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VLAG gives research a boost



Above all, I hope that you are all doing well, and are in good spirits. That is a prerequisite for working well on all the things that the VLAG community excels in, and also to enjoy a nice holiday! I hope that either of the two options holds for you, and that you are not too affected by the Covid-conditions.

In one of my previous messages, I mentioned that we are very busy at putting new initiatives out: geared toward giving the VLAG community a boost, mostly in relation to research, and PhD candidates. However, these initiatives are not limited to that. We work with talented MSc students, who are truly challenged by having to write their own research proposal within the VLAG graduate program. The candidates do this while being coached on the content by their prospective supervisor, and on skills through the VLAG program (digital this year). The rewards can be great, since there is money to award two projects! In this way, VLAG supports blue skies research and puts some of our newest researchers in the lead, as we have now successfully done for a number of years.

It is also good for you to know that we revisited the way of financing various things within VLAG, while trying to keep the paperwork to a minimum! Please check out the research page, and more specifically the VLAG fellowships section. We now have fellowships for both PhD candidates and post-docs for short stays (secondments) at renowned institutes. In this way the projects can get a

boost, making use of the knowledge and infrastructure that thus becomes available to our young researchers. Deadline for the current call is November 1st 2020 for activities starting in 2021. A second deadline for activities starting in 2021 is expected May 1st 2021.

Furthermore, there are options to bring renowned researchers to Wageningen, through our visiting guest researcher program for sabbaticals, master classes and symposia. For this there are not specific deadlines, and you can also continuously apply for extra funding for PhD trips which has been a recurring theme within VLAG from the first year of its' existence. What you can no longer apply for, and I know that this is a disappointment for some of you is supporting the drinks for the various activities that you organize. We prefer to spend the money on supporting science directly, and creating unique opportunities by giving the grants mentioned earlier.

Because traveling is a challenge, we launched an initiative to support on-line activities. One of our chair groups (Microbiology) embraced this opportunity, and are the first to organize a workshop supported by VLAG on: "In vitro models to study the effect of dietary and pharmaceutical components on human health". In this way, existing knowledge is made much more commonly available.

The next step that we will take is to redefine the VLAG open round. This time the program will revolve around recently (from January 2018 onward) appointed tenure trackers, in combination with the VLAG research themes, and in support of highly innovative ideas.

I guess that is all for now. You see that we have been pretty busy in trying to get all kinds of initiatives launched, and hope that you will actively make use of the options at hand. Never shy away from contacting us with innovative ideas to make science even more interesting. Please stay safe, and healthy!

Kind regards, also on behalf of the entire VLAG team,
Prof Karin Schroën, Scientific Director VLAG

From the VLAG Office



It is with great sorrow that we received the sad news that Betty Madzora, PhD candidate from the Food Quality and Design and Food Microbiology group and member of the VLAG PhD community, has passed away. Betty joined the last VLAG PhD week in July, where this picture was taken. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Betty's family, friends and colleagues both in Wageningen and in Zimbabwe.

VLAG PhD week

In July, the 46th edition of the VLAG PhD week took place three months later than planned. This edition was special in many ways, not the least due to the fact that the 1.5 m distancing Covid-protocol was followed. The safety of all involved was the highest priority and all precautionary measures to keep everyone safe were in place.



The course took place in a vast space (1200 m²) with capacity for 1000 people and this was the first time we used microphones.

Our strategy to keep organising this course in the classical educational setup is strongly motivated by the fact that the initial phase of the PhD program is crucial, especially in these times with limited and predominantly functional contact.

Yet, all special circumstances aside, the most special aspect of the course were the enthusiastic, committed and super friendly PhD candidates.

Next edition of the PhD week will take place in October '20 and is already fully booked.

Plans for PhD weeks in 2021:

48th PhD week: 29 March – 1 April 2021

49th PhD week: 30 August - 2 September 2021

Word from the VLAG PhD council



VLAG PhD COUNCIL

Open registration for Dutch language courses for all VLAG PhD candidates!
A new round of Dutch language courses will start this autumn 2020. Different levels are offered after office hours, and for the moment the courses are held online.

You can register for the course [here](#).

For more details please contact us at: phdcouncil.vlag@wur.nl

VLAG courses



VLAG organized 2 statistics courses last week. These were the first classical courses on the Wageningen Campus since the corona pandemic started. The WUR corona guidelines were followed. This picture was taken in Forum during the Applied Statistics course.

