

Annual Report of WU Quality Agreements 2019

1 Quality Agreements

1.1 Process

In January 2019, the Executive Board and the Student Staff Council agreed on the 2019-2024 Quality Agreements for Wageningen University. This included the decision on how the funds freed up through the termination of the basic study grant will be used to improve educational quality at Wageningen University. In the first half of 2019, WUR further developed the quality agreements into concrete annual targets until 2021, and outlined their main ambitions until 2024. A lot of work has been done on the implementation of the quality agreements. Since the autumn, progress has been reported at least three times a year via a dashboard. The information from the dashboard is also shared via the [Wageningen University website](#).

On 7 November, a panel visited to investigate for the NVAO whether WUR's quality agreements comply with the protocol. On the basis of supplied documents and discussions with various parties and stakeholders, the panel has given the NVAO a positive recommendation. The NVAO has included this positive recommendation in the positive advice to the Minister. The Minister has since approved the WUR Quality Agreements.

1.2 Progress

Wageningen University will invest in five of the six quality themes. For each theme, different projects have been defined with concrete goals and budgets per year until 2021. Almost all projects have achieved their objectives for this first year. For each project we give an overview of the objectives achieved, along with an explanation and some reflection.

WU is also evaluating the effectiveness of the measures for internal use. If these internal evaluations show that change is needed, we will report on this.

1.2.1 Small-Scale Education

Project	Objective	Objective achieved?
Thesis Supervision	All chair groups will maintain intensive thesis guidance despite the growing student numbers.	Random interviews show that the vast majority of chair groups have retained or implemented intensive guidance.
Sciences Groups Measures	In total, the Sciences Groups will take on 7.6 additional FTE for intensive small-scale education.	In total, the Sciences Groups have allocated 7.3 additional FTE for intensive small-scale education.
Additional Teaching Staff for Chair Groups	8 FTE of additional staff will be appointed by 30 chair groups	4.2 FTE of additional staff is be appointed by 28 chair groups

The theme 'small-scale education' has been particularly hampered in its development by the saturated job market. This backlog is expected to be compensated for in 2020. The chair groups and Sciences Groups are noticing clear relief in the tasks of the lecturers, who now have more time for education and their students.

The total number of FTE for the Sciences Groups will be adjusted downwards slightly, because more senior staff works in budgeted Sciences Group, who are in a higher scale, resulting in a lower total number of FTE that can be appointed. The allocated budget was sufficient to hire additional staff for 28 chair groups. The original idea was to target 30 chair groups in order to avoid any underutilisation. In the end, the decision was made to award the proposals of a total of 28 chair groups, in accordance with the budget, and to avoid underutilisation in other ways.

Following the NVAO panel visit, the decision was made to allocate the budget for free investment to the theme 'small-scale education', which for 2021 means a budget increase of €300K for this theme.

1.2.2 More and better study guidance

Project	Objective	Objective achieved?
Dealing with Stress Campaign	Organise a mental health week and at least 4 other activities. Continued presence of additional student psychologist (0.4 FTE)	All activities have been organised , including the 'surf your stress' week. Since 2018, the additional psychologist has been appointed for 0.4 FTE
More study advisors	0.40 FTE additional study advisors	0.40 FTE additional study advisors appointed
More student psychologists	0.40 FTE additional student psychologist	0.40 FTE additional student psychologist appointed
Student initiatives for students	1 student initiative funded	1 student initiative funded and implemented
Virtual Training Centre	Appoint coordinator. Inventory of all that is offered to students and plan is made for the virtual training centre.	Coordinator has been appointed. Inventory has been done. The integrated plan will be ready by the early months of 2020.
Training for staff	At least two training programmes per year to recognise problems that students face and guide them.	One training programme complete. The other training programme will take place in February 2020. It is now also part of multiple lecturer training programmes.

The stress-prevention campaign, Surf-your-Stress, has been launched. Surf-your-Stress week has attracted many students and has been perceived by students as very useful. In addition, the expansion of the student psychologists since 2018 has continued. The positive effect of the 'Surf-your-Stress' week has led to a higher demand for help from student psychologists, which has led to longer waiting periods. In 2020, WU will appoint two additional psychologists, as announced in the quality agreements, and this will lead to shorter wait times. An additional study advisor has also been appointed to perform a coaching and all-rounder function for several study programmes.

Students help each other, too. An initial project by students and for students has been launched with financial support from the quality agreements. Students have also submitted their ideas for projects for 2020.

In addition to training programmes focusing on student wellbeing, a wider range of training programmes will be better communicated through a virtual training centre. An inventory has been executed for the training centre and using this information, the Virtual Training Centre will be launched in 2020.

