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## Communication within the VLAG community in times of COVID

For the time being, Covid still has us in its grip, which is far from pleasant. Still, I hope that you are doing well, are in good spirit, and are taking good care of each other. It is important to keep an eye on what is feasible given the circumstances, as also stated by the management of the department and university. It is absolutely valid to rethink the criteria that we have, and maybe be content with less, simply because that is what can be realistically done. For this, communication between team members is essential to prevent expectations that are not shared and that may lead to situations that are not constructive, or even counterproductive. Please help each other going through the 'Covid motions' by starting these discussions, as a supervisor or as a PhD candidate, and reaching out. This is the most important thing that we need to do, as I experience in my daily work, as VLAG director and group leader.

Besides, I would like to update you on other VLAG activities that are also related to communication and exchange of ideas. The VLAG open round 'new style' has resulted in highly innovative projects. Basically, teams were formed that developed topics that bring research fields together that normally would not have been on each other's radars, and I am very happy that we could grant half of the applications. Congratulations to Julia Krug, Guanna Li, Silvie Timmers, Marie Hennebelle, Julia Keppler, Elske Brouwer-Brolsma, Etske Bijl, Gert Salentijn, Sarah D'Adamo and Nico Claassens. I encourage the teams that were not granted to submit your projects elsewhere; the proposed ideas were really great! Communication, networking and exchange are also targets of the VLAG Fellowship Program that enables our young researchers to visit expertise centers. We received four requests at the end of last year, and we were able to grant them all, about which you can read more in this FLASH. Moreover, the coaching program for the PhD council started in January. I was really happy to see this initiative take

off, and I am convinced that it will help various aspects related to communication and representation of our PhD community, consequently making the whole VLAG community stronger.

In the last FLASH I mentioned that we are preparing for the scientific external peer review which takes place every 6 years. We have been supporting enthusiastic teams of researchers that are now writing the contributions for the four VLAG Research Themes. I know that a lot of people contribute to make this process a success, and I also feel that this is of essence. The peer review is perhaps the most ultimate opportunity to get high-level feedback on how we operate and are seen within our fields, and I would like, together with you all, to try to get the most out of this process.

Before wrapping up, I would like to introduce our newest VLAG team 'recruit': Dr Jochem Jonkman. He will set up a PhD monitoring program, which I feel is essential to allow VLAG to contribute even more to progress and well-being of our PhD candidates during the entire trajectory of their project. He has consulted many, is currently developing his ideas, and will start a pilot soon. I hope that you are all enthusiastic about the prospective of having a program in place that will contribute to making the PhD trajectory even more valuable, and help VLAG keep in touch more closely.

As you have read, we are pretty busy with new initiatives to keep the VLAG community vital and hope that this also affects you positively. We want to be there for you, and do useful things for our community. Ideas are always very welcome, never hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards, also on behalf of the entire VLAG team, and 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



### Introducing our new colleague Jochem Jonkman, PhD Advisor

Generally, what follows in an introductory message is a list of previous positions: I studied Food Technology in Wageningen, worked at a mango processing factory in Ghana, did a PhD in food supply chain design, supported a project for agri-business development in East-Timor, and worked as researcher and research coordinator at the Supply Chain Innovation group of HZ University of Applied Sciences. But this list doesn't tell you, for instance, that I received reviews questioning why the paper I wrote even exists (Thanks, reviewer #2!), that I didn't manage to obtain funding as a starting researcher with the FCT in Portugal, or that the impostor syndrome is just around the corner, waiting to strike.

Neither list necessarily tells you much about who I am, nor what I will be doing...

With the VLAG team we are currently shaping the role of the PhD Advisor in relation to the PhD monitoring process. As a start, we have been going through the feedback from the PhD Survey that so many of you responded to last year. We're developing an action plan to follow-up on the signals we've received. I'm sure you'll hear more about that in one of the next newsletters.

For now, feel free to reach out if you'd like to have a conversation. I'm looking forward to getting to know you, and hear the stories you have to tell.

Regards, [Jochem Jonkman](#)

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### Good news!

Joris Sprakel, received a [grant](#) of just under two million from the European Research Council for his ground-breaking research proposal. His project focuses on strange and strong chemical bonds: catch bonds. The professor at the Physical Chemistry & Soft Matter group studies the secrets of an unusually strong chemical bond discovered at the start of this century in nature. This bond increases in strength under pressure. Understanding this amazing chemical characteristic and eventually copying it under laboratory conditions, is the challenge he faces.

