Wageningen University & Research

Principles of collaboration

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Content

1   Introduction

As one of the foremost knowledge institutes in its field Wageningen University & Research (WUR) develops and provides high quality knowledge, education and research to address the major global challenges in our field and to design and accelerate the necessary transitions. We work on sufficient and healthy food for everyone, and on sustainable food production that is nature-inclusive and circular. We also contribute to the prevention of and adaptation to further climate change, a biobased and circular economy, the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. But we cannot tackle and solve all the global challenges alone; we need partners to do this.

Various national and international developments, such as the changing geopolitical and economic conditions in the world, the societal and political debate on the ethical desirability of working for/with certain industries (e.g. tobacco and fossil fuel) and the launch of the National Guideline on Knowledge Security, have created an (even greater) need within the organisation for clear preconditions, guidelines and handles for entering into and shaping collaborations. On the one hand to have clear guidelines and starting points for ourselves and minimise risks for employees and the organisation, and on the other hand to show and explain to the outside world why and how we cooperate with partners.

To meet this need we have, as a first step, drawn up a collaboration statement. This statement describes our mission (chapter 2), why we collaborate (chapter 3) and what principles we have in place to guide our collaborations (chapter 4). This statement entails and applies to all forms of our collaboration: small and/or project-based collaborations, long-term strategic collaborations with multiple partners, Memoranda of Understanding, student (BSc, MSc and PhD) exchange programs, double and joint degrees, etc.

This document describes the general principles in relation to cooperation. Subsequently tools and guidance, such as an assessment procedure, a toolbox for employees/management and a collaboration advisory point, will be developed.

This document on collaboration is and will be further discussed within the organisation (e.g. WMB, BUM's, WGS, department meetings, FAT-session etc.) in order to raise awareness and to further fine-tune where needed. Parallel to this, internally but also externally, input is collected for the further design of the assessment procedure and the toolbox on collaboration.

2   Mission Wageningen University & Research

The mission of Wageningen University & Research (WUR) is 'To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life'. Our education and research directly or indirectly, on the short or long term, relates to finding solutions that contribute to a world in which there will be sustainable, sufficient and healthy food for everyone. We are contributing to a sustainable economy that is bio-based, nature-inclusive and circular, in which waste streams are reintroduced into the production and consumption cycle as raw materials. We are working to prevent further climate change (climate mitigation) and to adapt land use to climate change (climate adaptation). We are looking for ways to maintain and enhance biodiversity and make sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

The challenges in our field are considerable. Solutions for these challenges must offer new, integrated social and technological innovations and policies at different levels of scale (a systems approach), which result in concrete improvements. We also actively contribute to national and international dialogues, policies and practices related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and we train students and professionals who will discover and deliver breakthroughs in science and technology for a better society.

3   Why do we collaborate?

We address the challenges in pursuit of our mission and to realise our strategic ambitions and goals. But, we cannot tackle and solve the global challenges alone; we need collaboration with partners to do this. The global challenges require a collaboration of organisations and individuals across borders and a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or even transdisciplinary approach. That is why we collaborate on education and on fundamental as well as applied research projects all over the world.

Increasing our scientific and societal impact is central to all our collaborations; by working together we co-generate knowledge and increase impact. Wageningen University & Research is, since our inception in 1918, an organisation in which true internationalisation is a cross-cutting principle with overarching relevance for the achievement of our goals. We have built a strong network with currently over 2000 collaborations (with academic partners, business and industry, public agencies and NGO's) in more than 100 countries. And we educate currently students – our future collaborators - from more than 100 countries at our campus.

4 Principles of collaboration

It is our responsibility as one of the leading knowledge institutes to contribute to a better world through research and education. However, we are aware that not all organisations have the same standards and values as we have; therefore, we make conscious choices regarding our collaborations. And we always comply with the rules and regulations of the Dutch Government on collaboration.

We have formulated WUR principles that **apply to all forms of collaboration** (formal, informal, small or large), clustered in five categories of equal importance:

1 **Alignment with the mission and goals of WUR**. In our work, we aim to enhance sustainable, sufficient and healthy food for everyone, and a sustainable economy that is bio-based, nature-inclusive and circular. We also contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to further climate change, the conservation of biodiversity and the protection and sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. We do not enter into collaborations that conflict with these goals.

2 **Safety of our students, researchers and staff**. We have a duty of care for all our students, researchers and staff. We want our students, researchers and staff to be able to carry out their work and study safely. On campus, but also during field work and online. We do not enter in collaborations that that could jeopardize the safety of our students, researchers and staff.

3 **Safeguard (scientific) integrity and academic freedom.** We stand for the freedom to teach, research, learn and publish without political or other interference, and free from pressures, threats and intimidation. All activities that take place in a collaboration must comply with these principles; and we are prepared to review, pause or withdraw from engagements that threaten them.

