

The Graduate School for Production Ecology and Resource Conservation (PE&RC) intake meeting

Welcome to the graduate school PE&RC! This document gives you more information about PE&RC, the activities we organise and how we further can support you during your PhD. For more detail of courses, other activities and forms see the [PE&RC website](#).

1. **What is PE&RC?**

- PE&RC is a national graduate school with nearly 600 PhD candidates, some 100 postdocs and 260 academic staff members, spread over 7 institutes:
 - Naturalis Biodiversity Center
 - Netherlands Institute of Ecology
 - Radboud University, Institute for Water and Wetland Research (IWWR)
 - University of Amsterdam, Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics (IBED)
 - Utrecht University, Ecology & Biodiversity Group
 - Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Department of Ecological Sciences
 - Wageningen University, mostly chair groups of Plant Sciences and Environmental Sciences
- The [PE&RC Office](#) is based in Wageningen. Theo Jetten (PE&RC executive secretary) and Inka Bentum (assistant to the executive secretary) are responsible for procedures related to project evaluation. All other elements related to the PhD programme (training and education activities and support in the programme at large) fall under the responsibility of the PhD team:
 - Claudius van de Vijver (Head PE&RC PhD Programme)
 - Sabine Vreeburg (PhD Programme coordinator)
 - Naomi Zweerus (PhD Programme coordinator)
 - Jacqueline Verhoef (Office assistant, PhD Programme)
 - Inka Bentum (Office assistant, PhD Programme)
 - Maartje Moerman (Office assistant, TSP & TESH Certificates)

2. **Activities offered by PE&RC**

- [Postgraduate Courses](#) (methodological and topical)
- [Competence, skills, and career development training](#)
PE&RC is directly involved in the competence, skills, and career oriented training activities offered by Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) at Wageningen University. Activities in this programme are open to all PhD candidates of PE&RC, but the reduced course fee only applies to PE&RC PhD candidates of WU. That said, we are very willing to explore possibilities of offering these types of courses at our non-WUR PE&RC partner institutes as well. So, when interested in a specific course like these, please let us know!
- [PE&RC weekends](#)
- [PE&RC Day](#)
- [Discussion Groups](#)
- [PE&RC meetings, workshops and seminars](#)

3. **The Training and Supervision Plan (TSP)**

- The TSP is a training **and** supervision plan. It involves:
 - a. a section on training and education activities
 - b. a section related to your supervision, including the evaluation procedures
 - c. an agreement on co-authorship
- It documents the plan for your personal development to become an independent scientist with T-shaped skills. You can see the TSP as an awareness document in which learning elements can be specified. It also allows you to discuss your development plan, teaching responsibilities and supervision with your supervisors in a structured manner. It should be seen as a plan of opportunities.
- The TSP is not engraved in stone: planned activities and supervision details can be changed in time.

- The minimum number of ECTS per (sub)category are listed in the TSP form (in brackets after each category item). Given the minimum requirements, you decide which activities you do to collect a total of at least 30 ECTS.
- Activities can be done anywhere in the world and are not PE&RC restricted at all.
- An approved TSP results in a financial 'backpack' of at least € 3,500,- (provided by your research group or institute) to fund TSP-related activities. Note, however, that this is the low-hanging fruit, and that you are encouraged to try and obtain additional funds (e.g., a travel grant or a course subsidy).
- PE&RC does not need any updates of the TSP once it has been approved. We do encourage you to keep track of things, by documenting attended activities in the TESP form (see below).

4. Training and Education Statement Form (TESF)

- The TESP is the track record of all the (training) activities (courses, scientific meetings etc.) a PhD candidate has attended during the PhD project.
- While the TSP is the plan, the TESP is the reality.
- We advise you to keep track of all the activities you have attended using the TESP. In this manner you keep an overview of all achievements and know where you stand regarding the requirements.
- A TESP that meets the training and education criteria allows for a Training and Education Certificate and a PE&RC Training and Education section, supplied by PE&RC, which can be included in the thesis.
- The certificate and section to be included in the thesis are requested once the thesis has been submitted to the reading committee by submitting a signed version of the TESP (in PDF) and an unsigned version (in WORD) to [Claudius](#).
- Before you submit the final, signed TESP we advise you to send Claudius a draft version for feedback.

