

# The WGS graduate programme

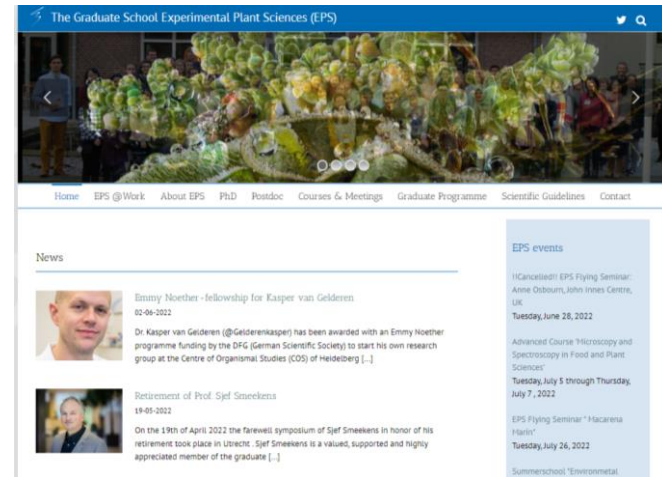
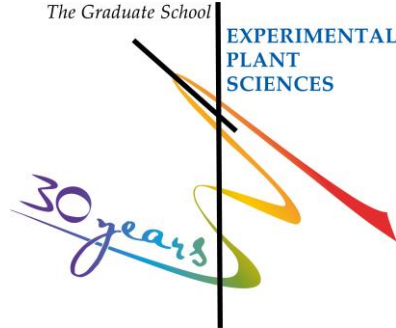
June 2022, Ingrid Vleghels



# Introduction

Dr. Ingrid Vlegghels

*Executive secretary of the Graduate School Experimental Plant Sciences,  
The Netherlands*



# Graduate schools at Wageningen University

Wageningen University has 6 graduate schools that organize *academic research* and the *PhD programme*

- Organised by theme: Plant (national) – Ecology (national) – Environment (national network) – Food & Biobased – Animal – Social Sciences
- Thematic allows specific collaborations/interactions
- Umbrella organisation: Wageningen Graduate Schools



# Graduate School Experimental Plant Sciences

Collaborative network of Plant Science research groups:

- University of Amsterdam 
- Groningen University 
- Leiden University 
- Utrecht University 
- Radboud University Nijmegen 
- Wageningen University 
- Netherlands Institute for Ecology 



# Graduate School Experimental Plant Sciences

## *The EPS community:*

- Stimulates collaborations
- Strengthens the plant science community
- Central portal for communication with stakeholders
- Allows collaboration in a national graduate programme

# Wageningen Graduate Schools - tasks

Graduate Schools have three main tasks:

1. To coordinate, develop and facilitate *doctoral education and training*;
2. To stimulate and coordinate the development of a coherent *research programme* within the mission of the graduate school;
3. To safeguard, monitor and stimulate the *quality and progress of research* by staff, postdocs and PhD candidates.

*In the Netherlands:* MSc education is not organised by graduate schools



# The WGS Graduate Programme – *writing and funding*

*Allows talented MSc students the opportunity to:*

- Write a research proposal as part of their MSc programme
- Choose a PI as writing coach/PhD supervisor and research group
- Together with PI choose a PhD subject
- Submit their proposal for funding in *WGS Graduate Programme* call



# The WGS Graduate Programme – MSc

## *MSc course Research Master Cluster: Proposal Writing*

Aim: to improve professional skills in writing and defending a scientific research proposal

- Writing, presenting and defending
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Argumentation and presentation skills

Result: ~110 proposals each year





# The WGS programme - call

- Deadline in September
- Allows proposals written by MSc students to be submitted
- Awards ~ 6 – 8 proposals per year
- 6 - 8 talented students can start with their self-written research proposal per year



Katerina Mouka, Nicole van 't Wout Hofland and Monique van Schie, Resource Magazine, no 12, 2022



## Start vier nieuwe projecten in Graduate School

Er gaan vier nieuwe projecten van start in het programma Graduate School (G) Topsector Tuitbouw & Uitgangsmaterialen (T&U). Binnen dit programma kunnen excellente masterstudenten aan de slag in samenwerking met kennisinstellingen en bedrijven, een voordeel voor promovendi en onderzoekers. Het programma wordt uitgevoerd in samenwerking met de Topsector Agri & Food.

[Topsector TU news.  
https://topsectortu.nl/nieuws/start-vier-nieuwe-projecten-in-graduate-school/](https://topsectortu.nl/nieuws/start-vier-nieuwe-projecten-in-graduate-school/)  
November 2021

## Five EPS proposals granted in TKI Graduate School Green Top sectors/Wageningen Graduate School call

The TKI graduate programme Green Top Sectors offers MSc students in the Plant Sciences the opportunity to write and submit their own PhD proposals with a research group of their own choice. A selection committee selected 4 EPS students, 3 from EPS and one from WAGS (Jiri de Leeuw), whose projects were awarded with a fellowship. In addition, Wageningen UR selected another 2 EPS proposals for funding.

### Granted proposals TKI Graduate School Green Top Sectors call:

Karin Peels, UvA (coach Dr. Halsea Starn) - Stabilizing unstable traits: elucidating the mechanisms underlying non-Mendelian segregation in crops

Sarah Kullmann, WUR (coach Dr. Erik Peleman) - The spring image: ecological effects of a parasitoid virus through caterpillar oral secretions

Sarah Hassan Marzouk, WUR (coach Dr. Jan van Kan) - Steps help plants: Exploring plant defense compounds to improve disease resistance in chrysanthemum

### Granted proposals Wageningen UR:

Monique van Schie, WUR (coach Prof. Doef Hiebert) - Navigating plant development: how the molecular compass SDOX1 coordinates plant architecture

Lizanne Kisteborg, WUR (coach Prof. Ger Krens, Dr. Caroline Aguilera) - Friend or foe? Exploring endophytic colonization by the banana pathogen Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. cubense in banana and other plant species

<https://www.graduateschool-eps.info/five-eps-proposals-granted-in-tki-graduate-school-green-top-sectors-wageningen-graduate-school-call/>,  
November 2021

# The WGS graduate programme - EPS

- Getting acquainted with the graduate school
  - National collaboration
  - Visits to research groups
- Participate in Annual Meeting Experimental Plant Sciences, Netherlands
- Visit to Plant Breeding company
- Matchmaking with companies



# The WGS graduate programme - EPS

## Why attractive for students?

- Students interested in a career in science *meet and interact*
- The students *choose* a PI as supervisor
- Combined interests leads to *new research* subjects
- Students *think* about, and *discuss*, their choices
  - Choice to do a PhD
  - Choice of PhD supervisor – a test of the relationship
- Learn to design a research question/objectives/experiments

# The WGS graduate programme - EPS

Why important?

- Create opportunities for talented students
- Create a link between MSc programme and PhD programme
- Enhanced visibility of young talent within graduate school
- Strengthening of national network

# The WGS graduate programme - EPS

When these students start their PhD they:

- Are better prepared for a PhD – ownership, proactive
- Are active members of the graduate school
  - PhD councils
  - Committees
- Are visible members of the community
- Offer support and sharing of experiences with MSc students
- Are more active in outreach



<https://www.genesproutinitiative.com/>





Thank you

