



Inhoudsopgave

Challenging times for the entire VLAG community!

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Challenging times for the entire VLAG community!

Of course I hope that you all had a good Summer, that you were able to enjoy some time away from work, and that you are all ready for and enthusiastic about the new academic year.

In the last months we have talked to many of the VLAG groups, and it is very nice to touch base with everyone, and talk about all the new initiatives that take place. It feels as if a new elan has arrived in VLAG-land, and that is really nice to be part of. On the other hand, we also noticed that quite a number of people mentioned that they feel stressed, ranging from tenure trackers who are worried whether they can comply with the demands, to professors who experience more difficulty in acquiring projects, to PhD candidates and post-docs who want to do well within their projects, but face many challenges that make their life more stressful..

Although this is part of the jobs that we do, I also feel that we as a community are not that good at recognizing stress, and dealing with it. In general, it is not that likely that we talk about it, partly because we don't feel comfortable with the topic. The key to controlling stress is to start by talking about it with your supervisors and colleagues. Alternatively, it is recommendable that supervisors dare to start this discussion in their role as mentor, and make stress a topic that can be discussed freely. I know that this is not always that easy, but happen to know that there is a really nice course organized by Wageningen Graduate Schools (Stress Identification & Management) specifically directed toward PhD candidates and Post-docs, that I can recommend. It will give you insights in what stress is, how you can identify it, and how to deal with it from a personal perspective (including a stress prevention action plan). I felt it important to share this information with you all. If stress is tackled early on, it will not become this multi-headed dragon that it sometimes turns into, and that can turn out to be very detrimental in the lives of our young talents.



In the last half year, many of our community have contributed to the documents written for the external peer review (EPR) that will take place in October this

year. For those of you who don't know what the EPR is: every 6 years we are evaluated on the quality of the work done, and the vision that we have for future work. It used to be that this would take place at the level of chair groups, but this year for the first time this is at the level of VLAG themes. We have four VLAG themes, and the chair groups operating within each theme needed to write a joint document which was a challenge and opportunity in one. A challenge because a lot of people work within one theme and not that many know each other, and an opportunity because now more people have had the opportunity to work together toward a common goal. I think that the entire process has brought together (parts of) the VLAG community, and I look forward to the days in October when the committee visits us.

As was the case for the four VLAG themes, also VLAG office needed to write a document for the EPR with all the achievements, and maybe even more importantly, the vision on how to support the VLAG community in the best possible way toward a bright future. It is really challenging to do this, but also very impressive to see all the activities that we as VLAG carry out to support groups in many different ways. In the next FLASH I hope to be able to share more about the EPR and with a bit of luck some findings of the EPR committee. Hopefully they will be just as enthusiastic about the whole VLAG community and our achievements as I am.

With this I have come to the end of my contribution. If you have any questions, please know where to find us, and enjoy the last bits of Summer!

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

From the VLAG Office

Short update from the new PhD Advisor

Many of us have been able to get some [vacationing](#) done during these past weeks. For me, my summer break was also a nice time to look back at my first months working as a PhD advisor with VLAG. It's been great to meet and interact with so many of you already in different settings: the group visits, check-ins with 1st year PhD candidates, the course I helped coordinate, meeting with the VLAG PhD Council... These interactions really help me to find my way in the organisation, and to know what's going on and to be in the loop. The coming time, I'm hoping to meet more and more of you in person as well. We've already had our first on-site PhD course, and are hopeful to see more of that happening these coming months.

Previous time, I promised to keep you a bit up-to-date related to the follow-up of last year's PhD survey. In the meantime, the Wageningen graduate schools have prepared a draft action plan. We're already working on a number of these actions, even though the plan isn't finalised yet. For instance, we're improving communication about the go-to channels for information on different issues, such as housing, mental health, supervision questions etc. And did you already take a look at the [renewed landing page](#) with information related to the WUR PhD Programme? There's much more going on, but I'll share updates on other points another time. Like previous time, I'm closing with an invitation: Feel free to reach out if you'd like to have a conversation! I'm really looking forward to getting to know you and hear about your ideas, questions and experience.

Regards,
Jochem Jonkman

PhD defences in the Academic year 2021-2022

Starting this academic year (2021-2022) on 6 September 2021, physical PhD defences will be the norm again, maintaining the current conditions:

- One, or after approval by the Dean of Research two, opponent(s) are allowed to attend the defence online. So, minimal three (or after approval two) opponents have to be present in the Aula, including at least one WUR (associate) professor.
- The PhD candidate, at least one promotor and the first WUR opponent have to be present in the Aula.
- max. 50 guests are allowed in the audience.



Online defences are only allowed when corona restrictions, such as travel restrictions, do not allow for a defence in the Aula. A request for an online defence must be made at least 3 weeks before the defence date to promovendi@wur.nl. Click [here](#) for the most recent updates and additional information!