The project involving training programmes to help staff recognise problems in students has not yet been completed fully. This will be compensated for at the start of 2020 with the organisation of an additional training programme. In addition, some of the training programmes on this theme have already been integrated into existing training programmes for lecturers.

1.2.3 Education differentiation

Project	Objective	Objective achieved?
Student Challenge	WU organises at least 1 student challenge per year	1 student challenge has been launched and an additional student challenge has been prepared in 2020.
Skills development	Completing pilots for 3 skills and setting up a framework for various academic skills. 6 training programmes for student assistants. Further shaping the digital learning environment to share knowledge about skills education.	3 pilots completed in various degree programmes. 7 training programmes for student assistants given. Frameworks for 14 skills developed. Digital learning environment further developed.

Extracurricular Activities	Increase in Career Service Centre activities. Launch of student coaching experiment. Complete a tailor-made Bildung programme pilot for a degree programme. Create follow-up plan to the programme for 2020-2021.	One additional career lunch each month since May 2019. An additional Career Day completed and pop-up CV checks 2-4x per month. Research into the needs of students for career coaching completed.
		Completed Bildung pilot. Multiple degree programmes have expressed interest. Plan made for 2020.

With the help of the funds for the quality agreements, WUR has organised a 'student challenge' each year since 2018. This has received a positive assessment from the participating students and others involved. Within various degree programmes, the first pilots for skills learning tracks were implemented successfully. Partly on the basis of the pilots, a framework was created in which all the skills that we want to integrate into the degree programme have been developed. From 2020, all degree programmes will start implementing skills learning tracks, and the support provided by the teaching staff will be funded through the quality agreements. The developed knowledge and tools are shared through the digital learning environment and the digital learning environment supports the implementation of the skills learning track.

A total of 7 didactic skills training programmes for student assistants have been requested and the objective has been achieved. The training programmes are experienced as very positive by students and the course coordinators themselves. The possibility for student assistants to apply for training programmes will be highlighted in 2020.

One degree programme has started the pilot Bildung. Other degree programmes have also expressed interest. The Career Service Centre has organised several additional activities, such as doubling the number of career lunches, and an additional Career Day for students. A study has been carried out to identify student coaching needs. No pilot based on this assessment has been carried out yet. This will take place in 2020.

1.2.4 Lecturer Professionalisation

Project	Objective	Objective achieved?
Training for PhD Candidates	At least 140 PhD candidates in a teaching role will receive didactic training.	162 PhD candidates in a teaching role have received didactic training.
Professionalisation Fund	Prominent education experts share their knowledge on WU's Teachers Day.	Did not take place. The money will be spent on additional training in 2020.
Unburdening and support lecturers	0.6 FTE additional staff to relieve lecturers	0.6 FTE additional staff has been appointed.

The interest in didactic training for PhD students is greater than the expected number of 140. The training courses were experienced as useful and effective by the participants. Nevertheless, there is a spending surplus, as due to increased efficiency in the organisation of training programmes, the costs were lower. Given the success of the training courses, the same budget will be allocated in 2020 and the aim is therefore to train more PhD students.

The Teachers Day is being developed and organised together with the lecturers. Teachers were more in need of interaction and exchange on the Teachers Day and less in need of prominent speakers. That's why, in the end, no additional budget was required. In 2020, the money will be spent on additional training courses for lecturers in 2020, in keeping with the aim of the project. In order to relieve staff, the full 0.6 FTE was utilised for the Sciences Groups.

1.2.5 Education Facilities

Project	Objective	Objective achieved?
Bring Your Own Device	Launch of WUR app store	The WUR app store has been launched. Will be gradually opened up to students.

The development of a WUR app store has begun. This will give students access to the necessary programs anytime, anywhere. The WUR app store will be gradually launched and in 2019 about 380 students have been granted rights to specific applications from the WUR app store.

1.3 Budget

In 2019 and 2020 Wageningen University will invest additional own resources in the quality agreements. In 2019, WU received a total of €3,009,823 from OCW (Education, Culture, and Science) for the Quality Agreements. WUR has also budgeted an additional €1,091,000 for temporary overspending. OCW's financial resources have been spent entirely on the Quality Agreements. In doing so, WUR has complied with the financial agreements in the Quality Agreements.

The budget for project "Extra staff for solving bottlenecks" has been increased to €810,000 for 2019-2021. €725,000 was budgeted for 2019. €85,000 has been added and this investment is offset by a reduction in spending to €810,000 in 2020 and 2021. This levelling out is necessary because this money has been used to appoint new staff.

