



PhD Supervisors

CC to: PhD-Office, General Directors, PhD council, Graduate schools,
emeriti with ius promovendi

Dear All,

I am sending this letter, on behalf of the Academic Board, to draw your attention to some aspects of our Wageningen University PhD programme. First of all, I would like to thank you all for keeping the quality of our PhD programme high. We want our PhD community to be lively, inspiring and of high quality. By supervising PhD candidates and participating in Wageningen Graduate Schools, you all contribute to that. Every year, a few hundred PhD candidates defend their theses successfully and proudly receive a degree from our university. This year, our PhD programme has been evaluated by an external panel. I am looking forward to their suggestions for further improvement.

Below you will find an overview of policies and reminders from the Academic Board aimed at further improving our PhD programme. Please note that these do not include significant revisions to the [Doctoral Degree Regulations](https://backend.wur.nl/sites/default/files/2025-10/Doctoral%20degree%20regulations%20English%202025.pdf)¹.

Cum laude proposals are strictly confidential

Some of our PhD candidates graduate cum laude (with distinction). We would like to remind you that our procedure to award cum laude is strictly confidential. The Academic Board, however, has noticed that sometimes PhD candidates become aware that their thesis is considered for cum laude before the defence date. This can happen, for example, when promoters, supervisors or committee members disclose that a recommendation letter for cum laude has been submitted with the thesis. This is against our policy. It may cause unnecessary stress for the candidate and potentially lead to disappointment. The Academic Board, therefore, requests that consideration of cum laude be kept strictly confidential and is only shared with supervisors and committee members, and not with the PhD candidate or others.

Education budget increases to €4,000 ("Rugzakje")

Chair groups are responsible for ensuring that an education budget is available for their PhD candidates at Wageningen University who are enrolled in one of the University's graduate schools. This budget is intended for the personal development component of the PhD candidate within the Training and Supervision Plan. As the amount has not been adjusted for inflation for 4.5 years (since 1 January 2020), the education budget has been increased from €3,500 to €4,000 for PhD candidates starting their PhD on or after 1 January 2025.

***Ius promovendi* for associate professors**

Ius promovendi is the right to guide a candidate to the doctoral defence, leading to the doctoral degree. Under Dutch law (the Higher Education and Research Act), full professors automatically hold this right. Other Academic staff may be granted *ius*

DATE
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SUBJECT
Clarification and changes in
PhD policy

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¹ <https://backend.wur.nl/sites/default/files/2025-10/Doctoral%20degree%20regulations%20English%202025.pdf>

promovendi by the Academic Board in line with the Doctoral Degree Regulations and the Academic Career Framework. At Wageningen University, all associated professors 1 are granted *ius promovendi*. In some cases, an associate professor 2 may apply for it through the Academic Board.

Please note that the Academic Board has reformulated its regulations concerning *ius promovendi* due to the introduction of the Academic Career Framework (ACF), which came into force on 9 March 2025. Details are available via WUR Support: [Home > Developing Myself> Academic Career Framework > Policy](#)².

Like full professors, associate Professors who leave WUR retain their *ius promovendi* rights for PhD candidates who started before their resignation or retirement. This right is valid for five years. Those resigning or retiring should ensure that Corporate HR and the Doctoral Service Centre are informed of their resignation/retirement date so that their *ius promovendi* rights can be correctly administered.

Quality of propositions

Propositions submitted to the Academic Board are regularly found not to meet the quality standards or criteria set out in the Doctoral Degree Regulations. Assessing propositions that are significantly below the required standard is time-consuming and places a significant burden on the review process. We therefore kindly remind promoters to carefully evaluate and approve propositions prior to submission, using the guidelines set out in the Doctoral Degree Regulations. Please note that members of the Academic Board may decide to return propositions without detailed feedback if they are considered to be of insufficient quality or do not follow the requirements.

The use of AI

PhD candidates must be transparent about the use of AI in their thesis and disclose any use of Generative AI writing tools in their authorship statement. When using generative AI (GenAI), candidates are responsible for verifying outputs, including checking sources and potential biases, and for protecting personal and confidential information in line with data protection rules by not entering such data into unsecured platforms. GenAI should be used responsibly, for example, as a tool for inspiration, while candidates remain fully accountable for their work and make informed, context-specific decisions. Supervisors play a key role in guiding responsible use of GenAI and safeguarding transparency and academic integrity throughout the research process. More information can be found here: [Internal knowledge - Rules and regulations regarding AI usage](#)³. As developments in this area are rapid, these rules and regulations are updated frequently; please ensure you stay informed.

A mandatory e-learning module on the use of AI is being prepared for PhD and EngD candidates.

Reminders

- **MSc thesis chapters cannot be part of a PhD thesis:** We would like to remind supervisors that research conducted as part of a Master's (MSc) degree may not be reused or submitted for the purpose of obtaining a doctoral (PhD) degree. The work presented for a PhD must be original and substantially distinct from research previously submitted for any degree.
- Our **PhD Councils** provide valuable contributions to the university, and the Academic Board values the support of supervisors in encouraging their PhD

²https://support.wur.nl/esc?id=kb_article&sysparm_article=KB0017579&topic_id=dcd41406eb90be14c213f4efbad0cd00

³ https://support.wur.nl/esc?id=kb_article&sysparm_article=KB0016738

candidates to participate in the PhD Councils of the graduate schools and the central Wageningen Doctoral Council.

- **Contact information in Hora Finita:** Hora Finita includes personal details about potential PhD committee members. However, we observed that this information is not always up to date or correct. This holds in particular for external (non-WUR-affiliated) people. Please note that the WUR HR system is the primary source for personnel data at WUR. Updates in HR are automatically shared with other systems, including Hora Finita. This process, however, does not apply to external staff (such as emeriti professors or external opponents). Their personal and professional details must be managed manually and directly in Hora Finita. We therefore ask chair groups to help ensure that both HR data for staff and Hora Finita records for external persons are complete and up to date.
- **Every PhD candidate has at least two supervisors:** The Academic Board requires that PhD supervision teams include at least two promotors/co-promotors, which ensures that important decisions regarding the candidate's progress and evaluation are made with oversight from multiple qualified supervisors. A maximum of four co-promotors/promotors is allowed, and these must represent at least two different chair groups. If the supervision team consists of fewer than four supervisors, all may come from the same chair group.
- **Workload and PhD duration:** We would like to remind you that workload and PhD duration remain points of attention. As supervisors, please encourage and coach your PhD candidates to keep a healthy work-life balance while aiming at completing the PhD thesis in time.

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With kind regards,



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