HR Together

The HR departments try to meet the need for HR services and try to continuously improve their services. This is currently done through the development process "HR Together", in which the HR departments work together on further quality improvement. An important part of this process is to connect with the various target groups within WUR and to take into account the experiences and views of employees. HR is therefore setting up a panel of who can provide feedback during this process.

If you are interested in joining this panel and want to commit yourself to this HR project for about 2 years (appr. 10h per year), please contact [Tarik Bosman](#).

All PhD candidates are welcome to join this panel (it's not only for those who are WUR employed!) and also, tenure trackers are still missing in the panel while needed for a good representation!

VLAG Graduate Programme 2022

Applications are written by candidates who will obtain a Wageningen MSc degree between June 2021 and December 2022. If you know an excellent MSc student who e.g. is planning to do an MSc thesis with you, it might be interesting to discuss this opportunity to write a PhD proposal, and possibly get it granted. An early start of their thesis might be helpful in making it possible to fit the Research Master Cluster course in their study programme. The latter is mandatory to be able to take part in the [VLAG Graduate Programme](#).

High Tech for a Sustainable Future - call 2021

Do you want to collaborate with your 4TU colleagues and make real impact? Don't miss the next call for the [High Tech for a Sustainable Future programme](#)

Data Driven & High tech: knowledge support questionnaire

Where do you go or who do you send an email to if you want to integrate data science into your project? The Wageningen Data Competence Center notes that it takes a long time to involve the right experts in data science projects, if they can be found at all.

That's why WDCC want to involve you by asking about your experiences in searching for data-driven high-tech (DDHT) people and need your input to get to the heart of the problem and to conduct a good problem analysis. Go to the [questionnaire](#).

WUR Vidi procedure

The upcoming NWO vidi deadline has been published. For the internal procedure see the [website](#)

VLAG courses

Highlighted event:

[Advanced Course Bioprocess Design](#) (4 – 8 October)

With recent advances in molecular biology and a growing biomass availability for use as industrial feedstock, the bio-based economy is getting a wider range of inputs. Scaling up the bio(techno)logy innovations and implementation in large-scale factories or biorefineries clearly is a present bottleneck: industries are struggling to get the bio-opportunities to the market, as experienced industrial bioprocess designers and operational experts are not readily available to meet the growing needs.

VLAG courses open for registration

[Modelling of habitual dietary intake - using SPADE](#) (11 – 12 October)

[Big data analysis in the life sciences](#) (25 – 27 October)

[Ecophysiology of food-associated micro-organisms: Roles in health and disease](#) (29 November – 1 December)

[Sensory Perception and Food Preference](#) (7 – 10 December)

Planned courses

Advanced Organic Chemistry (2021-2022 - 10 sessions, once every month)

Advanced food analysis (24-28 January 2022)

Applied Enzymology (21-25 February 2022)

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

Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses

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

Highlighted course

[RMarkdown](#) (6 and 13 December)

RMarkdown is a freely available software program that combines text, statistical analysis, and graphics into one file. Data storage, analysis, and presentation of results (in a paper or presentation) takes places in a single computer program. This has advantages like e.g. changes in a dataset are immediately processed in statistical models, graphs and reports. Workflows in RMarkdown can be considerably more efficient and therefore faster. Multiple RMarkdown files (e.g. each file being a paper) can easily be combined to form a thesis.

Other courses and events

BFC Career Event 2021

[BCF Career Event](#) (6 October) is the largest career event for the Life Sciences. It is the meeting place for everyone who is or wants to be active in Bio/Life Sciences, Chemistry, Food or Pharma. BCF Career Event offers you the opportunity to get into direct contact with a broad range of employers in the sector, but also with other organisations that can help you further in your career. At BCF Career Event over 2,000 job seekers and students are present as visitor.

ReMaT - research management training – online workshop

[The ReMaT workshop](#) (21 & 22 October) is an intensive, interactive workshop, providing an introduction to a number of key topics relating to research management including project management, grant acquisition, and science and technology related entrepreneurship.

ReMaT is especially tailored to meet the needs of early-stage researchers especially from the 2nd year of PhD studies onwards, but is also suitable for others involved in research, or in directing research. There is a strong emphasis on European networking.

New Frontiers ONLINE Symposium - Translational Glycoscience

[This symposium](#) (18 & 19 November) gathers national and international leading scientists to provide a universal overview on current advances in the field of glycobiology. The symposium will cover various diseases including genetic disorders, cancer, neurodevelopmental disorders, infectious diseases, as well as avenues for nutrition, health and aging. The symposium is aimed at both junior researchers as well as faculty members.

External calls & grants

LNVH Distinguished Women Scientists Fund (DWSF)

[The call for the LNVH DWSF](#) is open. This travel grant is intended for female postdocs from all disciplines, up to 3 years after obtaining their PhD, working in the Netherlands, who would like to travel abroad within the framework of their research.

Applications can be submitted until **15 December 2021**