Courses open for registration:

- [The VLAG Online Lectures series](#), continuing lecture series, *new dates planned!*

- [Chemometrics](#): 13-15 October 2020, Wageningen
- [RMarkdown](#): 21 and 22 October 2020, Wageningen
- [Food proteins: functionality, modifications and analysis](#), 9-13 November 2020, Copenhagen
- [Sensory Perception & Food Preference: into the Future!](#), 7-10 December 2020, Wageningen
- [Summer Course Glycosciences](#), 13-17 June 2021, Wageningen

Other courses planned for 2020-2021:

- Safety by design, 18-20 November 2020 (registration will open soon!)
- Energy metabolism and body composition in nutrition and health research, December 2020
- Advanced Food Analysis, March 2021
- Healthy food design, April/May 2021
- Reaction kinetics in food science, July 2021

Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses

VENI courses

Wageningen Graduate Schools together with Wageningen In'to Languages organise two courses for researchers interested in applying for an NWO Veni grant. All researchers interested in applying for an NWO Veni grant in 2021 (deadline 20 May 2021) that will be carried out at Wageningen University can join the course "[Getting on Track with Your Veni Application](#)" in Jan-Mar 2021. The course gives insight into the Veni application procedure and trains applicants in the skills needed for this process. For the domains AES, SSH and ZonMw, submitting a pre-proposal (deadline 7 January 2021) is part of the procedure. For researchers who will submit their proposal to those domains, a short *online* course "[Preparing your Veni pre-proposal](#)" will be organised in October 2020.

For a complete overview of all WGS competence, skills and career development training activities, please click [here](#).

Other courses

Life Sciences meets Physics with Industry 2020, 9 - 13 November 2020, Lorentz Center Leiden

This hands-on [workshop](#) introduces young scientists to industrial research. For a whole week you will work in a team on a real company challenge; one on *Non-destructive 3D measurements for seeds*, and one on *Super pangenome infrastructure for seeds*. Register [here](#) (deadline 28 September 14h)

Calls and grants

14th VLAG Open Round

VLAG announces a new call for research proposals. Focus of the current call is to strengthen collaboration within and across VLAG Research Themes. Within Research Themes a group of recently appointed Tenure Track candidates has been identified. These Tenure Track candidates are invited to lead the initiatives. The call text including the list of eligible Tenure Track candidates can be downloaded [here](#). For additional information please contact [Vesna Prsic](#).

VLAG Graduate programme 2021

The VLAG Graduate Programme involves the funding of two PhD positions and aims to stimulate talented MSc students of Wageningen University to do a PhD within one of the VLAG groups. Applications are written and submitted by candidates who will obtain a Wageningen MSc degree between June 2020 and December 2021. The Research Master Cluster course is mandatory to be able to apply for the 2021 VLAG Graduate Programme. During the Research Master Cluster course

students write the PhD proposal that they have to submit to apply for the funding of the PhD project by VLAG. We ask all interested students who fulfil the criteria to apply for the programme (before 17 January 2021) and we will select 8-12 students who will take part and can submit their PhD proposal (before 10 May 2021). More information can be found on our [website](#).

VLAG Research fellowships

Research fellowships aim to promote the quality of scientific research and strengthen international collaborations. We aim to support scientific activities and events that make ground breaking ideas available for the VLAG community, spark crosspollination of knowledge, and catalyse international collaboration by providing funding/grants/fellowships for:

1. PhD candidates and Postdocs for secondments at international institutes/universities (NEW)
2. Visiting guest researchers for sabbaticals, master classes and symposia (RENEWED)
3. International excursions by groups of PhD candidates

For more information on any of the options listed above, please look at our [website](#) where you can also find the appropriate application form.

VLAG External Peer Review 2021 – Support grant

The External Peer Review of the research within VLAG Graduate School will take place in October 2021 and will be based on the new national Research Quality Assurance: Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027 ([Introduction video SEP 2021-2027](#)).

Assessment criteria are still: Research quality, Societal Relevance, and Viability. The emphasis will be on qualitative assessment and there will be no quantitative scores. Additional aspects such as Open Science, Academic Culture, HR policy and PhD policy will play a role in the evaluation, as well.

To help researchers within VLAG Research Themes to prepare for the Peer Review VLAG will provide support grants. To apply for the VLAG grant a short 'plan de campagne' should be submitted at latest on **October 2nd, 2020**. All chair holders and personal professors within VLAG were informed by e-mail.

For additional information please contact [Vesna Prsic](#).

Schmidt Science Fellows

WUR can nominate 3 candidates who can apply to become a Schmidt Science Fellow. Candidates applying for the 2021 cohort must have completed, or expect to complete, all the requirements for the conferral of their PhD, including a successful defense, between 30 April 2020 and 30 September 2021. For information on the selection criteria, the proces and the program, please take a look at <https://schmidtsciencefellows.org/> If you want to be one of the first WUR nominees, make sure to read all available information thoroughly and inform [Anouk Geelen](#) **September 6th the latest** by submitting a short motivation letter and a letter/email from your promotor indicating his/her support for your application.

ERC starting and ERC consolidator course

October 6th, 2020 Yellow Research will give an ERC starting grant and consolidator grant course. For information check the following [intranet page](#).

Candidates can register by sending an email to [Henriette de Ruiter](#)