

# The VLAG Graduate Programme

A genuine opportunity for talented MSc students to work on their **own** ideas!

27 May 2021, Karin Schroën



# Take the candidates on a journey defined by themselves

- Familiar with scientific research (MSc thesis)
- Pursue a career in science
- Realistic scientific idea → Grant proposal
- Completely new dimension!



# How to keep highly gifted students motivated?

- Extra activities (organised by the VLAG team)

## *Within Research Master Cluster:*

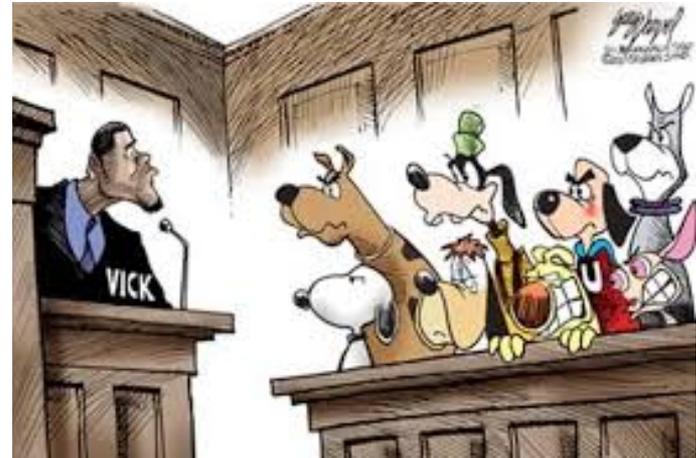
- Write a proposal of ~ 10 pages in 2 months
- Interactive program (self organisation & responsibility)
- Skills (personality test, presenting, pitching, peer review, feedback, writing, argumentation, rebuttals etc.)
- Background (science, publications, golden egg check)
- Work together with a personal coach on research topic



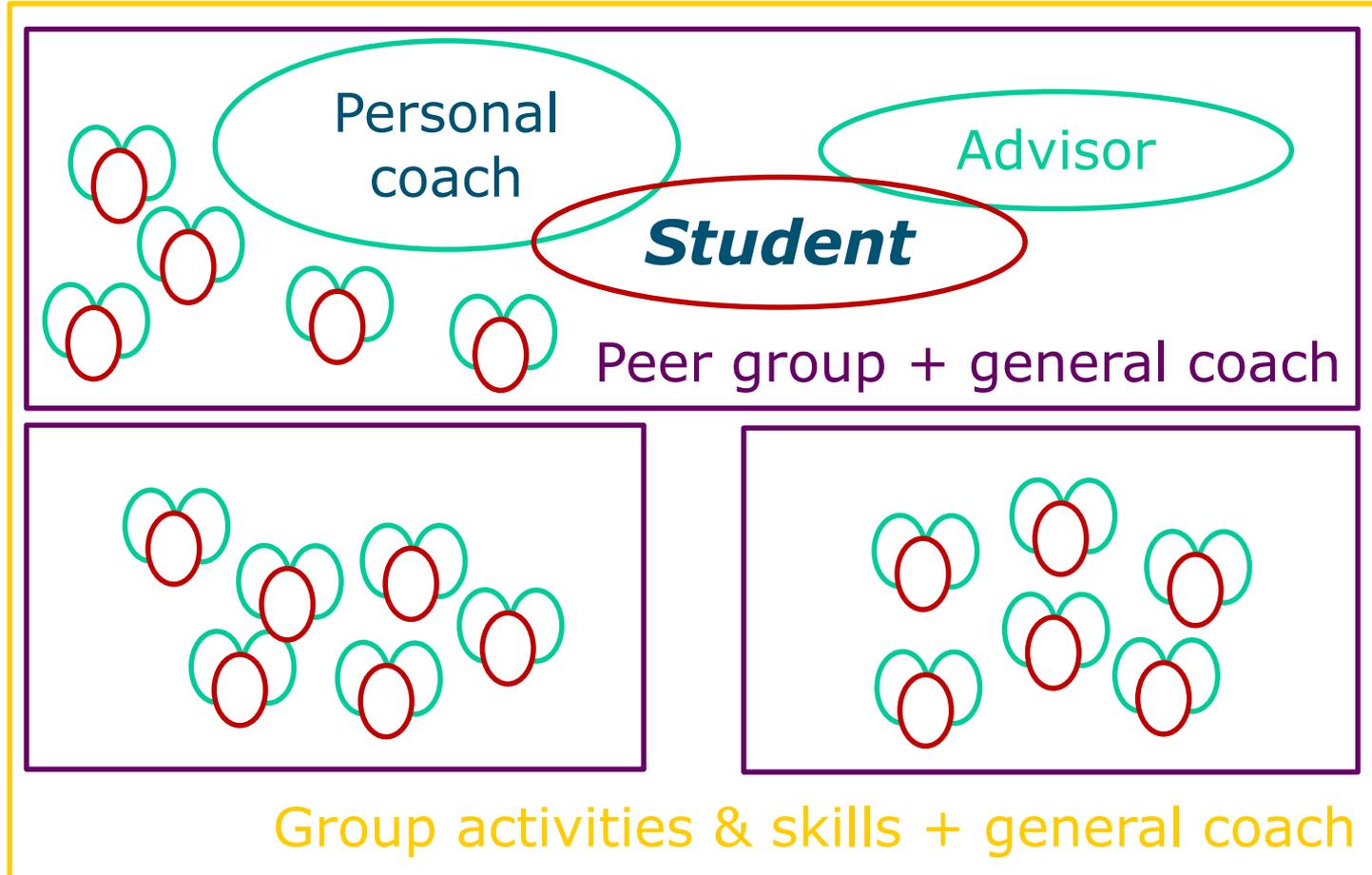
# Schedule & assessment in RMC / graduate program

