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## Word from our Scientific Director: Truth, values and sincerity in science

Above all, I hope that you all have had a great Summer, with well-deserved holidays that have revitalized you. Welcome back, and hopefully that also implies you enjoy campus-life live! The title of this month's contribution refers to many things that are currently very 'hotly' debated, for example in the KNAW (Dutch academy of sciences) advice on social safety in academia, but also in a theater performance that is brought to Wageningen after previous successful shows in Twente, Utrecht and Eindhoven. They both revolve around scientific integrity; the first one giving advice on how to maintain this, and the second one showing how 'easy' it is to find certain things normal that are not. If you have time, please go and see the theatre performance that is going to be shown a number of times; I think it will open not only your eyes, but more importantly, a discussion on how we work together. If you are in doubt about certain things happening in your surroundings, please talk to others. The only thing that you need to ask is, ..... is happening, do you think this is normal? The fact that you open a discussion is what counts, and you may find that others are experiencing similar things. It is not only good to share, but you are also invited to discuss with us when you find that this would help.

Within VLAG, we hear many stories that all revolve around co-dependency, be it between PhD candidate and supervisor, between staff and tenure track (criteria), between BSc/MSc student and PhD supervisor, and so on and so forth. I am sure that you can come up with many examples by yourselves. Of course, we try to do what we can to make things work for everyone; for example I am currently talking to chair holders (one per VLAG research theme) about teaching load, and also sharing recommendations that came out of the teaching load working group. Still, we feel that we could do more, and that we could help with monitoring the PhD trajectory more closely. To this end, we have introduced '9-month mentoring meetings' about 1.5 years ago. We feel that this has a lot of added value for our PhD candidates.

Currently we are setting up a 'PhD track event', targeted at PhD candidates that have been with us between 2-2.5 years. The intention of this event is to have a joint reflection moment; we will briefly 'revisit' the PhD week to allow you to look back, but foremost look ahead to things that are still coming. An important role will be played by more experienced PhD candidates whom we will ask to share their own do's, don'ts, and any advice they would like to give. We (Cornelia and Yvonne) will be available to discuss individual TSP updates with the participants, and provide advice where needed to complete it in a way that not only does justice to the number of credit points you need to accumulate, but more importantly in a way that allows you to get most out of it in terms of personal development. We will allow ample time for social interactions, and yes, there is going to be food as well! So be on the lookout for the first edition that will take place in November or December this year; it is going to be a rewarding day for all participating!

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



### Yvonne Smolders 25 years working at VLAG

On September 1<sup>st</sup> our colleague Yvonne Smolders celebrates her 25 years jubilee at VLAG. During these 25 years Yvonne welcomed around 2000 (!) VLAG PhD candidates and organized around 120 courses. If you would like to congratulate Yvonne with this special



milestone, please send her a note or postcard via the **internal WUR Courier 184 / room X0107 Axis building**. We would very much appreciate your contribution to surprise her!

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### VLAG Research Fellowships Call

VLAG has an [annual budget](#) to support the quality of scientific research by strengthening national and international collaboration for:

- PhD candidates and Postdocs for international secondments
- Assistant Professors for international visits
- Visiting Guest Researchers (for sabbaticals, master classes, symposia)
- PhD Excursions

The next deadline for the international visits/secondments starting in 2023 is November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Within the last VLAG Research Fellowships call we were able to grant fellowships to five PhD candidates and two Assistant Professors.

VLAG Call for grants for the Visiting Guest Researchers and PhD Excursions is always [open](#).

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### WGS Postdoc Talent Programme Call 2022-2.

Talented eligible researchers can apply for a two-year position within one of the Wageningen University research groups. For requirements and selection criteria, please take a look at [the call text](#). Deadline for applications is October 1, 2022. Grants will be awarded in December (four positions are available) and projects should start in June 2023 at the latest.

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### Expression of interest for research cooperation on Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (DSAI)

We are glad to inform you of the possibility to submit an expression of interest (Eol) for research cooperation on DSAI. Wageningen Graduate Schools and Wageningen Data Competence Center together organize this opportunity to strengthen the advancement of DSAI in our domain.

The objective of this call for Eol is to select interdisciplinary research challenges to be tackled in the context of PhD and post-doc projects. [Submissions](#) are open to both WU and WR.

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At the request of the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) has published: **Social Safety in Dutch Academia: From Paper to Practice**. [A guide](#) with recommendations and tips for preventing or tackling inappropriate behaviour at an early stage. Its purpose is to initiate a process for increasing social safety in Dutch academia.

Social safety is also top of mind at WUR. A program is currently underway within WUR in which various interventions and activities will be undertaken in the coming year for both staff and students aimed at, among other things, more awareness and an accessible support structure. You can read more about this in the [social safety intranet group](#).

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### Mindlab

To kick off the WUR programme 'Looking out for each other' on the subject of social safety, WUR organizes a professional theatre performance called '[Mindlab](#)' from 28 November to 7 December: "a performance that touches the heart of science". It is an intriguing performance that seamlessly connects to current themes within the research world such as leadership, social safety, integrity, and the balance between research and education. The number of seats per performance is limited. If you want to ensure a spot, please send an [e-mail](#) to be notified once registration is possible.

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### VLAG on LinkedIn

Would you like to be updated on courses (in and outside WUR), conferences, vacancies etc. Make sure to follow VLAG on [LinkedIn](#). Also if you would like to share news or events with the VLAG LinkedIn community, you can [send](#) your input to us.