A total of €842,100 of our own funds has not been spent. Some projects have been delayed and the funds for these projects will still be spent on implementing the intended measures. A total of €83,700 has not been spent because there is too much budgeted for the skills development projects (3.2) and PhD skills training (4.1). The measures and goals for these two projects have been realised nonetheless. We are operating on the principle that money that has not been spent, while the objectives have been achieved, will be used to solve any shortfalls in other projects. If there are no shortfalls, it will be considered whether additional measures can be implemented within the project in the following year.

In 2019 there is a deficit of €99,000 in the thesis supervision project. These additional budget funds have been spent and will be compensated for using the €83,700 that has not been spent due to overbudgeting. As a result of this compensation, the total underspending amounts to €742,100.

The 'free space per year' has been removed from the quality agreements and the budget has been added to the theme "small-scale intensive education".

The table below shows the financial reporting on the use of quality agreements in 2019. The overspending and underspending are explained underneath the table. Underspending will be avoided by 2020-2024 with the help of stricter detailed budgets.

		Budget (k€)	Realisation (k€)
Small-scale intensive education			
1.1	Thesis supervision	1700	1799
1.2	Science Groups	500	500
1.3	Extra staff for solving bottlenecks	810*	127
	Total	3010	2426
More and better study guidance			
2.1	Stress prevention campaign	50	50
2.2	More study advice for student by hiring more study advisors	30	30
2.3	More mental support for students by hiring more student psychologists	50	50
2.4	Fund to subsidise student initiatives to support students	5	5
2.5	Launch and run training centre	10	10
2.6	Training for staff to recognize and deal with student issues.	55	23.8
	Total	200	168.8
Education differentiation			

3.1	Student challenges**	300	300
3.2	Skills development	225	143.1
3.3	Expand extracurricular activities, including more coaching on personal development and career preparation	75	56.8
	Total	600	499.9
Professionalisation			
4.1	PhD Skills training	75	73.2
4.2	Fund to compensate chair groups for professionalisation and peer review expenses	25	0
4.3	Unburden and support lecturers by hiring supporting staff and instructional designers	75	75
	Total	175	148.2
Adequate facilities			
5	Bring your own device**	200	200
	Total	200	200
Total		4185	3442.9
Total OCW		3010	3010

* The annual budget has been levelled out to €810,000 per year, by adding €85,000 in 2019 and compensating for this in 2020 and 2021. This is the average of the budgeted amounts for 2019-2021. This even distribution is necessary for the appointment of the additional staff.

** The measures and resources from the quality agreements contribute to the realisation of a larger project.

Small-Scale Education

More money was needed for thesis supervision due to the growing student numbers. This deficit is compensated as far as possible with underspending on projects for which the measures have been realised.

The chair groups have been allocated a budget for appointing a total of 8 FTE respectively. Some chair groups are still in the process of hiring additional staff. Due to a saturated labour market, this is delayed. The resulting budgetary underspending will be compensated in the period 2020-2024.

More and Better Guidance for Students

Almost all budgeted expenditures have been realised. Only the project training for staff on student issues (2.6) saw underspending, because in 2019 the second training programme did not take place. This training programme will be offered in early 2020.

Education differentiation

The measures for the project skills have been achieved with fewer funds than budgeted. The remaining funds are used to offset the additional costs for thesis supervision. The underspending on the extracurricular activities project was caused by the fact that one specific activity was delayed. The pilot for coaching will be realised in 2020 with the remaining budget of 2019. The detailed budget for extracurricular activities in 2020 has been adjusted in order to achieve the intended objectives.

Lecturer Professionalisation

Minor underspending has occurred in the PhD skills training project (4.1). In total, more training courses have been provided with fewer funds. In 2020 we will organise more training courses for PhD candidates, which will prevent underspending. The project fund for professionalisation (4.2) has been postponed and the measure has been amended. The amended measure will still achieve the target by 2020 with the 2019 funds.

Education facilities

The budget for educational facilities has been fully realised.

1.4 Participation and Supervisory Board

The sounding board group of the Student Staff Council, the Supervisory Board, project leaders, the Steering Committee and the Executive Board have been in close contact in 2019 about the

implementation and progress of the quality agreements. A delegation from the Steering Committee has spoken regularly with the sounding board group of the Student Staff Council.

A work method has been discussed on how the progress and changes are aligned with the participational structure to ensure the involvement of the participational structure in accordance with the NVAO protocol. At the end of 2019 and early 2020, changes to quality agreements were discussed with the Student Staff Council and Supervisory Board and their agreement was requested. This process was completed at the beginning of 2020.

Progress is being monitored and reported on three times a year in a dashboard. The Executive Board shall discuss the dashboard reports with the Supervisory Board and with the Student Staff Council. The dashboard is also publicly available via the WUR website.