

P.O. Box 9101 | 6700 HB Wageningen | The Netherlands

PhD Supervisors

CC to: DSC office, General Directors, PhD council, Graduate Schools,
Emeriti with *ius promovendi*

Dear PhD supervisors,

Please find below a list of changes to the doctoral degree regulations and policy implemented by the Academic Board to further improve the quality of the Wageningen University PhD regulations and programme.

Four co-promotors

Under the former doctoral degree regulations, a total of four co-promotors and promotors was only allowed in exceptional cases, following a motivated written request from the promotor. The Academic Board now permits a total of four co-promotors and promotors.

If a total of four co-promotors and promotors are part of the supervision team, they must be affiliated with at least two different chairs at WUR or another institute with a maximum of two supervisors per group. This is outlined in Article 5.2 and has been adjusted in Article 6.2. Consequently, Article 5.5 has been removed.

Alignment of *ius promovendi* policy with Academic Career Framework

Like associate professors 1 in Tenure Track, all Wageningen University academics who are promoted to associate professor 1 under the Academic Career Framework will be granted *ius promovendi*. Additionally, individuals promoted to associate professor 2 under the Academic Framework may apply for *ius promovendi* before their evaluation process. Associate professors 2 are eligible for *ius promovendi* if they fulfil the criteria for associate professors 1 for funding, research and PhD supervision. Associate professors 1 and 2 who currently do not have *ius promovendi* can apply for *ius promovendi* via the Academic Board if they expect to fulfil the abovementioned criteria for associate professors 1 as outlined in the Academic Career Framework. Article 5.3 and Appendix 8 have been updated accordingly.

Period of granting of *ius promovendi*

As indicated above, some Wageningen University academics who are not professors may also be granted *ius promovendi*. This is for the duration of their appointment. For PhD candidates for whom they were already designated as the intended promotor, *ius promovendi* will remain valid for five years after their honourable discharge. The Academic Board reserves the right to withdraw *ius promovendi* if there are compelling reasons to do so. Articles 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 have been updated accordingly.

Clarification WUR promotor final responsibility

Only promotors with *ius promovendi* granted by Wageningen University can be appointed as the first promotor, holding final responsibility within a candidate's supervision team. This clarification has been added to Article 5.3c.

Wageningen
University & Research

DATE

5 March 2025

SUBJECT

Changes doctoral degree
regulations

OUR REFERENCE

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Impartiality in the evaluation process

To uphold the integrity and impartiality of the thesis and defence evaluation process, Article 7.4 has been clarified to ensure independence between the co-promotors and promotors, as well as the PhD candidate on one side, and the chair (deputy Rector Magnificus) and opponents on the other. The independence of external experts in the cum laude procedure has also been clarified in Article 18.2.

Additionally, neither the (co-)promotor nor the candidate is permitted to contact an opponent in a manner that could influence an independent evaluation process.

The Academic Board would also like to remind everyone that the thesis committee (Article 7 of the doctoral degree regulations) should remain unchanged throughout the entire evaluation process unless unforeseen circumstances arise.

Transparency about the use of generative AI (GenAI) in the thesis

If GenAI is used in the research of a PhD candidate, it must be reported in each applicable individual research chapter of the thesis, including the introduction and synthesis chapters. To ensure transparency, a new sub-article (12.5) has been added to regulate the reporting of GenAI usage and Article 12.4 has also been updated accordingly.

Additionally, the authorship statement must be included in the thesis, specifying the contributions of the authors and the use of GenAI. The authorship statement, now located before Appendix 5 of the doctoral degree regulations, includes reference to GenAI and has been incorporated into Appendix 3, 'Design, format, reproduction, and distribution of the thesis'. PhD candidates are instructed to include the authorship statement on the second-to-last page of the thesis.

Minimum number of first-authored articles in rubrics

To ensure the minimum quality standards for PhD theses, the rubrics have been clarified regarding the required number of first-authored research chapters in a thesis.

If the thesis is not a monograph, it must contain at least three research chapters in which the candidate is the first author, with a maximum of one shared first-authorship research chapter. These chapters must be of a publishable quality in a reputable scientific journal.

Annex 5d and e have been updated accordingly.

PhD admission process

The admission policy for PhD candidates has been updated. The requirement to submit a proposal for a Qualifying Examination (QE) for candidates holding a master's degree shorter than the equivalent of a two-year Dutch master's programme no longer applies.