5. Project proposal

- The project proposal is meant to define the PhD research in a clear, realistic and feasible manner that ultimately results in a PhD thesis of appropriate quality.
- Note that the project proposal too is not engraved in stone and research can in time divert from the original proposal.
- It is of added value to write your own project proposal, even if your supervisors have already written a proposal to secure funding for your project. The reason being that the writing process will give you ownership of the project and will give you a much clearer view of what you want to do and why you want to do it.
- We explicitly offer the service of providing an external review of your project proposal where reviewers are asked to evaluate the quality, innovativeness and feasibility. This is not done to grade your work or place judgement, but merely to generate feedback on your proposal that can help strengthen the proposal.
- In the project proposal form, you can list potential reviewers. The process of external review is much sped up if you prime potential reviewers prior to the submission of your proposal to PE&RC. For one, you can check whether they are willing and have time to do the review, and secondly, this plants the seed such that they generally respond sooner to our formal invitation to review the proposal.

6. Go/No-Go Evaluation

- The Go/No-Go evaluation determines if a PhD candidate can proceed with his/her project. In fact it is a formal confirmation of the supervisor(s) that you have the potential to achieve a PhD degree within the given timeframe (four years in case of a full-time contract). Actual date of the Go/No-Go varies between 8-14 months after start of the project and depends on the institute you are at.
- We encourage you to do a 'mock' evaluation in the period that leads to the formal Go/No-Go. For this, ask your supervisor(s) to fill in the evaluation form and do the same for yourself. In a personal meeting, compare the answers and discuss any discrepancies. Subsequently identify those elements that need improvement and make a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) plan of action to tackle these.
- Please familiarise yourself with the consequences of either a 'Go' or 'No-Go' decision.

7. [Confidential advice / mediation](#)

- Doing a PhD is not always easy and has its ups and downs. Some people are very able to navigate away from the downs, while others need a bit of support or advice in those times. If this is the case or you have a conflict with supervisors or you feel stressed, angry or worried about things related to your PhD you can contact [Claudius](#) for confidential advice and support.

8. [The PE&RC PhD council \(PPC\)](#)

- PhD candidates of PE&RC are organised in the PE&RC PhD Council (PPC). The members of this council represent the various research institutes, research fields and categories of PhD candidates within the graduate school.
- The main objective of the PE&RC PhD Council is to advise the PE&RC PhD Programme coordinators, the PE&RC Board and the PE&RC Committees. The PPC also serves as a "Knowledge and Experience Base" for new PhD candidates.
- If you have any questions about the PPC, or if you feel the PPC should know about a certain issue that needs attention, and that applies to more people than just you yourself, then please contact the PPC directly via ppc.perc@gmail.com.
- Also, if you are interested in joining the PPC yourself, please contact them via ppc.perc@gmail.com or make this known to the PhD programme coordinator with which you had your intake meeting.

9. **What to do after the intake meeting?**

- Send a profile picture of yourself when we do not have one yet. We use this in our internal database, so all PhD programme coordinators know who you are. It is not shared outside PE&RC.
- Send a draft version of your TSP for feedback to the same PhD programme coordinator that you had an intake with. Try to do this as soon as possible after having discussed the TSP with supervisors. After the final adjustments you can then submit the signed final version of your TSP to the same person. This must be done within three months after the start of your PhD project.
- Send your research proposal to the secretariat of the graduate school (office.pe@wur.nl) within 6 months after the start of your PhD project.
- Sign up for relevant activities. Note that you may already indicate that you have an approved TSP to qualify for reduced course fees after you have had your intake meeting but TSP has not yet formally been approved.

10. **Final take home messages**

- Know the rules of the game! Familiarise yourself with what you can ask for and what your responsibilities are (e.g., read the doctorate degree regulations of your university).
- Doing a PhD is not easy, and ups-and-downs are part of it. Despite the demanding work, keep a healthy work-life balance and do not completely depend on the PhD. Seek out options that can help you through some tough times.
- Take responsibility (be in the driver's seat and keep your supervisors in the back seat. That means that you take prime responsibility in the communication)
- Be proactive, look ahead, plan well!
- Be happy!!!! And, when you feel that you are not happy in doing your PhD, please contact the confidential advisors of PE&RC ([Claudius](#))