## *Tentative*

- After 1 week: pre proposal < 1 page
- After 4 weeks: core of proposal 4-5 pages
- After 7 weeks: full proposal 11 pages
  
- Later: defence of proposals



# Student organisation



# Needed to make this a success

- An expert
- Skills in writing and defending a scientific research proposal
- Background information on how science works
- *Motivation!*
- *Structure!*



# What worked excellently

- The group was great
- Clever and dedicated candidates
- Learned a lot from each other; amazing!
- Very professional
- Genuinely interested in each other's topics
- Feedback was honest and on the level
- The team really wanted to help each other
- Even just before the final decision was made!



To see talents grow  
and shine is a  
privilege!

*I hope to also see you  
do that*

*Thank you!*



# VLAG Graduate Programme 2022

Information session 27 May 2021

Karin Schroën, Anouk Geelen

*The Graduate School*

VLAG

The logo for VLAG features a stylized teal graphic consisting of two curved lines that resemble a checkmark or a stylized 'V'. A vertical black line intersects this graphic, and the text 'VLAG' is positioned to the right of the lower part of this line.

# VLAG Graduate Programme 2022

- Funding of at least one PhD position
- Stimulate talented MSc students of WU to do a PhD within one of the VLAG groups
- Interested students who fulfil the criteria have to apply for the programme
- We will select max. 8-12 students who will take part and can submit their PhD proposal
- Next to the regular Research Master Cluster, the students are expected to take part in some additional VLAG-specific learning activities

# VLAG-specific learning activities

- A meeting with one or more PhD candidates to ask questions about being/becoming a PhD
- Informal meetings with the other selected candidates and/or VLAG staff to exchange ideas about the research, being a PhD, and preparing for the call (*'upon request'*)
- Workshop “Personal leadership and team dynamics” offered by VLAG and given by an experienced trainer to better prepare for the job

# Graduate School VLAG

- Mission: develop careers of young researchers and promote research collaboration in Biobased, Biomolecular, Food and Nutrition Sciences
- Research Theme's and participating groups
  - Chemistry for Life Sciences and Bio-based Economy (BCT, BIC, BIP, BNT, ORC and PCC)
  - Food Science & Technology (FCH, FHM, FPE, FPH and FQD)
  - Human Nutrition & Health (GN, HAP, NBH, ND, NMG and SSEB)
  - Biological Systems & Interactions (BPE, HMI, MIB, SSB and TOX)
- For more information: [www.vlaggraduateschool.nl](http://www.vlaggraduateschool.nl)

# You can participate if...

- You are a (former) student at WUR (graduation between June 2021 and December 2022) from one of the eligible MSc programmes (MBF, MBS, MBT, MFQ, MFS, MFT, MML, MNH)
- You are highly motivated to start a scientific career
- You belong to the best students of your cohort based on your (BSc and MSc) grades
- You have the support of a coach who is affiliated with VLAG
- You will participate in the course YWU-60312 Research Master Cluster: Proposal Writing (in p5 2021/2022, i.e. April-May 2022, the latest);
- You will submit an original research proposal for a PhD project, written by you on a topic of your choice, which fits the VLAG research domain, before 9 May 2022
- You are able to start the awarded PhD project in 2022

# Apply to participate in the programme

- Registration form
- A CV
- An official list with all BSc and MSc courses and grades;
- A recommendation letter from your proposed Promotor, a staff member with ius promovendi, of one of the VLAG chair groups;
- A letter with your motivation;

Deadline for application: **16 January 2022**

# Evaluation of the proposals

- Only selected candidates can submit a full PhD proposal for the VLAG Graduate Program, the deadline is **9 May 2022**
- A committee of 4 VLAG (associate) professors or senior scientists (representing the 4 VLAG themes) will assess the proposals/candidates
- The selection of the proposal will be based on:
  1. Quality, originality, feasibility and societal relevance of the proposal (50%)
  2. Quality of the candidate (50%) → during the interview
- Based on the scores of the proposal the committee will select a number of applicants for an interview and to present their PhD project proposal
- The application form is the same form that is used in the RMC course

