



## Content

Word from our Scientific Director: The joy and burden of teaching within VLAG

From the VLAG Office

From the VLAG PhD Advisor

From the VLAG PhD Council

VLAG courses

Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses

Other courses and events

## Word from our Scientific Director: The joy and burden of teaching within VLAG



Two weeks ago, I was teaching again in a very classic lecture room setting. I always enjoy doing this, although I have not done that in a long time since I have worked mostly with knowledge clips in the last years, even far before covid made this the preferred way of working. To my surprise, there were not that many students attending the live lecture (about 30 out of more than 140 candidates for the course). When doing a second lecture in the same week, the attendance was even lower. Possibly, I did a terrible job during the first lecture

leading to this drop, but upon checking this with the students, they told me that this was not the case, and that they actually prefer to watch on-line, either at the time of the lecture, or at any time that they find most convenient.

Clearly, teaching has changed, and also within VLAG it is a topic that is discussed a lot, both for the PhD courses as well as the participation of the VLAG community in courses for BSc, and MSc students, and also in thesis projects for these students. Scientific staff, as well as PhD candidates spend a lot of time in creating valuable knowledge exchange and creation. In itself this is part of the joy of teaching. At the same time, it may also be perceived as a burden. For example tenure track staff needs to meet certain deliverables to proceed in the tenure track process. For PhD candidates with a WU contract teaching will take at most 10% of their time, and although this is not an obligation, we see that many PhD candidates without a contract, and also post-docs, participate quite fully in teaching, which is not necessarily required from a contract requirement point of view.



What is worrying from my perspective is that many of our PhD candidates participate in teaching rather unprepared. For that I would like to draw your attention to the courses that are given on Wageningen Graduate School level, and that may help you in enhancing your teaching skills, and thus in getting more out of teaching. You can even dedicate a part of your training and supervision plan to this. Especially for those interested in an academic career this could be an added benefit that can be obtained as part of doing a PhD project in Wageningen. What I mention does not just hold for courses, but also for supervising thesis students. Every additional skill that you can pick up during your projects is going to greatly benefit you in the future, since the skills that you pick up are universally applicable to many situations.

As you may have heard, at VLAG we have a working group dedicated to teaching load, and we hope to share the findings in the very near future with the VLAG community. There are certainly points that we would want to put under your attention and that are a concern for all of us. At the same time the working group will share tips and suggestions to make the teaching load more manageable for all within VLAG. We will let you know soon how we will continue with this, and hope that we can reach many of you to share our insights.

Kind regards, also on behalf of the entire VLAG office team, and stay safe and healthy,  
Prof Karin Schroën, Scientific Director VLAG

## From the VLAG Office

### VICI Grant for Louis de Smet

Louis de Smet has been awarded a Vici grant for his research proposal on efficient and selective water desalination. Nanoporous 2D and 3D materials that exhibit promising properties for energy storage can also desalinate water efficiently via electro-driven processes. This proposed research aims to add selectivity to such separation processes by fine-tuning their chemistry and understand the underlying fundamental mechanisms. With this innovative approach, salts can be obtained in their purest form, enabling the recovery and reuse of metals and nutrients. Implementing a multidisciplinary approach, in collaboration with three industrial partners and two research institutes, the stability, energy efficiency and upscaling of the separation process with the advanced, nanoporous 2D and 3D materials will also be addressed.

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### VLAG Fellowships

VLAG has a yearly budget to support the quality of scientific research and strengthen international collaboration, through so called VLAG Research Fellowships.

The next deadline for **PhD/Postdoc fellowship** activities starting in 2022 is **1 May 2022**.

NEW:For 2022/2023, we extend the fellowship programme with **fellowships for Assistant Professors**.

The deadline for Assistant Professors to apply for activities starting in 2022 is also **1 May 2022**.

The grant for **visiting guest researchers** can be used to fund sabbaticals, masterclasses and symposia.

Based on the questions from our scientific community, we now also include an option to fund **PhD thesis committee members**. Committee members invited by a chair group may be eligible for reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs in case such a researcher extends his or her stay with the aim to actively and substantially contribute to a VLAG workshop or masterclass.