Candidates can now be admitted to the PhD programme if they hold a master's degree that meets the following criteria:

- a. Candidates with a European master's degree can be directly admitted to the Wageningen PhD programme.
- b. Candidates with a non-European master's degree can be admitted if Nuffic evaluates their highest degree comparable to a one- or two-year Dutch master's degree.

Attendance co-promotors PhD defence ceremony

The Academic Board reminds everyone that, unless there are compelling reasons for absence, all supervisors are expected to attend the defence ceremony of the PhD candidate. Exemptions may be granted after consultation with the Dean of Research office. The first promotor must always be present.

EngD regulations update

The EngD programme has been successfully running for two years, and we continue to refine and improve its framework. As part of this progress, the EngD regulations have been recently updated. You can find the revised regulations here: [EngD Admission and Application - WUR*](#)

Timely registration

The Academic Board emphasizes the importance of timely registration for PhD candidates who spend the initial part of their PhD studies abroad (e.g., in sandwich programmes or joint degree programmes). As with all PhD projects, candidates must be registered before the start of their study through one of the Wageningen graduate schools.

This ensures that the entry requirements for the WU PhD programme are properly verified, including those for scholarship-funded candidates, and prevents the need for retroactive registration of a start date in the past.

Undesirable scholarship conditions

In recent years, there have been cases where PhD candidates were obligated to reimburse (part of) their scholarship, tuition fees, and/or research costs after a no-go decision or the termination of their project following an initial go decision. This situation often has severe consequences, placing both the PhD candidate and their supervisors in a highly precarious position.

The Academic Board considers the requirement imposed by funding providers for PhD candidates to repay (part of) their funding if they do not complete their PhD programme a potentially undesirable condition and is actively exploring options to address it.

Practicalities and minor changes in the doctoral degree regulations

- **Distribution of printed copies thesis:** Since 1 January 2025, The Doctoral Service Centre (DSC office) is no longer responsible for distributing printed copies of the thesis to opponents and the deputy rector. Instead, the chair group of the first promotor will now handle the distribution. Appendix 3 has been updated accordingly.
- **Instructions cover design:** Clearer instructions regarding the cover design of the thesis have been added to Appendix 3a.
- **Use of *ir.* and clarification affiliation in title pages:** In accordance with WUR communication guidelines, the use of the title '*ir.*' is now explicitly permitted in the title pages of the thesis, as reflected in Appendix 3b of the doctoral degree regulations. Additionally, instructions on how to properly mention affiliations on title pages have been clarified. Appendices 3 and 7 have been updated accordingly.
- **Update of example propositions:** The example propositions in the doctoral degree regulations were outdated. A new example has been added to Appendix 3e.

- **Criteria for propositions:** The criteria for the acceptance of propositions have been updated and added to Appendix 4. Instructions for citations have been included in the criteria, and the phrases 'could,' 'should,' and 'would' have been added to the list of expressions to avoid.
- **Communication opponents in Hora Finita:** The letter to the thesis committee that accompanied the evaluation is no longer being sent and has been removed. Additionally, the evaluation form has been updated in Hora Finita. The updated form has been included in the doctoral degree regulations. Appendix 5b and c have been updated accordingly.
- **Update addendum Appendix 6:** Addendum Appendix 6 has been updated to cover broader force majeure situations beyond the original COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Procedure for picking the date of defences:** Since July 2024, a new booking procedure for defence dates has been implemented. A defence date can only be booked after the PhD candidate submits the thesis, the authorship statement, and the propositions, and the first promotor approves them. Once these documents have been approved by the supervisor, an assessment committee must be proposed.
The DSC office then processes these documents on behalf of the Dean of Research and forwards the thesis to the assessment committee. Only after the DSC office has approved both the thesis and the assessment committee can the promotor book a defence date.
- **Clarification of language requirements:** Annex 2 on the language requirements has been clarified and better aligned with the language requirements for an MSc.
- **Task description in doctoral degree regulations:** Article 5.8, which contains a description of the promoter's task, has been moved up to Article 5.1. Also, Article 6.8, which contains a description of the co-promoter, has been moved up to Article 6.1.
- **Update article 21.1:** Article 21, regarding the Committee for Objections has been updated. The name of the committee is now correct, and objections related to Article 5.1c are no longer handled by a separate objection committee; therefore, Article 22 is removed.
- **List with associate professors 1:** A list with associate professors with *ius promovendi* will be made available on the intranet.

Unless otherwise stated, the above-mentioned changes/additions will take effect on 1 April 2025.

With kind regards



Prof. dr C. Kroeze
Rector Magnificus



Prof. dr ir. W. Hendriks
Dean of Research