

# Information for Members of the Theoretical Biology Group

Welcome to the Theoretical Biology group!

To help you to settle and to be able to start working as soon as possible, here is some information about what you need to do in the beginning, important phone numbers, email addresses, etc. For Ph.D. students starting a project in our group, we have added a special section on "Ph.D. Life" that provides more general information about topics such as project planning, teaching obligations, or the requirements on a Dutch Ph.D. thesis.

This document is updated continuously. Please inform us if you have the impression that important information is missing. Info can also be found on the TheoBio web site [www.rug.nl/biol/theobio](http://www.rug.nl/biol/theobio).

## **Important Telephone Numbers**

Joke (secretary)	8200	(email: <a href="mailto:joke.bakker@rug.nl">joke.bakker@rug.nl</a> )
Franjo	2131 050-5343097	(email: <a href="mailto:f.j.weissing@rug.nl">f.j.weissing@rug.nl</a> ) (home number)
Fax (secretary's office)	3400	
Emergency	2021 8050	during working hours outside working hours
Centrale meldkamer:	5520	

Please note that for internal phone calls the four numbers are sufficient (e.g.8200). If you call from outside the university, you have to dial (050)363\*\*\*\*, e.g. (050)363 8200, from abroad +31 (0)50 363\*\*\*\*. To make outside calls, first dial 0 and then the actual number.

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# 1 First Steps for Newcomers

## Key to Your Room

You can get a key for your room from the secretary (Joke).

## Entrance Pass

To have access to the Biological Centre at any time of the day, you need an entrance pass (“toegangspasje”). At the secretary’s office you can get a form (“aanvraag deurpas”) which has to be filled in and signed by the head of the group (Franjo). After that you have to hand it in at the reception of the Biological Centre. Your entrance pass will be made as quickly as possible (usually within a few hours).

## Outside Office Hours

Please note that outside office hours (19.00 - 07.00, weekends and bank holidays) the entrance passes only work at the camera-guarded entrances. These entrances are: 6518 (wing F) in the bike’s cellar, 6512 main entrance reception, and 6518 (wing F) sliding doors. If you work outside regular office hours, you have to announce your presence and the time of departure to the ‘Centrale Meldkamer’ (phone 5520).

## Notification of Your Arrival

### Checklist:

- Please inform Joke about your arrival and provide her with your new address and (private) phone number.
- Make sure that you are added to our *mailing lists* (TheoBio, weekly schedule, pub meetings) to receive all kind of information and announcements (see Chapter 7.1).
- Ensure that you are also included on the *TheoBio web site* and check your personal details (like room number, phone number, etc.) on it. If these are not correct, contact the webmaster of the TheoBio web site, Joke.
- You will certainly need *office material* (paper, pens, envelopes...). A small store of these things can be found in Joke’s office.
- In Joke’s office there will be a personal letterbox for you. Please check for mail regularly. There is also a (blue) box for outgoing mail.

Your postal address at the Biological Centre is as follows:

<name>  
Theoretical Biology Group  
University of Groningen  
P.O. Box 14  
9750 AA Haren  
The Netherlands

- Please make yourself familiar with the house rules (see Section 4.6).

We wish you a successful and pleasant time in our group!

## 2 Embedding of the Theoretical Biology Group

### 2.1 Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FWN)

The Theoretical Biology Group is part of the *Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences* ('Faculteit der Wiskunde en Natuurwetenschappen', FWN). The Faculty is split into three branches:

- Life Sciences
- Natural Sciences and Technology
- Information Sciences.

The Life Sciences branch, which is most relevant for us, coordinates various Bachelor's and Master's programmes, and it coordinates research through a number of research institutes, including:

- CEES (Centre for Ecological and Evolutionary Studies)
- CBN (Center for Behaviour and Neurosciences)
- GBB (Groningen Biomolecular Sciences and Biotechnology Institute)
- IVEM (Center for Energy and Environmental Studies)
- IWI (Mathematics and Computer Science)

As far as research is concerned, the TheoBio group is part of the CEES institute.

More information on the Faculty can be found at [www.rug.nl/fwn](http://www.rug.nl/fwn).

