.

The student counselling service encompasses the student counsellors, medical support and the student psychologist. Broadly speaking, the student counselling service supports students who encounter personal, mental or health problems or serious difficulties with choices in their study career. It also supports students who lack study skills or in situations outside their control which affect study progress.

## Studium Generale

In order to enhance their academic skills, a multidisciplinary view, and contact with developments in society, we offer the possibility for students to participate in "Studium Generale". Lectures, discussions and films on – for in-

stance – ethics, international relations or philosophical themes, are open to students of all programmes.

## Sports facilities

The Sports Centre of Wageningen UR offers all registered students and staff extensive opportunities for sports and recreation, indoors and outdoors. Lessons are given in many sports; several student sport clubs give the opportunity for competition, and there is room for individual training sessions.

In 2012 the Sports Centre will be extended with an enlarged fitness room and other facilities.

## Student Service Centre and International Office

All administration on admission and enrolment is done at the Student Service Centre. Part of the Service Centre is the International Office that supports non-Dutch students with all procedures that are need to be taken care of: application, admission, payment, visa, housing and insurance. We used to guarantee all non-Dutch students a room in or near Wageningen but the fast growing numbers changed that to the guarantee of a bed.

Wageningen University is working very hard to provide the international and Dutch students with rooms in or near Wageningen but it will take a few years to tackle the current shortage.

## Language Services

Language Services offers courses in English, Dutch and several other languages on different levels to support both Dutch and international students in their study and social life.



## 4.3 Organization

### Education Institute (OWI)

The Executive Board is responsible for all education and research at Wageningen University. It decides on the framework for education and then it is up to the faculty to deliver and maintain the quality of education. Wageningen University has only one faculty and all education is organized in the Education Institute (*'onderwijsinstituut', OWI*). The Education Institute is responsible for the organization and quality assurance of the educational programmes. To achieve this, every programme has a

Programme Committee and a Programme Director. The Programme Committee, consisting of equal numbers of students and faculty staff, is responsible for the content and quality of the programme, although in a formal sense this is subject to approval of the Executive Board. The Programme Director is responsible for the realisation of the programme.

The OWI Board is responsible for the content, quality and finances of the BSc and MSc programmes. As we highly value input from our students, the board consists of four students and four professors. The Rector Magnificus chairs the OWI Board. The Director of the institute advises the OWI Board and is responsible for the realization of OWI Board policies and decisions.



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Courses are taught by faculty staff of the Chair Groups. The Programme Directors maintain close contact with the Chair Groups on the design, the content and the quality of the courses. They are the 'match-makers' between the 'demand-side' (Programme Committees) and the 'supply-side' (Chair Groups) of Wageningen University. This typical Dutch 'consensus (polder) model' may seem complex; however within the educational framework of the single faculty, it works well for us and for our students.

## Wageningen Graduate schools

The education of PhD-candidates is the responsibility of the six Wageningen Graduate Schools. Researchers that meet the criteria set by the graduate school can become a member of the graduate school. Managed by the Dean of Sciences, the six graduate schools are gearing their policy to one another on subjects like training and supervision plans, the research courses they organize, and the PhD admission procedures.

## Examining Boards

Our four Examining Boards (each responsible for a group of related programmes) have the role of assurer of quality of assessment of interim exams, internships and theses. Until recently, they focused on the quality of individual students' programmes, exemptions, and checking whether students had completed all courses successfully in order to grant them a degree. The Examining Boards are now, as in all other Dutch universities, in the process of strengthening their role of assurer of quality of assessment. They support the examiners who are responsible for valid, reliable and transparent assessments and they verify the quality of assessment for courses.

## Student participation

We stimulate students to participate in activities which are extracurricular, but often relate to studies or student life.

Three main supportive actions are:

- 1 take student participation in programme committees, student council etc. seriously,
- 2 facilitate activities by the provision of, for example, good sport facilities and the location of study associations at Forum,
- 3 support activities financially by a generous, transparent financial support system (FOS).

Depending on the extent, extracurricular activities can lead to study delay. Special attention is needed to align this participation aim with measures like "Bachelor before Master" (harde knip) and extra registration fees for those with more than one year of study delay. We are developing solutions based on better study planning supported by appropriate study advice.

## 4.4 Quality assurance

We use several instruments to evaluate the results of our educational efforts. They are described in detail in our quality plan. Here we give a comprehensive overview of the most important instruments and the goals they are used for.

