

# Wageningen University Framework for Education

## 1. Introduction

This **Framework** describes the common rules for all WU bachelor and master programmes and WU courses (size, structure, scheduling, etc. ) It is an overview based on rules laid down in the Higher Education and Research Act and rules adopted by (bodies or committees of) Wageningen University as laid down in the Student Charter, EER and RR and decisions on education structure or – policy made by the Executive Board.

## 2. Learning outcomes of a study programme

Every BSc and MSc study programme has its own explicit intended learning outcomes. Intended learning outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after successful completion of the study programme. The learning outcomes differ in level of complexity for the BSc and MSc programme, following the Dublin descriptors. The intended learning outcomes of a study programme are mentioned in the Study Handbook. All parts of a programme (courses, thesis, internship etc.) are supposed to contribute to the learning outcomes.

The scheduling of the elements in the programme should be logical (building from basic to more complex courses and subjects, leading to the desired learning outcomes) and feasible (completion of the courses and the programme must be possible in the allotted time period). The described study programme is comprised of compulsory courses (CS), and/or courses from which the student can choose according to specific guidelines, restricted optional courses (RO).

## 3. The structure of a BSc study programme

The BSc study programme consists of 180 credits. It comprises a major (including a BSc thesis) with a maximum of 150 credits and a free choice portion of minimally 30 credits, to be used for a minor and/or free choice courses.

### **Major and BSc thesis**

The core of the BSc study programme is the major. Most majors have a size of 150 credits. In a study programme the size of the major may be diminished in favour of a larger portion of free choice, when based on solid arguments. In every BSc study programme there is at least one major, but a choice of more majors may be offered. If there are more majors offered within one programme, they have to differ at least 24 credits from each other, the BSc thesis not included.

The major is completed with a BSc thesis. The optimal length of the BSc thesis may vary per study programme. The programme committee can choose a length of 12, 18 or 24 credits. The purpose of the bachelor thesis is to demonstrate that the student achieved the required level of the learning outcomes at the end of the major.

### **Free choice/Minors**

Each BSc study programme contains a free choice portion of at least 30 credits, scheduled unbroken in the third bachelor year, either in the first three periods or in the last three periods of the academic year. The students' choice for the free choice portion should show sufficient cohesion and profundity and contribute to the learning outcomes of the bachelor programme. Within the free choice, students can choose a described minor and/or an individual combination of courses, at Wageningen University or another institute of higher education. It is up to the student to demonstrate that his choice has the appropriate level, cohesion and profundity.

### *Described minors*

A described WU-minor is a cluster of related courses of in total 24 credits (with one exception; the education minor is 30 credits). WU-minors are approved by the OWI Board and mentioned in the Study

Handbook. Within such a minor students can substitute maximally 6 credits with one or more relevant courses. This substitution is not permitted in the educational minor. A student can also choose to follow a described minor at another institute of higher education.

#### *Individual minor or courses*

The student can also compose an individual minor by choosing a coherent set of courses of at least 24 credits. In his proposal for the Examining Board, the student presents his set of courses as an individual minor with a title (which must clearly differ from the titles of the described WU-minors). A student is also free to choose a set of courses, not presented as a minor.

## **4. The structure of an MSc study programme**

### **The design of the MSc study programme**

The MSc study programme consists of 120 credits. With the learning outcomes of the study programme as limiting conditions, the WU MSc programmes aim for a tailor-made and student centred programme. Preferably, in most of the programmes a common part is programmed which gives the foundation of the programme. Besides this common part, the programmes offer the student ample choices, fitting his prior knowledge and ambition, through e.g. specializations, free choice courses, and an internship and a thesis at various chair groups.

The MSc study programme can offer different specialisations.

### **MSc thesis, Internship and Academic Master Cluster**

In every MSc programme, at least 60 credits are reserved for a thesis and an internship. A successfully completed MSc-thesis is seen as a proof of the fact that the student achieved the learning outcomes of the study programme. An internship is a period during which the student, in an institute or company outside the University, gains experience in an environment and through activities which are comparable to an academic starter's position. In most cases the student carries out an assignment and writes a report. In MSc programmes, the internship may be substituted by a second thesis. If so, this possibility must be expressed in the Study Handbook.