### 2.2 Centre for Ecological and Evolutionary Studies (CEES)

As indicated above, the TheoBio group belongs to the research institute *Centre for Ecological and Evolutionary Studies* (CEES). The director of CEES is Prof. Dr. Leo Beukeboom ([l.w.beukeboom@rug.nl](mailto:l.w.beukeboom@rug.nl)), Prof. Dr. Han Olf ([h.olf@rug.nl](mailto:h.olf@rug.nl)) chairs the scientific board, while Mrs. Joke Nunnink ([j.h.m.nunnink@rug.nl](mailto:j.h.m.nunnink@rug.nl)) is the administrative manager. CEES embraces eight research groups, all located at the Biological Centre in Haren:

- Animal Ecology
- Community & Conservation Ecology (COCON)
- Evolutionary Genetics
- Marine Benthic Ecology & Evolution
- Ocean Ecosystems
- Microbial Ecology
- Plant Ecophysiology
- Theoretical Biology

CEES may be important for you for a variety of reasons. First, major decisions on the research budget or the distribution of Ph.D. positions over groups are taken at the level of the institute. If, for example, you request an extension of your contract beyond the normal four years, the decision on this will be taken by the CEES director and Joke Nunnink. Second, the CEES groups closely collaborate with each other, while collaboration with groups outside of CEES occurs less often. But of course, there are also "interesting" groups outside CEES (e.g. the Animal Behaviour group). Third, CEES organizes a number of events of direct interest for Ph.D. students. For example, Ph.D. students of CEES organize an ongoing series of lectures

on ecological and evolutionary topics, to stimulate scientific interactions between the various research groups of the institute and to create an opportunity to invite researchers who are leading in their field. By combining the lectures with a social gathering and a dinner in town with the lecturer, these lectures usually become a social event of the institute as well!

Each lecture is preceded by a preparatory session where interested Ph.D. students discuss some recent papers that are relevant for the guest's field of research. The lecture and the social event afterwards are of course open to all interested colleagues.

The CEES lectures are announced on the CEES web site ([www.rug.nl/biol/cees](http://www.rug.nl/biol/cees)) and by posters on the notice boards.

All Ph.D. students of CEES are invited to propose speakers from their own field of research for delivering a CEES lecture. If you want to make use of this opportunity, you should contact Ana ([a.l.f.duarte@rug.nl](mailto:a.l.f.duarte@rug.nl)) or Aniek ([a.b.f.ivers@rug.nl](mailto:a.b.f.ivers@rug.nl)).

CEES also organizes several series of 'current themes' seminars with changing topics that run throughout the academic year. Each seminar series consists of six biweekly sessions in which a set of research articles is discussed. All participants read all of the articles, give a presentation on at least one of the articles, and take an active part in the discussions. Members of the TheoBio group are expected to participate in the series organized by our group, the "Current Themes in Theoretical Ecology and Evolution".

For more information please consult the CEES web site: [www.rug.nl/biol/cees](http://www.rug.nl/biol/cees).

## **2.3 Graduate School of Science (GSS)**

Whereas CEES may be important for you in all kinds of matters related to your contract, your research budget, or the scientific aspects of your project, the *Graduate School of Science* (GSS) is responsible for the educational aspects of a Ph.D. programme. In the Netherlands, half a year of the 4-year Ph.D. period has to be spent on "educational activities". Roughly speaking (see Chapter 6 for details), these activities consist of:

- performing a theoretical pre-study for your project;
- following advanced courses for Ph.D. students;
- presenting your work at scientific meetings.

The Dutch research schools organize and coordinate these activities. In the past, the research school *Functional Ecology* was responsible for the CEES Ph.D. students. At this moment, this research school is in a process of reorganisation. The educational program will be continued in a new structure within the GSS.

Throughout your Ph.D. project, you are supposed to follow several courses organized by FE/GSS. These courses, which are given bi-annually and typically last a week, can have their focus on specific topics (e.g. Theoretical Ecology), on methods (e.g. Multivariate Analysis) or on scientific skills (e.g. Dynamic Presentation). Every Ph.D. student gets a "personal budget" for paying course fees and the cost of travelling and accommodation. FE/GSS also organizes scientific meetings, e.g. the annual Verweij-meeting (last weekend of January) on the island of Texel, which is specifically designed for giving Ph.D. students the opportunity to present their work to a broader audience. Every Ph.D. student is supposed to give presentations (a poster or a talk) in at least two of these meetings.