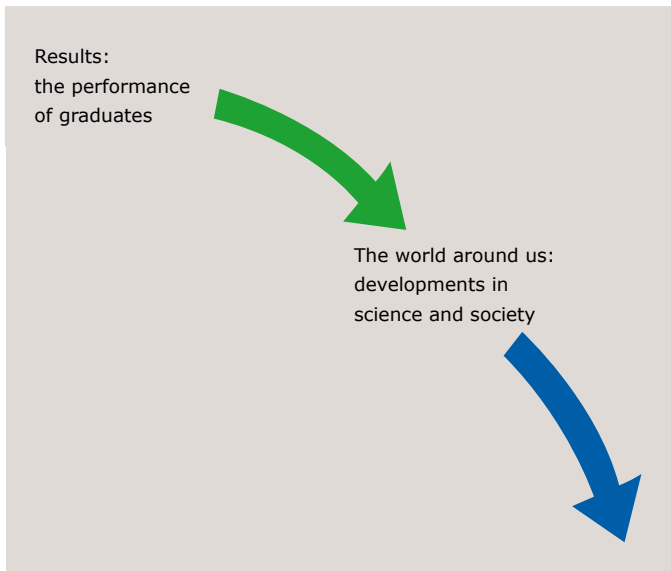


Instrument	Learning outcomes	Study programmes	Personnel	Facilities	Strategy and organization
Strategic plan cycle		X		X	X
External advisory committees	X	X			
Career research alumni, WO Monitor	X	X			
International Student Barometer		X	X	X	
Examining Boards	X				
NSE (National Student Questionnaire)		X	X	X	
Education monitor		X			
Course evaluation		X	X		
First year and programme evaluations	X	X			
Research and education accreditation cycles		X	X		
Results and development interviews			X		
Annual report Educational institute		X			X

# The world around us and challenges for the future

# 5

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The world around us and challenges for the future.  
In this chapter we briefly summarise the most important challenges that will determine our education policy agenda in the years to come.

## 5.1 Developments in education and society

We see the following relevant trends in student populations and higher education policy:

- A growing number of Dutch bachelor students do not live in Wageningen, they stay at their parents' home;
- More mobility of students within Europe, more exchange students;
- The interest of students outside Europe for a master study in Wageningen is growing, the availability of fellowships is declining;
- Students are more focused on online media;

- Growing diversity of the master student population in culture, nationality, age, starting level and wishes;
- Shift of attention from competencies to knowledge in secondary and higher education;
- Changes in study financing and funding for education, especially for the master's programmes;
- Stronger focus on excellence, selection, higher intensity of courses and in the new policy agenda '*Kwaliteit in Verscheidenheid*';
- Focus in governmental policy and funding on study success rates (Bachelor before Master or '*harde knip*', '*langstudeerdersregeling*' etc.).

And in society:

- A growing importance of knowledge for the economy and an increasing demand for more highly educated personnel;
- A labour market demand for directly employable graduates;
- A growing interest for lifelong learning.

## 5.2 Wageningen University in a changing world

We believe that our three pillars, relevance for society and industry, international orientation and inspiring students, will support us in the future. Nevertheless, the changing world gives us many reasons to reconsider aspects of our education. Here we mention the most important themes that will be the subject of discussion in the coming years.

### E-learning and distance learning

To respond to both the Dutch and the international student who will not or cannot come to Wageningen for a full time study programme and to all students who are

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more focused on IT and online media, we are considering offering (part of) our education through e-learning and distance learning. It will be an extra challenge to combine it with the great importance we attach to the academic community in Wageningen: you must have been part of it to be a real Wageningen graduate.

### Master's programmes: mastering diversity

In the past years, we have paid great attention to the bachelor's programmes. We introduced a major-minor structure for all bachelor's programmes, paid extra attention to the learning outcomes and re-arranged courses.

In the coming years, our attention will focus more on the master's programmes. We aim to better define the added value of a master's degree; to consider different tracks in the master's programmes (for instance research, consultancy, policy, education); to consider a variation in duration of programmes; and we will adapt the programmes to respond even better to the diversity of enrolling students. This also implicates a decision on special Research Master's programmes. New master's programmes should be developed along the lines of disciplines and themes in which we excel in research, for instance Earth Science and Biosphere, Systems Biology or Health and Society.

### Bachelor's programmes

As described above, we have recently changed the structure of the bachelor's programmes to be better prepared for the future (major-minor, Bachelor before Master or 'harde knip'). In the coming years we will focus on improving the existing programmes. We are considering changing the language of the programmes fully

to English to facilitate the enrolment of international students. In several programmes we want to attach greater importance to the knowledge of mathematics, chemistry, and physics and to use special courses to resolve the different entrance levels of the students. We will investigate if a form of the current Academic Consultancy Training can or should also be introduced in the bachelor phase. Above all, we will encourage students to be fully engaged in their studies and to reach results that reflect their talents.

### Study success

Governmental policy is aimed at study success rates, and an agreement with the universities was made to reduce drop-out rates and study delay. In Wageningen drop-out rates and delay were acceptable and until 2010 we did not focus that much on it. In 2011 we started up a number of pilot projects on study success and in the coming years we will study the causes for drop out and delay, and propose measures to decrease them in all study programmes. A working group will advise the Executive Board on the policy on study success.

### Internationalization

To stay one of the most prominent international universities, we should reconsider and elaborate our internationalization strategy and policy, e.g. the international aspect in the learning outcomes, stimulation of a multicultural attitude with students and staff, recruitment of excellent students, and English as the teaching language of the bachelor's programmes.



## Quality of assessment

In the coming years we will continue our efforts on the quality of assessment. A further elaboration of the role of the Examining Boards, the examiners and the lecturers should guarantee the quality of examinations.

## Relation to Van Hall Larenstein

Wageningen University and Van Hall Larenstein (University of Applied Sciences), are both part of Wageningen UR. In the past few years, we have developed a joint "Education House", with two pathways in higher education: an academic and a professional one. We strive for coherence between the two pathways and easy switches for students between these pathways. Every student should be able to take the track that fits their ambition and talents and should not lose time in switching.

All these themes and new developments in society encourage us to reflect on and adapt our vision and policy on education regularly. That is the one of the ways to assure the quality of our international education, for the quality of life.





