

Teaching by VLAG PhD candidates – a compendium of the WUR rules, VLAG guidelines, and best practices from the VLAG community

Based on the work of the VLAG Teaching working group (2021-2022) and the outcomes of the Strategy meeting on November 8th, 2022

WUR rules

<https://www.wur.nl/en/education-programmes/phd-programme/aim-content-of-the-wageningen-university-research-phd-programme/teaching.htm>

PhD candidate involvement in teaching activities is very likely of interest for both PhD candidates and their chair groups. Teaching experience can be very useful for PhD candidates to further develop and improve their teaching skills, especially if they have an interest in pursuing an academic career. Teaching activities include both practical course contributions and supervision of theses, more information on this below.

Important: there is a difference between two categories of PhD candidates regarding teaching activities:

A. PhD candidates employed by WUR

PhD candidates with an employee contract at Wageningen University & Research (WUR) are regarded as scientific staff members with research and teaching responsibilities and can therefore be asked to spend maximally 10% of their time on teaching activities at WUR. A chair group can make an appeal to an employed PhD candidate to spend more than 10% of their time on teaching activities. In those cases an extension of the employee contract is compulsory to compensate for the extra time.

B. PhD candidates not employed by WUR

PhD candidates not employed by WUR do not have a formal authority relationship with WUR and therefore they cannot be asked by the chair group to take up teaching activities at WUR. However, if they want to develop their teaching skills, they are allowed to perform teaching activities and gain practical experience as part of their education and training programme. This should begin by the PhD candidate asking the chair group, not the chair group asking the PhD candidate.

How can you calculate your time spent on teaching?

Practical course or lecture teaching activities

The time spent on practical course assistance and teaching lectures consists of contact hours with students, preparation hours (which often happens before the course begins) and hours needed for marking exams or correcting reports. The total number of hours for each course must be discussed with the course coordinator.

Supervision of MSc and BSc theses and internships

PhD candidates regularly spend time on supervising BSc or MSc students on their theses or internships. Depending on the type of thesis the number of teaching activity hours by PhD candidates vary. In the table below you find the number of hours that you should use for your TSP. If the thesis is a blended form of lab and desk study, a corresponding ratio must be used to calculate the supervision hours.

	Hours, Thesis (36 ECTS)	Hours, Thesis (24 ECTS)	Hours, Thesis (12 ECTS)	Hours, Internship
Lab	90	56	20	20
Desk	38	30	20	20

Standard supervision hours of PhD candidates for BSc and MSc projects to be used for TSP

VLAG Guidelines

- Supervisors discuss the learning goals and added value of involvement in teaching activities with their PhD candidates (employed by WUR and not employed by WUR) at the start of the PhD project.
- It is highly recommended for PhD candidates to follow [WGS courses on teaching](#) early on.
- Involvement of a PhD candidate in teaching activities starts after the TSP and the research proposal are submitted to VLAG office.
- PhD candidates and their supervisors are involved in the planning of course-related teaching. Teaching schedules will be communicated at least three months before the start of the course.
- Time and activities related to research are limited during periods with substantial teaching activities.
- At least three months before the start of a thesis student, the PhD candidate should be notified in order to manage their own planning.
- Thesis students should work on a topic that is part of their PhD project.
- The PhD candidate who supervises thesis students acts on authority of a staff member who has the final responsibility.
- PhD candidates can supervise a maximum of two students (BSc, MSc or interns) at the same time.
- Teaching activities should be finished six months before the PhD contract ends.

Best practices from the VLAG community

- An extended six-year PhD contract (four years research and two years teaching) may be an alternative to hiring permanent teaching staff – included in the collective labour agreement (CAO) 2020. It should be noted that such a combination contract cannot be extended.
- A thesis market (e.g., two times per year), or similar platform, at the level of the chair group or cluster or study program, where PhD candidates can meet potential thesis students and promote their projects.
- Several approaches to improve efficiency exist within and between multiple chairs within VLAG (e.g., a flexible pool of teachers shared by several chair groups).
- One contact person per chair group organizes PhD involvement in courses, and one (or the same person) for BSc/MSc thesis and internship coordination. This person may delegate dividing the teaching tasks among PhD candidates to one or more PhD candidates. However, the PhD candidates cannot be responsible for finding a solution if not all tasks can be taken up by PhD candidates.
- Send an email to all PhD candidates in the chair group to explain the chair group's specific practicalities, including e.g., information about contact persons, deadlines etc. A suggestion is included as appendix.
- Engage PhD candidates in the entire teaching process and make them part of the teaching team.

Appendix - Suggested follow-up action by chair holders

Dear PhD candidate,

Teaching others is a valuable part of your PhD trajectory. According to WUR PhD programme policy the maximum time spent on teaching activities by employed PhD candidates is 10% (i.e., 84 working days = 672 h). You have to keep track of all your teaching activities in your training and supervision plan (section III).

The supervision of MSc and BSc students is coordinated by <name> and is within our chair group arranged as follows. <...> The teaching hours for an MSc thesis are 90 hours. See also the information on the [WUR website](#).

Teaching activities related to courses, including practicals, tutorials, thesis rings etc., are coordinated by <name> and are yearly divided and communicated in <month>.

We would like to advise you to consider one or more of the WGS trainings on teaching to support you in this role and work on your teaching skills.

If you have questions about this, please contact one of the contact persons mentioned above.

Best regards,
<education coordinator(s) or chair holder>