**Covid-19 financial compensation for PhD candidates and post-docs employed by Wageningen University**

August 2020

The research and education at Wageningen University & Research is affected by the restrictions that were and partly still are enforced in the Netherlands as well as abroad to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The restrictions affect many core activities, including PhD and post-doc projects. Wageningen Graduate Schools estimates that 20-25% of our PhD candidates experience minimal to significant delays due to measures taken to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus. These delays can be caused by a myriad of factors including:

* fieldwork or laboratory research that could not (or sporadically) be conducted
* an inefficient working environment at home
* PhD courses that were postponed or cancelled
* a delayed start date and/or travel to Wageningen may have led to visa issues, quarantine costs, extra costs of air travel, costs for remaining in the Netherlands or in a home country.

The extent to which PhD candidates and post-docs experience a delay also depends on many factors including the type of PhD candidate (e.g. employed, sandwich, scholarship, external), type of research (e.g. use of existing data, new data collection, laboratory based, field work, international travels), stage of the research project, teaching duties and personal situation.

Wageningen University & Research focusses on tailor-made solutions to mitigate delays of PhD and post-docs incurred due to the Covid-19 restrictions and aims to ensure that all PhD candidates and post-docs can complete their projects. In all cases, supervisors and managers are encouraged to look for possible solutions within the means of their chair group and Science Group so that the project can be completed within the previously determined allocated time frame.

At an earlier occasion we have communicated a variety of possible measures to mitigate delays in PhD projects, including:

* focus temporarily on other activities of the PhD project
* rearrange scheduled studies
* redesign your studies
* consider the requirements for a thesis
* buy more time through an extension.

At present there are two possibilities for financial compensation of PhD candidates, and one for post-docs. First, with the help of crowd funding, an emergency fund has been installed for bachelor and master students and non-employed PhD candidates ([www.wur.nl/en/Benefactors/More-information-1/For-Applicants/Emergency-Fund-for-students.htm](http://www.wur.nl/en/Benefactors/More-information-1/For-Applicants/Emergency-Fund-for-students.htm)). Second, in the negotiations within the Collective Labour Agreement, funding has been set aside for the year 2020 to financially compensate for delays of temporary employed PhD candidates and post-docs. Needless to say, these latter funds are limited and will only be made available if all the above-mentioned mitigation measures did not work.

Here, we provide information regarding financial compensation of PhD candidates and post-docs who are temporary employed at Wageningen University for delays incurred due to Covid-19 restrictions through funds made available from the collective work agreements of Universities (0,45% loonruimte CAO-NU). These funds are only available for 2020. To be eligible for compensation, the following applies:

1. the PhD candidate or post-doc is employed by Wageningen University
2. the delay is solely caused by Covid-19 restrictions
3. delays cannot be mitigated by other means
4. the PhD candidate has an approved TSP and research proposal
5. the compensation is essential to successfully complete the PhD/post-doc project.

Compensation for PhD candidates and post-docs who are temporary employed at Wageningen University will focus on those individuals where more limiting possibilities exist to take measures to mitigate delays. For PhD candidates these include candidates 2.5-3.5 years into their research (full-time) and all post-docs.

There are 3 categories of compensation funds:

1) "2020 PhD fund" for PhD candidates whose contract expires before January 1, 2021

PhD candidates at Wageningen University with an employment contract expiration date between 15 March and December 31, 2020 and for whom an extension was/is necessary are eligible to apply. The fund will provide candidates with a maximum of three months extension if the candidate is full-time employed and cover salary of the PhD candidate + 35% overheads. Candidates employed part-time can request an extension with a maximum duration which is equivalent to a three-month full-time employment. In exceptional cases, an extension for a longer period can be requested (up to 6 months). The request to use the “2020 PhD fund” must be submitted by a graduate school to the Dean of Research no later than August 28, 2020. A decision will be made on September 1, 2020. The promotor should submit a dossier to a Wageningen Graduate School who will submit it to the Dean of Research. An evaluation committee will be formed to prioritize eligible dossiers and allocate funding. The minimum information/proof provided should include:

1. the candidate’s eligibility (see 5 criteria above)
2. the expiration date of the employment contract (provide a copy)
3. information on the type and extent of Covid-19 related delay incurred
4. evidence that no other mitigation measure(s) could be applied
5. the number of months for which compensation is requested
6. a (research) plan to finish the PhD thesis/post-doc project

All applications must be submitted via one of Wageningen’s graduate schools, who are charged of ensuring that dossiers are complete, and approve the submission.

2) “2021 PhD fund” for PhD candidates whose contract expires in 2021

For PhD students with a contract expiration date between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021, a request can be submitted for funding for a maximum extension of three months. Candidates employed part-time can request an extension with a maximum duration which is equivalent to a three-month full-time employment. An important difference with the “2020 PhD fund' is that this is based on a more substantive assessment (how much delay is there, why it cannot be resolved otherwise within the time left, research still to be conducted, etc). The contribution from the chair group and the Science Group to minimizing the delay should be clearly specified. The dossier should demonstrate that the compensation is essential and that there are no other options to mitigate delay or fund an extension. A request will be considered ineligible if the employment contract terminates after December 31, 2021.

A request to make use of the “2021 PhD fund” for PhD candidates must be submitted by a graduate school to the Dean of Research no later than November 22, 2020. The fund will be sufficient to provide candidates with a maximum of three months extension and covers salary of the PhD candidate + 35% overheads. In exceptional cases, an extension for a longer period can be requested (up to 6 months). The promotor must submit a dossier through a Wageningen graduate school which will be evaluated by a committee who will prioritize eligible dossiers and allocate funding. The dossier should contain all the information/proof as is provided in a “2020 PhD fund” dossier with additional clear argumentation (with evidence if applicable) why the incurred Covid-19 delays were/are unable to be resolved or why other funding is not available to extend the employment contract. All applications must be submitted through one of Wageningen’s graduate schools, who should ensure that dossiers are complete and approve the submission.

3) “Post-doc fund”

For post-docs, a request can be made to fund an extension (max 3 months), if the delay is caused by restriction to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Post-docs employed part-time can request an extension with a maximum duration which is equivalent to a three-month full-time employment. In exceptional cases, an extension for a longer period can be requested (up to 6 months). The dossier should demonstrate that the compensation is essential and there are no other options to mitigate delays or fund an extension. A request to make use of the “Post-doc fund” must be submitted to the Dean of Research no later than August 28, 2020. The fund will cover the salary of the post-doc + 35% overheads. The supervisor of the post-doc must submit a dossier through a Wageningen graduate school providing information/proof as contained in a “2020 PhD fund” dossier which will be evaluated by a committee who will prioritize eligible dossiers and allocate funding.

Please note that funds are limited and not all requests for compensation are likely to be granted.

We are aware that previously announced funds and the funds available here will not assist all PhD candidates and post-docs that are affected by the restrictions to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Wageningen University & Research aims for all PhD and post-doc projects to be completed and for all PhD candidates to complete their studies. At a later date, the need for additional compensation measures for other PhD candidates (e.g. with completion date after 2021, other type of PhD candidates) will be assessed. It is not yet known whether additional funds for financial compensation will become available.

Kind regards,

Arthur Mol, Rector Magnificus

Wouter Hendriks, Dean of Research