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### PhD/Postdoc fellowships for secondments at international institutes/universities

VLAG provides grants which allow VLAG PhD candidates and Postdocs to visit a top research institute/university abroad. We were able to grant the four applications that we received last November. Congratulations to **Jilu, Kaustub, Bart and Rob**. We wish you a great experience during your time abroad.

The next deadline for the PhD/Postdoc fellowships for activities starting in 2021 is May 1<sup>st</sup> 2021. Please take a look at our website ([VLAG Calls - Vlag Graduate School](#)) for all requirements and the application form. There you can also find more information about the other VLAG Research fellowships; Visiting guest researchers for sabbaticals, master classes and symposia and International PhD excursions (both with continuous application).

#### *VLAG PhD/Postdoc fellowships Nov 2020*

Jilu Feng (FQD/FPE) 6wk visit to INRAe, Rennes, France
Kaustub Singh (ORC) 3m visit to IMDEA Energy Institute, Madrid, Spain
Bart Lagerwaard (HAP) 2m visit to Eurocat Technology, Reus, Spain
Rob de Haas (PCC) 3m visit to University Washington, Seattle, US

## VLAG courses

### Highlighted event:

#### **Lipid Droplet/Oleosome online Young Scientist Event (29 March afternoon).**

Biobased Chemistry and Technology group, is organising the 2nd International Lipid Droplet/Oleosome Conference that will take place on 2 and 3 December 2021 in Strasbourg

(<https://lipiddropletsoleosomes.org/en/>)

Based on the initiative by the PhD candidates involved in the Lipid Droplets/Oleosomes consortium this online Young Scientist Event will take place 29 March and is aimed to strengthen the bonds between young scientists from different disciplines who are interested in Lipid Droplets/Oleosomes (From Biology to Soft Matter and Food Science).

If you would like to participate (free of charge), please contact [Dr Costas Nikiforidis](#)

### VLAG courses open for registration

[2<sup>nd</sup> edition Postgraduate course "Healthy Food Design"](#) (3, 4, 6, 7 May)

*This course provides the essential skills for designing healthy foods for specific categories of consumers in the European legislative framework of nutritional and health claims.*

[Online Summer Course Glycosciences](#) (10, 11, 17, 18 June)

*This broad online course in glycosciences combines general introductions in the field of carbohydrates and glycoproteins with in-depth sessions.*

[3<sup>rd</sup> Master class Healthy and sustainable diets: synergies and trade-offs](#) (5 - 7 July)

*Master class to broaden disciplinary thinking in agriculture, food sciences, nutrition and health to arrive at a disciplinary research perspective on healthy and sustainable diets. It aims to contribute to synergy between scientific disciplines, applied research and stakeholders along the food supply chain.*

[11<sup>th</sup> edition of Reaction kinetics in food science](#) (12 – 17 July)

*The use of kinetics is necessary for many aspects of food research. Enzymatic, chemical, physical and microbial reactions in foods occur simultaneously during processing and storage, and usually it is a cascade of reactions. The food scientist needs to optimize the quality of food, and this can only be done in a quantitative way with the proper use of kinetics.*

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

*In this course the focus will be on statistical modelling of habitual intake using SPADE (Statistical Program to Assess Dietary Exposure). The course will consist of a combination of lectures on general principles of modelling habitual intake, lectures on how to use SPADE, and practical exercises with SPADE.*

### **VLAG statistics courses open for registration**

Introduction to R (31 May – 1 June)

Applied statistics (7 – 9 June)

Chemometrics (14 – 16 June)

For more information and registration, see [VLAG Statistics courses](#)

### **Other planned VLAG courses 2021**

Big data analysis in the life sciences (October)

Sensory Perception and Food Preference

## **Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses**

### **WGS PhD TRAINING ANNOUNCEMENTS ~March 2021~**

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

Please note that there will be online, in-person and blended training sessions available. This may change according to the COVID-19 guidelines of the government at that time. Please check the training schedules on our [website](#) for the most recent updates.

### **Highlights**

[Introduction to WUR Library for PhD candidates](#) (11 March)

*In 30 minutes, you will be introduced to all the tools and services of WUR Library relevant to the first steps of your research. This is an online session in MS Teams. Please mail to [office.library@wur.nl](mailto:office.library@wur.nl). You will receive an invitation by email, so you can join the Teams meeting*

[The Essentials of Scientific Writing and Presenting](#) (blended training starting on 12 March)

*Presents an overview of how to effectively write and present scientific information*

[Systematic approaches to reviewing literature](#) (starting on 25 March)

*In medicine, systematic reviews are the standard way to review evidence. This method is rapidly growing in importance in other disciplines. Systematic review is now used to describe theory, concepts, methods and evidence. The course offered at WU is interdisciplinary. In addition to what they require*

to do their own review, participants learn about research in other disciplines and they will learn how to report their research in ways that are more broadly accessible.