Next to the thesis and the internship (or second thesis), every MSc study programme has an Academic Master Cluster (AMC) of at least 12 credits. An AMC is a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary course, aimed at acquiring professional skills. It can have various forms (e.g. an Academic Consultancy Training, a Research Master Cluster). The programme committee must substantiate a deviation of the ACT-variant of the AMC.

### **Free choice/Minor**

Programme committees can choose but are not obliged to schedule a free choice portion in the MSc programme. If the free choice portion is 18 credits or more, the student may choose to compile a set of coherent courses of at least 18 credits, to form an individual minor.

## **5. Properties of courses (including AMC, internship and theses)**

### **Description of courses in the Study handbook**

For all courses, the Study Handbook provides a description of at least the following:

- a. the language of instruction
- b. the content of the course
- c. the number of credits
- d. the learning outcomes
- e. the interim examination method
- f. the examiner and the coordinator
- g. the teaching and learning methods
- h. whether any prior knowledge is assumed or required, in the form of courses followed or otherwise.
- i. whether the course has a maximum number of registrations.

### Language of instruction

Conform the Code of Conduct Foreign Languages, the language used in education in the first and second year of the described bachelor's programmes is Dutch, learning materials may be in English. For courses in the third bachelor year, the English language is preferred. When desirable, a programme committee may ask for a bachelor course in the first two years in English. The language used in education in the master's phase is English. A more comprehensive set of the language requirements for education and examination can be found in the [Code of Conduct Foreign Languages](#).

Field Code Changed

### Number of credits

One credit corresponds with 28 hours of study. These hours of study include all activities that are necessary to follow the course, to prepare for and pass the interim examination. The size of a study unit or course depends of the type of subject matter and the period in which it may be scheduled.

#### *Courses which are part of a described study programme*

- The standard size of courses is 6 credits.
- The courses that are taught in education periods 1, 2 and 5 have a size of 6 or 12 credits.
- The courses that are taught in period 3 and 4 have a size of 6 credits.
- The size of the courses in period 6 can be other than 6 or 12 credits.
- In periods 1 t/m 5, courses with a size other than 6 or 12 credits are only allowed if they do not cause any problems with scheduling the relevant study programme(s). For courses with a size of less than 6 credits in periods 1 t/m 5, permission must be granted by the Board of the Education Institute.

#### *BSc thesis*

- A BSc thesis consists of 12, 18 or 24 credits, depending on the study programme.

#### *MSc Internship*

- MSc internships have a minimum size of 24 credits and a maximum size of 39 credits, expressed in multiples of three credits (24, 27, 30, etc.). The total number of credits must include both the working hours at the institute and the writing of a report.

#### *MSc thesis*

- MSc theses have a minimum size of 24 credits and a maximum size of 39 credits, expressed in multiples of three credits (24, 27, 30, etc.).

#### *Thesis for exchange students*

- Chair groups have the option of offering theses for exchange students with a size of 18 or 21 credits.

#### *Selected topics (course code starts with a 5) (Capita selecta)*

- Selected topics can have a size of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 credits.

#### *Education provided by professors holding endowed chairs (course code starts with a 9)*

Professors holding endowed chairs have temporary assignments and, as a consequence, special rules apply for their courses:

- their courses, theses and internships cannot be part of a described programme.
- their courses can have a size of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 credits.
- their theses/internships have a minimum size of 18 and a maximum size of 39 credits, expressed in multiples of three credits. Students who want to do such a thesis or internship must have permission of the Examining Board.
- they are not obliged to offer theses or internships.

### Mandatory and assumed prior knowledge

In the Study Handbook the mandatory or assumed prior knowledge should be described per course. There are the following rules for the requirements on prior knowledge:

### *Mandatory prior knowledge*

Mandatory prior knowledge may **only** be required for the BSc thesis and MSc thesis, up to a maximum of 12 credits. The courses providing the mandatory prior knowledge must be part of the described programme.

### *Assumed prior knowledge*

Assumed prior knowledge is the knowledge the student is assumed to possess before starting the course, regardless of how this knowledge was acquired. The assumed knowledge can be described as courses which are supposed to be passed successfully or as already required learning outcomes. For courses in the described programme, prior knowledge can only be assumed if such courses or learning outcomes are part of the described programme and scheduled before the relevant course. However, assumed prior knowledge courses do not have to be passed before taking the relevant course.