# Time schedule 2022

- Online information session: May 27<sup>th</sup>
- Application deadline: 16 January
- Selection of students: between 16 January and 1 February
- Additional VLAG-specific learning activities: February – April
- Deadline to submit full PhD proposal: 9 May
- Result of the VLAG Graduate Program: End of June

# An alternative option...

- If your proposal will be finalized beginning of Sept 2021
- If you want to start your PhD ~ in the first half of 2022
- If your topic fits within the top sector Agri&Food
- If you are able (together with your supervisor) to bring in a private partner who will contribute (cash)

**→ Graduate School Green Top Sectors TKI 2021 call**

# Graduate School Green Top Sectors TKI 2021

- **Top sector Agri&Food** covers everything related to food, both the primary production as well as the processing, handling, marketing and distribution of food → largely overlaps with VLAG (health research does not fit within this call)
- Two PhD positions for A&F (and two for Horticulture & Starting Materials)
- Deadline for applications: **15 September 2021**
- Interviews: October 2021
- Decision: November 2021
- All VLAG supervisor have received an email from me with the procedure and application form on May 20<sup>th</sup>

# Remaining questions

[www.vlaggraduateschool.nl](http://www.vlaggraduateschool.nl) > Research > VLAG calls

[anouk.geelen@wur.nl](mailto:anouk.geelen@wur.nl)



# Q&A - 27 May 2021 meeting

- Can the advisor be from a different graduate school? Yes, that is possible if the supervisor and the planned research are part of VLAG.
- How much time investment is required from the personal coach? Ideally get 1 hour/week and determine what you want to be on the agenda.
- When can we expect to receive the invitation (rejection) for the interview? The time between submission and invitation are relatively short. Think in terms of max one month.
- I've written a proposal that is to be executed at the chair groups SSB (VLAG) and VIR (not VLAG). Is it then still possible to participate in this programme? If one of the main groups is connected to VLAG and your research topic fits within VLAG you can participate.
- What will the initial selection of the 8-12 students be based on? The selection is based on CV / grades (MSc) courses and motivation letter mostly. Minimum 7.5 average course grades, 8 for thesis.

## Q&A - 27 May 2021 meeting (2)

- How flexible is the deadline for a December 2022 graduation? The deadline is needed as the student must be able to start with the project in 2022.
- I didn't find any specific info about the interview and the evaluation committee. The evaluation committee will (in principle) be members of the VLAG board.
- In which periods will the RMC course be provided? RMC runs in all periods (please check the education schedule to be sure).
- Would I still be able to participate if I don't have a thesis grade yet on January 16th? Yes, you can.
- How long will be the presentation for the interview? 10 min presentation and 10 min Q&A

# Q&A - 27 May 2021 meeting (3)

- Selection to interview will not be decided by MSc scores? No, the ones presenting will be the ones chosen by the committee based on quality of their proposal.
- Are there grade minima for the RMC course as well or only for the VLAG GP? There is no minimum grade for RMC.
- So, am I right that grades of courses, thesis and internship are only used to get the qualification to submit proposal? Yes, that is to some extent the case. In a later stage the quality of the proposal is leading, but the quality of the candidate will also be weighed.
- What is the effort level for this RMC course? Can one say do this along the thesis? No, that is not a realistic plan.
- Quality of candidate will be weighed by interview only? Also, during the first stage the quality of the candidate counts.

# Q&A - 27 May 2021 meeting (4)

- Only 1 candidate will be granted, or could also be 2 if both have equally high qualities? That depends on the number of grants.
- Do you need to remain enrolled at the WUR when you are selected for the VLAG GP? No. How does it work when you are graduated? Do you need to "pay" for VLAG by means of tuition or anything? No.
- To do PhD in VLAG graduate school, is this program the only way? or there's another way? There are many other ways. This program is unique in the sense that the student can write her/his own proposal.
- Funding for next years is not certain yet, so no details or timelines are available for questions related to future rounds after 2022.
- Are all professors that work within one of the chair groups that are mentioned here affiliated with VLAG? Most of them are, but you can verify with the supervisor or with VLAG to be sure.

# Q&A - 27 May 2021 meeting (5)

- If I have done a different BSc, for example not at WUR or with a slightly different background, can I then still participate? Given that I am doing an eligible MSc now. Yes, you can.
- Suppose I'm doing a double degree program, can I enter the VLAG selection procedure while I have not finished my second degree yet (expected graduation summer 2022)? Yes, you can.
- How does it work if we want to do a PhD with one of the research institutes mentioned on the website? It is possible, but you also need to have a chair group involved.

## *TKI call 2021*

- What is the initial filtering based on for the TKI call? There is no filtering. All can submit.
- Will the Graduate School Green Top Sectors TKI programme also be done next year? The TKI call is not sure for next year.