For more information on FE/GSS, please consult the web site: [www.rug.nl/biol/fe](http://www.rug.nl/biol/fe).

## **2.4 Dutch Society for Theoretical Biology (NVTB)**

The Netherlands is internationally renowned for its strength in the area of theoretical biology. Virtually all Dutch theoretical biologists are members of the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Theoretische Biologie (NVTB, Dutch Society for Theoretical Biology; website: [www.bio.vu.nl/nvtb/](http://www.bio.vu.nl/nvtb/)). You are strongly encouraged to become a member as well. The TheoBio group will reimburse the membership fee. As a benefit, you can profit from the NVTB mailing list, where important information on topics concerning our field is sent around, such as the programme of meetings, open positions, or the publication of new textbooks. Most importantly, the NVTB organizes an annual meeting, which is always interesting and a lot of fun. Almost all Dutch TheoBio groups are present at the meeting. Hence, the meeting gives a good opportunity to get to know the other groups, their research questions, and their approaches. Moreover, the meeting provides a forum for presenting your own work.

## **3 Scientific and Social Activities**

Every Friday afternoon a 'weekly schedule' is distributed (by email). It provides you with an overview of events inside and outside the TheoBio group (talks, discussion rounds, social events etc.) in the next week. The schedule can also be found on the TheoBio website ("Weekly Schedule").

### **3.1 Regular Scientific Meetings**

#### **Theory Club ("Theoretisch Clubje")**

The Theoretical Biology group meets once a week on Wednesdays at 17:00 in the "Theory Lab" (room H 010) to discuss recent results and developments in an informal atmosphere. The "Theory Club" is the forum for discussing the research progress of group members and the work of guest speakers. As a member of the TheoBio group you are expected to attend these meetings whenever possible and to participate actively in the discussions (even if the topic seems only remotely related to your own project). If you want to give a presentation, please contact Joke ([joke.bakker@rug.nl](mailto:joke.bakker@rug.nl)), who is in charge of the schedule.

#### **Literature Club**

Apart from the work discussion meetings (Theory Club), there are literature discussion meetings (Literature Club), and a series of book discussion meetings. The Literature Club meetings are devoted to the discussion of articles selected by group members. The Literature Club is organized along two lines. General sessions take place once every two weeks on Tuesdays at 11.00 in H10. These sessions are intended for the entire group; papers are picked by the person in charge for that week without any restriction on topics. To structure the discussion a bit the person in charge will first give a short PowerPoint presentation on the paper they've chosen, outlining the key features of the article and perhaps raising particular points for discussion. The weeks in between the general sessions are meant for more specialised literature clubs for those who are interested. These topical sessions are organized on a sign-up basis, and can have different formats than the general sessions. If you want to sign up to chair a general discussion you should contact Tim ([t.w.fawcett@rug.nl](mailto:t.w.fawcett@rug.nl)). Check the TheoBio website ("Literature Club") for more info on the specialised sessions.

### **Book Discussions**

The idea of the book discussion meetings is to discuss two or three books per year, interspersed with some months without book discussion. Titles of the books, times, and further information will be provided by email in time.

## **3.2 Social Activities**

### **Monday Morning Coffees**

Every Monday morning (10.30) we have a coffee break with the whole group in the “Theory Lab” (H010). To make this meeting even more attractive, each time one of the group members brings biscuits for everybody on his/her own expense. The supply of cookies relies on altruism and social control. In other words, everybody is kindly requested to know when it is his/her turn again to bring cookies. The “koekjes”-list in the Theory Lab, on which you can sign in for a specific date, serves as a reminder.

### **Koffie en Taart**

There is a habit in the Netherlands to treat your colleagues to cake on special occasions (e.g. birthday, acceptance of paper, beginning of your appointment,...). In our group this usually takes place at coffee time (10.30) in the Theory Lab.

