

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

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Gab van Winkel



WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY  
WAGENINGENUR

# Wageningen University & Research

- *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'



# Contents

- 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...

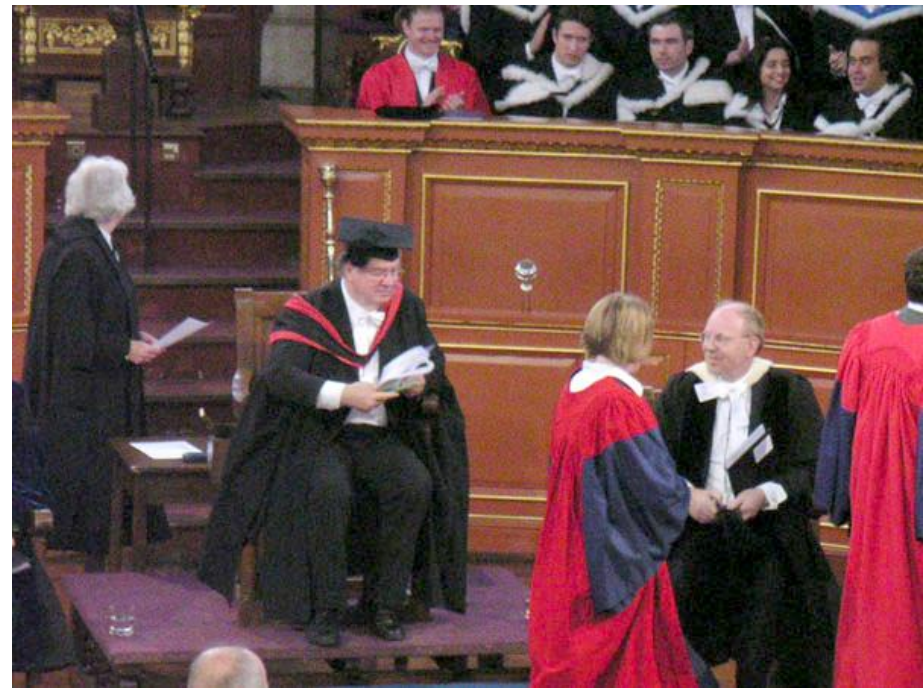
This presentation is:

- inspired by my experiences at Wageningen University
- not necessarily the view of Wageningen University



# Definition and terminology

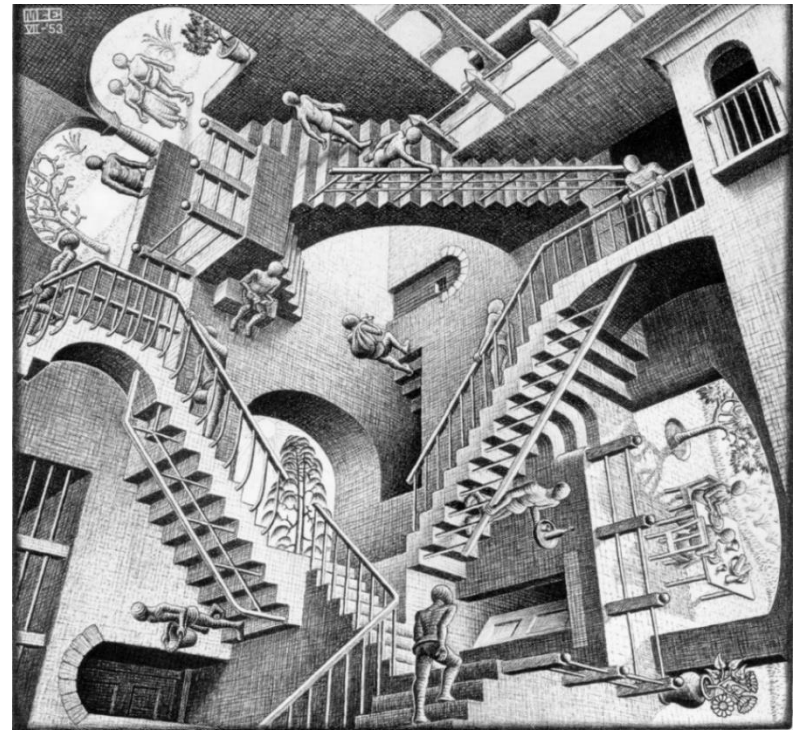
- Joint, double and dual degrees: is there a difference?
- Always: **one** thesis, **two** diplomas
- On or two public defences
- One thesis evaluation?



# 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!