For any of the options listed above, please use the appropriate application form from our [webpage](#).

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### Looking for research support? Go to the SupHub

The [SupHub](#) brings together information on research support services that are available at WUR for every stage of the research cycle. From writing a proposal, funding, lab work and data gathering to analysing, publishing, and creating impact for your research output. The SupHub provides a single point of entry to quickly identify the service you need, regardless of who offers the service and where the information is located.

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## HR Budget for empowerment trainings or coaching to support and stimulate development

WUR is committed to being an inclusive organization, with equal opportunities for all. There are currently a lot of [initiatives to create a more inclusive environment](#). One of the issues that needs attention is the number of female professors and women in senior positions, which is still lagging behind. Therefore there is budget available in 2022 for empowerment trainings or coaching to support and stimulate your development within AFSG and WUR. If you would like to make use of this budget or have questions please contact your HR advisor. Let us know if you are interested **before 1 June 2022**.

## From the VLAG PhD Advisor

One of the challenges I faced when starting with WUR 'during covid', was to find my way within the organisation. While working from home, figuring out how an organisation works and getting to know the right people is much harder when you don't run into colleagues in the office or at events. Fortunately, I had my colleagues helping me out and I could draw upon some prior experience. As a PhD you will probably encounter a similar challenge when you're new to the WUR or when you're dealing with new questions and situations you haven't experienced before. Similar to my case, your colleagues might be a valuable source of information and can refer you to the resources you're looking for. Additionally, you can also take a look at the [help and support page](#) for an overview and links to some of the resources available for PhD candidates. A link to the newly launched Research Support Hub (Suphub) was added to the page as well. I continue to discover relevant resources and meet interesting colleagues within the organisation. I hope the support pages I mention above help you to do the same!

Regards,  
[Jochem Jonkman](#)

## From the VLAG PhD Council

### Joining the VLAG PhD Council

Are you interested in improving your PhD experience and that of others? Then join the VLAG PhD Council. We are a diverse and multicultural mix of PhD candidates from all the different VLAG chair groups that meet up monthly to discuss the interests of the PhD candidates and other relevant developments.

Are you for example interested in organizing a colloquium to explore rewarding core skills for PhD candidates such as grant application or career pathways either in academia or industry? Or would you like to help collect PhD feedback on the PhD trajectory? There are many more aspects where you can contribute and build a stronger community among VLAG PhD candidates!

We are always looking for members, currently especially from the chair groups: FHM, BNT, BIP, HMI, MAT, PPH. If you are interested please send us an email at: [phdcouncil.vlag@wur.nl](mailto:phdcouncil.vlag@wur.nl)

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### Announcement; Colloquium on Help and Support system for PhD candidates

Ever wondered about the support system available for you in your PhD trajectory? Do you know that beyond your research, your wellbeing is of utmost importance? The VLAG PhD Council is organizing a colloquium to explore our options. The details of date, time, and venue will be shared with you soon!

## VLAG courses



**VLAG PhD COUNCIL**

### Highlighted event

[Postgraduate course Healthy Food Design](#)

The healthy food market is booming. Adding a biologically active ingredient to a conventional food matrix might sound simple but it is not the smartest way to design innovative, effective and successful food products. The course is aimed at PhD candidates, postdoctoral

researcher, professionals from both academy and industry, that are interested in knowing how to design healthy foods for specific categories of consumers.

### Other VLAG courses open for registration

[VLAG Online Lecture Series](#): 19 May 2022; Prof. Maria Barbosa 'microalgae: translating research into applications.

[Dairy Protein Biochemistry](#) (27-29 June 2022)

[Microalgae Process Design: from cells to photobioreactors](#) (1-8 July 2022)

### Planned courses:

Advanced Proteomics (6-10 February 2023)

Rheology, the do's and don'ts (1-3 May 2023)

*Tip! For an overview of all courses regularly organised by VLAG take a look in [past courses](#) and contact the [VLAG office](#) for the planning.*

## Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses

### Registration open

[WGS PhD Workshop Carousel](#) (20 May 2022)

WGS are organising the annual WGS PhD workshop carousel; a wide variety of workshops, with topics ranging from 'managing your supervisor' and 'storytelling' to 'entrepreneurship' and 'impostor syndrome'. During the event, you get to try out different sessions: Some of the workshops are full training sessions, while others are teasers that give insight into more elaborate courses and workshops.