### **Pub Meetings**

On Thursday evenings, we regularly go to a pub from 21.00 onwards. Everybody is cordially invited to come and to bring his friends, family, etc. as well. As we don't want to get bored, we go to a different pub every week. The organizers of these important social events is Tim ([t.w.fawcett@rug.nl](mailto:t.w.fawcett@rug.nl)). He chooses the pubs (suggestions are always welcome!) and announces them by email.

### **Other Activities**

Feel free to invent and establish your own / other group activities. They are very much encouraged and will be appreciated a lot!

### **Social Committee (“Personeelsvereniging”)**

Recently, we have established our own ‘personeelsvereniging’ to organize social events for the TheoBio group. Aniek ([a.b.f.ivals@rug.nl](mailto:a.b.f.ivals@rug.nl)) and Michael ([m.briga@rug.nl](mailto:m.briga@rug.nl)) are presently the members.

## **Staff Meetings**

Every two weeks, there is a meeting of the scientific and administrative staff of the TheoBio group (Charlotte, Franjo, Ido, and Joke). If you have suggestions for agenda items, please contact Joke. From every session minutes are drawn up (in Dutch only) that can be scrutinized in Joke’s office.

## 4 Administrative Matters

### 4.1 Status of Ph.D. student

Unfortunately, Ph.D. students in the Netherlands vary, formally, in their status. On the one hand, Ph.D. students can have a status of an AIO (= assistent in opleiding) or OIO (= onderzoeker in opleiding), which means that they are employees of the University of Groningen. All matters related to the employment are dealt with by the personnel department (at present personnel consultant at the Biological Centre: Mrs. Alyson Bulthuis, phone 2192, [a.c.h.bulthuis@rug.nl](mailto:a.c.h.bulthuis@rug.nl), and personnel administrator Mrs. Ynske Joustra, phone 4873, [y.joustra@rug.nl](mailto:y.joustra@rug.nl)). On the other hand, there are bursary students (“bursalen” or “promotie-studenten”) who typically get a scholarship from the University or another granting agency. Formally, a bursary Ph.D. student has the status of a student and not of an employee. Contact person for bursary Ph.D. students at the faculty level is Mrs. Annette Korringa (phone 4504, [a.h.t.korringa-de.wit@rug.nl](mailto:a.h.t.korringa-de.wit@rug.nl)), but in case of questions it might be wise to contact Joke or Joke Nunnink (CEES) (phone 2311, [j.h.m.nunnink@rug.nl](mailto:j.h.m.nunnink@rug.nl)) first.

### 4.2 Financial Questions

#### Personal Account and Budget

In the beginning of your appointment you will receive a personnel registration number (see above) and (in some cases only) a “project code” giving you access to your personal research budget. You will need these numbers e.g. for the declaration of travel expenses and placing orders.

#### How to Order Things

- Office material: usually from Joke’s office. If what you need is not available (any more), inform your secretary who will order it for you from the internet shop Office Depot. Orders which are placed before 5 pm, will be delivered the following day. In urgent cases, (some) articles that are not in stock can also be received from the Repro Shop of the Biological Centre (which is situated on the ground floor of the F wing, in opposite of the library). For receiving products/articles from the latter you will need a “project code” (ask your secretary for it).
- Other material (e.g. lab material): can be ordered through the department “Centrale inkoop” by using a special card (ask your secretary for further instructions).
- Bigger investments: can only be done in agreement with your supervisor.

#### Tuition Fee

CEES makes a tuition fee (“aio-schoolgeld”) available to every Ph.D. student to follow courses. A part of this allowance can also be used for covering the printing costs of the thesis. For more information ask for a copy of the information paper “Procedure tuition fee for AIOs/Bursaries” at the secretary’s office.

### **4.3 Conferences and Other “Business Trips”**

#### **How Often?**

In principle, regular participation in conferences is encouraged. However, due to financial restrictions, there are limitations. As a rule, Ph.D. students attend 4 to 5 international conferences during their 4-year period and only one of these is intercontinental (i.e. outside Europe). In specific cases (e.g. for Ph.D. students with their “own” budget) there may be more financial freedom allowing to travel more. In case of financial restrictions, Ph.D. students can always apply for financial support to the NWO or to the organizer of the congress/conference. In any case, you should always discuss your plans with your supervisor(s) before making any definite arrangements.