[Effective behaviour in your professional surroundings](#) (30 March, 6 April, 12 April, 21 April)

To assist you in building and empowering your attitude, behaviour and position in your professional surroundings.

[Brain-friendly working \(new online format\)](#) (30 March, 6 and 13 April)

This program aims to increase understanding of the brain and provide tools on how to directly apply the knowledge in the PhD work.

[Introduction to LaTeX](#) (13 April)

An introductory workshop that covers the basics and the useful features of LaTeX; an automated document preparation system and mark-up language which can be used as an alternative to text processors like MS-WORD.

[Bridging across cultural differences](#) (22 and 29 April, registration will be open in the second half of March 2021)

Key tactics for a global career: learn how to apply the understanding of cultural difference to improve your day to day interactions.

[Ethics for Social Sciences Research](#) (19 May)

One-day seminar on dealing with ethical issues in human subjects research

[Mobilising your - scientific - network](#) (23 and 30 September)

Offers you the essential tools to create a network through a variety of introductions, discussions and assignments

#### **New dates available**

[Project and Time Management](#) (11 May, 27 May, 22 June)

Planning, control, monitoring and management of the research project and time are essential in accomplishing the PhD.

#### **Other courses and training of interest**

[Writing Lab Free feedback on your academic text during the Editing Desk walk-in hours](#)

[English for IELTS and RATER](#)

[Sports Centre the Bongerd](#) offers [health courses](#).

## Other courses and events

#### **Online course: Writing a vidi proposal (23 May and 3 June)**

Researchers who want to write a vidi proposal this year that they want to carry out at Wageningen University can register for an online course given by Yellow Research. The 3 webinars are on May 28th from 10.00 to 12.00 and on June 3rd from 10.00 to 12.00 and from 13.00 to 15.00 pm. You can register by sending an mail to [Henrieke de Ruiter](mailto:Henrieke.de.Ruiter@wur.nl)

#### **Call for abstracts NWO Life2021 (26 – 28 May)**

Do you want to contribute to NWO Life2021 by giving an oral or poster presentation about your research progress? The call for abstracts is now open! Visit the website for more information or to sign up for the Life Newsletter: [www.nwolife.nl](http://www.nwolife.nl)

Extended deadline abstract submission for oral presentations: **16 March**

#### **Call for abstracts for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual IMGC Symposium on Milk Science and Health (15 - 17 June)**

[Submit](#) your abstract for the upcoming two 2-day IMGC VIRTUAL Symposium 2021 which is co-hosted by WUR. This symposium's theme addresses very hot topics in milk research: "Future Perspectives on Milk Bioactives and Proteins". Abstract submission closes: **23 March**

Click [here](#) for more information on the symposium.

### **8<sup>th</sup> edition of Innovation for Health (15 – 16 April)**

[Innovation for Health](#) is the premier conference for key players in Life Sciences and Health in the Netherlands and Belgium and is attended by 900+ visitors annually. This edition is planned as a hybrid conference, with a live programme and exhibition on 15 April in Rotterdam. The conference brings top-notch speakers to the stage, displays high impact innovations, highlights best practices, and demonstrates inspiring developments in healthcare. This year's conference has a focus on immunology.

### **Virtual International Conference on Food Digestion (6 - 7 May)**

This conference will cover six themes, with four speakers per session, three of which are reserved for PhD students.

- *In vitro* digestion models
- Food interaction and meal digestion
- Absorption models
- Lipid digestion
- Starch digestion
- *In silico* models

Abstracts are to be submitted **by 25 March at 11 am**. Instructions can be found on the Infogest website: <https://www.cost-infogest.eu/ACTIVITIES/Virtual-ICFD-2021>

Click [here](#) for registration for 6 May

Click [here](#) for registration for 7 May

### **BioBusiness Summer School (28 June - 2 July)**

Are you a PhD, postdoc or a Master student and are you interested to pursue your career in one of the many Life Sciences companies in the Benelux? Do you want to know more about your career opportunities and learn about key business topics? BioBusiness Summer School is a 5-days course, focussing on key knowledge of main business topics in Life Sciences and allowing you to connect with professionals from the field and expand your network with like-minded peers. Get in touch with leading organisations from the Benelux such as Janssen Pharmaceutica, EY, Avantium, Thuja Capital, myTomorrows, Scenic Biotech and many more!

Early-bird discounts until 31 March 2021. Click [here](#) for more information & registration.