Joint degree programmes: best practices and challenges from the Wageningen perspective

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- Agriculture, environment & nature, food & health
- Research university with 2000 doctoral candidates
- Top three worldwide in our domain
- ‘Best university’ according to students in the Netherlands
Gab van Winkel

- Work in research policy since 1986
- Gave workshops on research integrity
- Now researcher and adviser on doctoral education
- And doing my own PhD on ‘the doctorate 1920-2020’
Definition and terminology
Benefits from joint doctoral programmes
Challenges and questions for our discussion
  ● Equal partnership
  ● Quality assurance
  ● Three or four years?
  ● Financial incentives
Before we start our discussions

- Freely share experiences and concerns
- Spread the new ideas, not the gossip...

This presentation is:
- inspired by my experiences at Wageningen University
- not necessarily the view of Wageningen University
Definition and terminology

- Joint, double and dual degrees: is there a difference?
- Always: one thesis, two diplomas
- On or two public defences
- One thesis evaluation?
Benefits from joint doctoral programmes

- **Individual level**
  - International experience for the doctoral candidate
  - Collaboration among supervisors

- **Institutional level**
  - Sharing best practices

M.C. Escher, 1953: ‘Relativity’
Challenges – Equal partnership

- Should partners be in the same quality league?
  - in research environment
  - in quality of supervision
  - in opportunities for learning and teaching
  - in thesis requirements
  - in thesis evaluation

- What if differences are too large?
Challenges – Quality assurance

- Co-responsibility during the whole doctoral project
  - in external review of the project proposal
  - in selection and admission of the candidate
  - in monitoring performance and progress
  - in setting and communicating thesis requirements
  - in the review procedure by examiners
  - in the public defence

- Make sure to address this all in a joint degree agreement
Challenges – Three or four years?

- Endless discussion, but you can’t wait till it’s resolved!

- Universities with a four-years doctorate tend to demand the same from their partners. Is that fair?

- How about EU programmes that fund only three-years doctorates? Settle in or find funding for the fourth year?
Challenges – Financial incentives

- Example: most Dutch universities demand that the (first) thesis defence takes place at their own location

- Is this just a way to control quality standards?

- Or is it due to the output-based budget system of universities in the Netherlands?
  - budget partly depends on number of doctorates
  - doctorates only ‘count’ if defended ‘at home’
Thank you for freely sharing your views!