### Highlighted course

[Scientific Publishing](#) (12 May 2022)

Providing insight and awareness in the process, rules, ethical aspects of scientific writing and publishing

For a complete overview of all competence, skills and career development training activities by WGS, please click [here](#). Or click [here](#) for the direct links to the webpages of the other graduate schools.

## Other courses and events

**Omnia's Opening Dialogue: [Navigating complex crises together](#)** (10 May 2022)

The 1<sup>st</sup> Wageningen Dialogue in the new building Omnia puts our global food system centre-stage. What innovations and collaborations can help to transform the food system and contribute to climate, biodiversity and human nutrition? Where are the tensions and how can we strengthen, challenge and spark each other?

**Symposium on Gastric Protein Digestion** (11 May 2022)

The division of Human Nutrition and Health (WUR) are organizing [this symposium](#) (9:30 to 11:30) before the PhD defenses of Ruoxuan Deng and Andrea Rivera del Rio.

Confirmed speakers are; Prof. Alan Mackie (School of Food and Nutrition, University of Leeds, UK) and Dr Gail Bornhorst (Faculty of Food Science & Technology and Biological & Agricultural Engineering, UC Davis, US).

**[The Open Science Community Wageningen Launch Event](#)** (13 May 2022)

The Open Science Community Wageningen (OSC-W) is the new Open Science community of Wageningen University & Research (WUR) and associated research institutes. A bottom-up community introducing and fostering open science practices. The community comprises academics and support staff from different disciplines and all career stages. The common goal is to stimulate transparency, accessibility, and reproducibility of responsible research across all disciplines.

### **BFC Career Event 2022**

[BCF Career Event](#) is the perfect meeting place for everyone who is or wants to be active in Bio/Life Sciences, Chemistry, Food or Pharma: BCF Career Event Netherlands - Jaarbeurs Utrecht (19 May 2022)

### **Workshops on ERC Starting and Consolidator grants (24 May, 15 June or 8 September)**

RVO organizes 3 [workshops](#) on ERC Starting and Consolidator grants.

Are you planning to submit a proposal for an ERC Starting or Consolidator grant? Are you wondering if your profile is strong enough or whether your idea is 'mature' enough? Would you like to find out about the do's and don'ts? If so, this workshop might be interesting for you.

### **NWO Life 2022 (24 & 25 May 2022)**

[NWO Life](#) is a unique annual congress covering all disciplines and scale levels in the Dutch Life Sciences, from femtometre to kilometre, from cell to planet. The overarching theme of this year's NWO Life is 'Resilience'.

### **Biobased Coatings Europe 2022 (8 & 9 June 2022)**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> [Annual Biobased Coatings Europe](#) will give you an insight to the industry's latest policy evaluations and, while focusing largely on developments within the coatings industry in Europe, will also concentrate on updates and future forecasts on supply and demand of the key world markets.

### **WUR workshop on ERC Starting and Consolidator grants (14 June 2022)**

Candidates who are seriously considering applying in the coming round can register for a course organised by Yellow Research. During this 1-day training course in Wageningen, the ins and outs of writing a good ERC proposal will be covered. You can register by e-mailing **Henriette de Ruiter**, indicating in your registration email how you meet the submission criteria, when you obtained your PhD and in which chair group you want to do your research.

### **BioBusiness Summer School (27 June - 1 July 2022)**

[The summer school](#) is an introductory course for academics who are contemplating a career switch to industry and young professionals in their first industry jobs. During the programme participants will learn the basics of the main business topics, gain insight into the world of Life Sciences companies, meet leading business people and expand their international network.

### **Grant Application Course (12 & 13 October 2022)**

During this [intensive online course](#) participants will be taught by seasoned scientists, grant application experts who have reviewed hundreds of grants, assessors from funding bodies and many more.