## From the VLAG PhD Advisor

Doing a PhD is a good thing! We sometimes forget to highlight the benefits that a PhD brings: becoming an expert in a specific field and developing the associated skills, working in collaboration with others, and improving your ability to share knowledge through better communication skills. A [recent paper](#) shows that positive expressions get less interaction online than their opposites. To counter, it calls for more attention for the positive aspects of being a PhD candidate. We can all play an active role for ourselves or those that we supervise or collaborate with: Celebrating the steps you take along the way, building connections with colleagues and peers around the world, supporting each other to limit the impact of negative experiences. The paper provides some recommendations, but is also realistic: sometimes you might just have to take a break. However, being independent does not mean you have to do everything on your own. Positive interactions with your peers and supervisors are very instrumental to everyone's wellbeing. I'd like to encourage you to consciously pick a moment to talk about something positive together. What good experience can you share?

Regards,

[Jochem Jonkman](#)

## VLAG courses

### Highlighted course

[Life Sciences Data Integration Challenge](#) (24 – 28 October '22)

Over 5 days, participants will form multi-disciplinary teams to analyse a research problem using statistical and mathematical modelling pipelines, with the aim of uncovering new insights and observations. Combining big data analysis with modelling methods, i.e. combining statistical tools with explainable/interpretable models. During the challenge, teams will be provided with data from one of the following possible topics;

- Increasing production of crop defense compounds in tomatoes
- Deciphering the action of drugs to tackle breast cancer

- Analyzing interactions between microbes in the human gut
- The synthetic design of microbial communities

Alongside an overview of the available data, teams will also receive supporting references, tools that may be useful for data analysis, and example research questions that they could look to tackle. At the end of the challenge, teams will be judged on the novelty of their analysis and the results they obtain – we encourage teams to think out of the box and to combine tools in new and exciting ways!

### [NanoBioPhysX course](#)

Interdisciplinary fundamental science and outreach course activity linked to the NanoBioPhysX club. For PhD candidates working on fundamental topics (experiment or theory) within the crossover field of **nanotechnology**, **biology**, **physics** and **chemistry**, interested in broadening their academic scope and societal reach.

### Other VLAG courses open for registration

[Advanced Proteomics](#) (6-10 February 2023)

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

### Highlighted courses

[R-Markdown](#) (31 October & 3 November '22)

In the two day course you will be introduced to the basics of starting an R Project in RMarkdown: how to setup a decent file structure, how to import data and how to process them and how to export the results. Some example data will be used but it will also be possible to work on your own data. The course will have many practical assignments.

[Philosophy and Ethics of Food Science and Technology](#) (start 19 January '23)

This course includes hands-on dealings with ethical, philosophical, and societal issues surrounding science. The discussion with the guest scientists from various disciplines is based upon relevant actual cases from the realm of food technology, biotechnology, nutrition and health.

The goal of this discussion series is to spark educated discussions on various facets of science and about the responsibilities of being a scientist.

[Start to supervise BSc & MSc thesis students](#)

Monthly short workshop meant for teaching staff, Postdocs and PhD's **who are not supervising thesis students yet, but are about to**, at WUR.

Students expect certain behaviour of their supervisor, but the supervisor also has expectations of his/her student. Questions about responsibilities for supervisor and student arise. In this 2,5 hour workshop you will be provided with some general information about supervising thesis students and discuss good practices, expectations, basic skills. Furthermore there will be room for questions.

**Postdoc course:** [Developing my research vision](#) (start 22 September '22)

The course is aimed at young scientists who aspire to a career in academia or, more specifically, those who must develop a research vision for their Tenure Track. Those interested please register as soon as possible as the first training day is 22 September.

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

Everything is Connected (theatre show inspired on Protein Transition research)

In this [guided theatrical tour](#) on Wageningen Campus, a dancer, a musician and a performer give their artist impressions on “protein transition”. A musical humorous show with dazzling insights in the history and future of our beloved planet.

**NIZO Plant Protein Webcast Series: Eliminating off-flavours** (15 September '22)

[NIZO Webcast](#) to hear about NIZO's latest insights in key areas such as the impact of processing, the complexity of aroma profiles and off-flavour elimination.

**NWO Biophysics** (10 & 11 October '22)

This [conference](#) presents an programme covering a broad range of scientific topics varying from microscopy and cell biology to biomedical engineering. It is the very heart of Dutch research groups in these fields of expertise, creating a place to explore, push boundaries and celebrate interdisciplinary science together.

**BloSB course: Single-cell Analysis** (10-14 October '22)

The [course](#) features a mix of lectures and practicals, and the opportunity to perform hands-on analysis of scRNA-seq data in R.

**ReMaT - research management training ONLINE** (10 & 11 October '22)

[This ReMaT workshop](#) is designed for early-stage researchers, particularly PhD candidates from the 2nd year onwards.

**Grant Application Course** (12 & 13 October '22)

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.

**Conference Microbiome Interactions in Health and Disease** (24-26 October '22)

The [Microbiome Interactions in Health and Disease](#) meeting will bring together leading scientists and clinicians from the fields of microbiology, gastroenterology, nutrition, cancer and public health to discuss the latest developments in this fast-moving area.

## Other announcements

**CineScience movie talks**

In collaboration with the Heerenstraat Theatre in Wageningen, WUR host the CineScience movie talks. Every month, scientists exchange the academic arena for the cinema with screenings of films and documentaries that they have personally selected. Scientists can now [submit movie suggestions](#) for CineScience 2022-2023.

*In Dutch only;*

**Gratis kennis maken met NAV?**

Wil jij jezelf professioneel ontwikkelen en helpen om de kwaliteit van de voedingswetenschap te verbeteren? Als pas afgestudeerde MSc *en* als eerstejaars PhD kandidaat kun je 1 jaar gratis kennis maken met de [NAV](#). Je hebt dan toegang tot de bijeenkomsten, workshops en lezingen. Check of je voldoet aan de [registratie-eisen](#) en [stuur](#) je registratie-aanvraag binnen 1 jaar na afstuderen.