### **Teaching methods**

Wageningen University strives for a variety in teaching methods over a programme and in courses. The possible teaching methods, to be used in the description of courses in the Study Handbook, are<sup>1</sup>:

EO	One-day excursion
EM	Multi-day excursion
F	Field practical
G	Group work
IN	Internship
IP	Individual paper
IS	Independent study
Le	Lecture
P	Practical
T	Tutorial
TH	Thesis.

It is compulsory for students to attend scheduled course meetings with the following teaching methods: practical (P), field practical (F), excursions (EO, EM). For the other teaching methods, lecturers must specify any compulsory attendance in the Study Handbook or in the study guide for that particular course.

### **Examination**

Each course (including thesis and internship) has to have an assessment strategy ('*toetsplan*'). Interim examinations are meant to assess the learning outcomes. They have to be valid, reliable and transparent. Lecturers can also plan partial assignments within a course. The time students need to prepare for and participate in partial and interim examinations, should be an integral part of the calculation and planning of the study load (credits) of the course.

For theses and internships, special rubrics are designed to support the assessment process.

### **Maximum number of students for a course**

The EB can establish a maximum number of students for a course. The EB is very reluctant in this policy, the ultimate goal is to have no maximum set for any course. The only reason for a maximum can be a material reason (e.g. too small practical rooms or lack of materials) and the EB expects every chair group to find a solution for the problem as soon as possible. The student for whom the course is a compulsory course will be admitted unconditionally. The student for whom this course is a restricted optional course in the described programme, has priority in participation.

### **Codes of courses**

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<sup>1</sup> For the funding of education by the chair groups, a more detailed set of teaching methods is used.

Every course has a code (AAA 1 02 03). The three-letter code is derived from the abbreviation of the responsible chair group. The first figure indicates the level or type of the course (1= introductory, 2= continuing, 3= in-depth, 5= capita selecta, 6= Academic Master Cluster, 7= internship, 8 = thesis and 9= course by endowed chair). The next two figures give the sequence number of the course in the series (AAA). The last two figures indicate the number of credits of the course. Codes are assigned by the department ER&I, responsible for the publication of the Study Handbook.

*Example: BIC 10306 Practical Biological Chemistry is a course of the Biochemistry chair group (BIC) , on an introductory level (1), with the sequence number 03 and a size of 6 credits.*

## **6. Scheduling of campus education**

### **Study load and structure of the academic year**

The size of the study load per academic year is 60 credits. The academic year is divided into six education periods:

- Periods 1, 2, 5 and 6 have a duration of 8 weeks each and a study load of 12 credits;
- Periods 3 and 4 have a duration of 4 weeks each and a study load of 6 credits.
- There are two general resit periods; one between period 3 and 4 and the other in August. For each course which is assessed through an interim examination, a resit must be offered in each of the two general resit periods.

### **Scheduling education and interim examinations**

The scheduling is based on the following rules and principles:

- Both the educational activities and the interim examination have to be scheduled within one education period.
- In periods 1, 2 and 5, separate courses can only be scheduled either in the morning or in the afternoon. In periods 3 and 4 the courses will be scheduled on the whole day (3 credits courses in these periods will be scheduled either in the morning or in the afternoon). In period 6 scheduling can be both: morning/afternoon or whole day.
- In periods 1,2 and 5, the 8th week of the period is reserved for interim examinations. In the 7<sup>th</sup> week no or hardly any educational activities are scheduled except self-study. In other periods interim examinations can be scheduled otherwise.
- In general, no educational activities for compulsory or restricted optional courses are scheduled in the evenings, weekends or holidays. Only interim examinations (including partial interim examinations) can be scheduled in the evening during the exam period. Exceptions can be made for special courses like online/distance learning, excursions, honours programme courses, summer courses etc.
- The planning of individual education subjects such as theses and internships, takes place in mutual consultation between student and lecturer wherever possible.
- Courses or study units that, due to their nature and/or size, do not fit within a single period, can be scheduled during two or more sequential periods ('ribbon scheduling'). The individual parts of such programme units must end each period with a partial interim examination about the teaching material from that period.
- The free choice portion of the BSc study programme will be scheduled unbroken, either in the first half year (periods 1, 2 and 3) or the second half year (periods 4, 5 and 6) of the third year of the BSc study programme.
- BSc minors are scheduled as a block in period 1,2 and 3 or in period 4, 5 and 6.
- For every course, there are offered three possibilities in a period of 13 months to take an interim examination. The education and the corresponding first interim examination should both take place within a single period. Resits for interim examinations are offered in both general resit periods, in February and August. For a course in period 3, the resits take place in August and in the February resit period a year later.
- If the examination material or the type of examination for a particular course are significantly altered (regardless of whether or not the same course code is used) or if the course is cancelled, then the interim examinations given in both re-sit periods of the first year for the altered course or the first year after the course has been cancelled, must also be given in the previous form.