4 **Endorsement of fundamental human rights.** In all collaborative activities fundamental human rights[1] must be endorsed and respected. Also, WUR wants to be a diverse organisation where it does not matter who you love, where you were born or what you believe in. We strive to create an inclusive culture in which all groups and individuals feel welcome. Everyone's voice is heard, valued and respected. This is also part of our collaborations.

5 **Contribution to the open flow of ideas and data.** We strive for collaboration, reuse of knowledge and transparency, not only between researchers and disciplines, but also with society as a whole. In this way, we increase our scientific impact, bring scientific knowledge to society, and provide solutions to societal challenges. We are open and transparent. But we can decide to protect research, data and technology if that is considered to be of strategic importance to the organisation, or in case (dual use) risks are identified; we will ensure knowledge security.

In considering and addressing these principles, we create a risk-aware culture that safeguards our people and those we work with, promotes academic freedom and upholds our institutional values. We balance the opportunities and risks of our activities. In this way, we create an academic culture of vigilance and awareness of the risks; ensure that people are equipped to know how to minimise or mitigate them; and enable WUR to collaborate safely, responsibly and transparently across the world.

We will (continue to) provide our students, researchers and staff with guidance, tools, materials and training to engage with partners in an open, safe and responsible way. We will develop a toolbox and install a collaboration advisory point to help and advise our students, researchers and staff in initiating and engaging in collaborations.

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[1] As established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

5   Responsibility

The concrete implementation of collaborations almost always lies with individual scientists. Based on their fields of research, they engage in contacts, projects and activities to advance their work. They are also usually the first point of contact for potential partners seeking cooperation.

When considering whether to establish or continue collaborations, we rely primarily on the judgement of the scientist or (other) representative of the institution directly involved. It is the responsibility of all employees to make a careful assessment when entering into collaborations. We trust that they have determined whether the collaboration complies with all WUR principles and have – when needed - also spoken to others (colleagues, supervisor and/or the helpdesk for collaboration) in order to form a sound opinion.

In case of doubt, there is a duty for all employees to report to their superior, who then reviews the proposed collaboration. The management of the business unit/institute/chair group can, when needed submit the matter to the management of the Science Group and then, if necessary, to the Executive Board (EB). The management provides (in consultation) a solution which is in line with the institution's overall objectives, tasks and responsibilities and calls for meticulous accountability in relation to the staff of Wageningen University & Research.

Whenever there has been a deliberation IF or HOW to collaborate, the outcome of the assessment will be summarised and archived with the project documentation, so that we can evaluate our arguments and learn from them or explain to others if so needed.

Appendix   Checklist principles

Before we start any collaboration, we check whether the collaboration complies with <u>all five principles.</u> The five principles are supported by guidelines and regulations as listed below (to be detailed further).

1 **Alignment with mission and goals WUR**. All our collaborations contribute to our mission and strategy. This is described in:
   a <u>WUR strategic plan 2019-2022</u>.
   b <u>Extension and update strategic plan 2019-2024</u>.

2 **Safety of our students, researchers and staff**. WUR has a duty of care to all its students, researchers and staff. The responsibilities of both employee and employer, guidelines and tips regarding travelling are described in the following documents, which you have to take into account:
   a <u>Travel Policy</u>.
   b <u>Infection Prevention Policy</u>.
   c <u>Travelling To Yellow, Orange And Red Areas</u>.
   d <u>Safety And Security Courses</u>.
   e <u>Social safety</u>.
   f <u>IT security</u>

3 **Safeguard (scientific) integrity and academic freedom.** All academics and researchers at Wageningen University & Research act in accordance with the:
   a <u>Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity</u>.
   b <u>Wageningen University & Research Integrity Code</u>.
   c <u>Guidelines for authorship, citation and affiliation</u>.

4 **Endorsement of fundamental and human rights.** WUR demands that all employees act with integrity in teaching, research and service provision. In order to guarantee integrity, WUR upholds various codes, rules of conduct and complaints regulations tailored to a wide-range of integrity dilemmas:
   a <u>Wageningen University & Research Integrity Code</u> formulates the starting points for desirable behaviour for everyone who works within, studies at, and/or represents Wageningen University & Research.
   b The <u>Guidelines Multicultural Settings</u> contains guidelines regarding social conduct, being aware of the various nationalities and national backgrounds of all employees, guest employees, and students.
   c WUR has drawn up an <u>anti-corruption code</u> which provides rules for doing business in a fair and ethical manner with countries that have a low corruption index (CPI), or with which no business can be done based on UN sanctions policy.

5 **Contribution to the open flow of ideas and data**. WUR adheres to the principles of open science, but we will protect research, data and technology that is of strategic importance to the organisation, or in case (dual use) risks are identified:
   a WUR established an <u>Open Science & Education programme</u> which describes a more open participatory way of working to conduct, publish and evaluate scientific research.
   b An <u>information security policy</u> has been established WUR-wide, which describes the 5 principles of the information security policy.
   c WUR has an <u>IP policy</u> which establishes the basic principles governing the ownership, disclosure, protection, researcher's incentives and transfer of WUR IP, as well as the roles and duties involved.
   d Knowledge security policy.