



Guidelines for Promoters, Chair Holders and Chair Groups related to the PhD programme

Preface

This document outlines responsibilities of promotor and chair holders, as well as policies that Wageningen Graduate Schools expect to be in place regarding supervision of PhD candidates at Wageningen University. The document aims to ensure similar supervision and treatment of the various PhD candidates across graduate schools.

1 Responsibilities of the promotor

Article 5 of The Doctoral Degree Regulations describes the qualifications and tasks of the promotor. The Academic Board amends these regulations regularly to adhere to the Dutch Higher Education and Scientific Research law (Wet op hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek). Promotors are expected to know and understand these regulations (and the latest amendments) and act accordingly. The promotor can be a Wageningen University professor, or an associate professor who has been granted the *ius promovendi* by the Academic Board of Wageningen University. The right to act as a promotor is awarded by the academic board for the duration of their appointment at Wageningen University. Promotors will retain the right to act as promotor for candidates for whom they were already appointed as promotor before their discharge, for five years after their discharge. However, during this period they cannot accept new candidates as intended promotor.

The composition of the supervisory team is registered in Hora Finita during the registration of the PhD candidate and project at the graduate school. The Academic Board formally appoints, at least, one promotor and one co-promotor. The Doctoral Degree Regulations allow deviation from the number of supervisors but only in cases approved by the Dean of Research where the promotor is responsible for ensuring that supervision is well organised. In this way, the PhD candidate does not depend on one supervisor for guidance and expertise, and depending on the topic(s) addressed in the PhD research, the supervisory team can contain several experts up to a maximum of four supervisors.

The promotor is responsible for the development of the candidate towards becoming an independent scientist. The promotor is, similar to the co-promotor, committed to providing supervision in terms of scientific input and expertise, and is informed at all times about the progress of the research and is supportive when it comes to the wellbeing of the PhD candidate. On the right is a non-

exhaustive list of what is expected of promotors in PhD projects.

A promotor is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the project is feasible (logistically, financially and time wise)
- Recruitment and selection of the PhD candidate
- Involving specific experts as part of the supervisory team to successfully guide the PhD candidate
- Performing procedural/administrative duties related to the WU PhD programme
- Assistance with finding accommodation (especially in case of scholarship PhD candidates)
- Guiding the PhD candidate in the ethical conduct of science according to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity
- Discussing, reading, commenting, analysing data and critically reflecting on the performance of the PhD candidate whereby these tasks can be divided over promotors
- Ensuring co-authors follow the [WU Authorship, citation and affiliation guidelines](#); the promotor is not automatically a co- author
- Discussing the tailor-made training and supervision plan reflecting the personal development goals (improving skills and competencies) of the PhD candidate
- Exercising duty of care for the PhD candidate
- Planning and monitoring of progress of the PhD candidate
- Discussing career perspectives of the PhD candidate
- Monitoring social well-being of the PhD candidate
- Providing a go/no-go decision in time and ensuring that the process that leads to the decision is documented
- Safeguarding local supervision in the country where field studies occur (*if applicable*)
- Annual progress and development meetings with the PhD candidate
- Informing and updating chair holder (*if applicable*)
- Approval of the PhD thesis before submission to the Doctoral Service Centre

2 Responsibilities of the chair holder

The chair holder has overall responsibility for the balance between the number of PhD candidates and the available supervisory capacity in the group, the quality of supervision, and is supportive when it comes to the wellbeing of the PhD candidates in the chair group.

A chair holder is responsible for:

- The proper implementation of the WU PhD programme in the chair group
- Ensuring that the PhD supervisors in the chair group are familiar with the prevailing rules and regulations of the WU PhD programme, and encouraging them to follow a PhD supervision course and attend at least one PhD supervisor workshop every two years. Monitoring of the quality of supervision, e.g. via the Performance & Development (R&O) cycle
- Developing and implementing chair group policies regarding PhD supervision (*see below*)
- The financial viability of all PhD projects in the chair group, including scholarship, externally financed and external PhD candidates; every PhD project should have funding available for research and training for at least four years
- Monitoring the progress of the PhD projects in the group
- An inclusive academic environment in the group
- Research integrity in, and data management of the chair group
- Exercising duty of care for all PhD candidates
- Ensuring that potential teaching activities of the PhD candidate adhere to the rules set by Wageningen University and the collective labour agreement (CAO), so that they have sufficient time for the PhD training and research and are not overloaded with teaching duties
- Monitoring the supervision load of supervisors in their group and ensuring that all supervisors have sufficient time to deliver high quality supervision.
- The number of PhD candidates a supervisor can have depends among others on the type of project, the skills of the supervisor and the degree of independence of the PhD candidate.

3 PhD supervision policies in chair groups

The chair group is the most important 'home' for PhD candidates within the university. It has to be clear for PhD candidates what they can and cannot expect from their supervisors and the chair group. The chair groups should, therefore, implement good practices that support the supervisors in their duties towards the PhD candidates including:

- A recruitment and selection procedure by a panel of staff members
- Ways to ensure a social, supportive and dynamic academic environment for PhD candidates, for example, including:
 - a buddy system for new PhD candidates
 - PhD peer consultation groups per chair group or together with adjacent chair groups
 - an easily accessible staff member as a contact person for PhD candidates in case of personal issues
 - a platform to exchange PhD supervision experiences amongst the supervisors in the group
- Ensuring that every PhD candidate:
 - has a supervisory team with the required expertise
 - has a realistic planning and the necessary funding for research, training, conference visits, etc.
 - has a project that can be completed in four years (full-time equivalent)
 - has a project in line with their own wishes and career perspective
 - develops a Training and Supervision Plan in cooperation with the supervisory team that includes an agreement on the composition of the supervisory team and the availability and responsibilities of each supervisor
 - is entitled to regularly scheduled supervisory meetings
 - has annual progress and development meetings
 - attends PhD courses and is involved in academic exchange
- A policy for management of research data produced in PhD projects
- Merits regarding publishing and co-authorship with PhD candidates that are in line with Wageningen University policy and the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

Additional information

Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) has published a Guide for Supervisors, https://support.wur.nl/esc?id=kb_article&sysparm_article=KB0016840. This guide provides PhD supervisors with practical information on the PhD process, the golden rules for PhD supervision, guidelines about the go/no-go decision, and a worksheet for a conversation about expectations. Furthermore, WGS organises courses for PhD supervisors and regular lunch meetings to exchange experiences on specific issues and topics related to PhD supervision, see <https://wgs.crs.wur.nl/Staff>.

In case PhD candidates, after discussion with their promotor(s), remain concerned about any aspect described in this document in relation to their own PhD studies, they are advised to contact their graduate school.