## **7. Online education**

Wageningen University has a pilot project for online master programmes. Although the online master programmes are specializations of the 'normal' master programmes, programme committees have, only in the pilot, certain degrees of freedom to deviate from the general rules in this Framework:

- Due to the separation of online content and on campus practicals from existing courses into new units, courses may vary from the standard size.
- The first academic year of the pilot (2015-16) only 30 credits of the specific online education programme are offered. After the pilot, the total number of credits in courses, internship and thesis may vary between 30 or 60 credits offered in one academic year.
- Courses, interim examinations and re-sits are not bound to the regular campus education periods and hours. Courses may be stretched over more periods, without the obligation of a partial interim examination after each period.
- Besides the normal teaching methods, several specific online teaching methods are allowed: DKC (Distance Knowledge Clip), DEL (Distance E-learning material) DT (Distance Tutorial) and DGW (Distance group work).
- Due to the development costs of online courses and the character of the pilot, the freedom of choice of online courses for students is limited.

## Appendix 1 Relation of documents on education

There are several documents containing rules and regulations regarding the education of Wageningen University. The five most important documents are:

- The Education and Examination Regulations, general part
- The Education and Examination Regulations, specific part (Study Handbook)
- The Rules and Regulations of the Examining Boards
- The Framework for Education
- The Student Charter

These documents differ in scope and goal:

**Education and examination regulation (EER):** existing of a general part for all programmes and a specific part per programme in the Study Handbook. The general part of the EER gives detailed information on the structure and organisation of programmes and courses, procedures and requirements of interim and final examinations and other topics relating to the organisation and procedures of the education and examinations. It describes the rights and obligations of students. The Executive Board adopts this general part of the EER, after getting advice of the Examination Boards and Programme Committees and the approval of the Student Council.

The Study Handbook, being part of the Education and Examination Regulations and adopted in the same way/together with the general part of the EER, describes the separate programmes and all courses in detail. The text is based on the results of the decisions of the OWI-Board in the annual Education Modification Cycle.

**Rules and Regulations Examining Boards (R&R):** the regulations set by the Examining Boards, describing their tasks and responsibilities and the way these are executed:

- monitoring the quality of exams and interim examinations;
- making regulations, in the framework of the law and the Education and Examination Regulations, for the orderly conduct of interim examinations and adequate administration of the results;
- deciding on exemptions for examinations and practicals;
- deciding on individual and free bachelor and master programmes;
- appointing examiners.

The R&R are meant for both students and examiners/staff.

**The Framework for Education:** describing the common rules for all WU bachelor and master programmes and courses(size, structure, scheduling, etc.). It is one of the basic documents for the quality control of our education. It is the framework for the designers of study programmes (programme committees and programme directors), but not a document describing the procedures, rights or obligations for students. The Framework contains elements from the Education and Examination Regulations, the Law and policy decisions of the university. The Framework should be revised annually or whenever necessary, and to be decided upon by the Executive Board.

### Student Charter

In the Student Charter, students find all information they need for their study. It includes the general part of the EER, the R&R and also several other regulations and information (languages, travelling, Profiling Fund etc.).

Document	describes	target group	Decision
<b>Education and Examination regulations (EER); general part</b>	Procedures, rights and obligations regarding education and examination and WU courses	students	EB
<b>Study Handbook = EER; specific part</b>	Detailed information on programmes and courses	students	OWI-Board in Education

			Modification Cycle
<b>Rules and Regulations Examining Boards</b>	Regulations and procedures regarding examination, tasks and authorities of Examining Boards	students, examiners	Examining Boards
<b>Framework for Education</b>	Information on principles and rules for the design and structure of WU bachelor and master programmes and courses	programme developers, programme committees, chair groups	EB
<b>Student Charter</b>	Information on many aspects of the study, study facilities etc. Compilation of all regulations applying to students (including EER general part and R&R)	students	EB