#### **Which Budget?**

There are different budgets to finance travel expenses (own budget, group’s budget, CEES tuition fee for Ph.D. students, etc.). Please discuss with your promotor/daily supervisor beforehand which budget can be used in your case.

#### **Application Form**

Before going on a trip ABROAD you have to fill in an application form of the Financial Department (‘aanvraag/opdracht buitenlandse reis’), which has to be signed by the head of the group/ budget holder and handed in to the secretary afterwards. Please do this as early as possible, which means as soon as you know you will be going!

On the form a so called “R-number” can be found, which you will need for example for asking for an advance or for booking a flight through the travel agency ‘Carlson Wagonlits’. After having handed in the application form, you will receive the ‘declaration form’ for declaring your travel expenses after your return.

Business trips within the Netherlands do not need to be applied for in advance. You can simply declare your expenses with the e-form ‘Declaratie binnenlandse reis’ afterwards.

Important: Always keep all your receipts and tickets. Otherwise your expenses will not be reimbursed.

#### **Notification of Absence**

In any case, you have to give the secretary notice of your absence.

### **4.4 Holidays and Days at Home**

#### **Holiday Registration Card**

Every new group member receives a holiday registration card (“vakantiekaart”) in the beginning of his/her appointment (Please note that bursary Ph.D. students don’t!). This card has to be given to the secretary who keeps the administration of your vacation. For your own registration – it also shows the total of your holiday allowance - you will receive a copy of it.

#### **Announcing Holidays and Days Off**

If you go on holiday (or on a conference or other business trip), you have to announce this *in advance* to the group’s secretary.

#### **Minimum Number of Vacation Days**

A minimum of 10 days (=80 hours) of vacation per year is compulsory.

## **Working at Home**

Everybody may work at home once in a while, but unless clear arrangements have been made about working at home on a regular basis, Joke *always* has to be informed about absence or vacation, even if it is for a single day.

Because of bad experiences in the past, we are reluctant to allow working at home on a regular basis. Any such arrangement has to be very well motivated. As a general rule, any long-term arrangement has to be preceded by several shorter test periods that are evaluated at least once per month.

## **Illness**

If you are ill and cannot come to work, please inform Joke as soon as possible. If you can oversee that you will be ill one day only, we will consider this a day off, as if you would work at home for that day. Any longer period of illness (two or more days) will have to be reported to the P&O department.

## **4.5 Health and Security**

### **Safety Handbook ('Informatiegids')**

Before you start working you are kindly asked to read carefully the safety handbook of the Biological Centre ('Informatiegids', in Dutch, English version under construction...) which is available at Joke's office. In addition to chapters with information about the building and the various services and facilities within the complex, there is also extensive information for those who work with chemicals.

### **Emergency Numbers**

during working hours	2021
outside working hours	8050

### **Health Guide**

The University of Groningen drew up a "Health Guide for International Students and Guests" with useful information on the Dutch health services, insurances, health related subjects, relevant addresses, and telephone numbers. Please ask for a copy at the secretary's office.

### **Health Insurance**

For information on your (collective) Menzis health insurance (unfortunately only in Dutch) please consult:

<http://www.rug.nl/medewerkers/gezondheid/CollectieveZiektelastenVerzekering?lang=en>  
<http://www.menzis.nl/>

### **Going Abroad for More than a Month:**

If you plan to go abroad for more than a month for studies or experiments, you need to announce this as early as possible to the contact person of Menzis at the RUG, Mrs. Joke Hermanni (phone 5332, [j.a.s.hermann@rug.nl](mailto:j.a.s.hermann@rug.nl)). Please send her either a short letter or an email including the period, the country and the purpose of your stay abroad. If you don't do so and become ill abroad, you will not be insured.

Group members who don't have a Menzis health insurance (e.g. bursary students with a (Ubbo Emmius) scholarship probably won't), have to check the conditions with their health insurer themselves.

## **4.6 House Rules**

### **Closing Windows and Entrance Door**

When leaving the building, everybody is kindly requested to close his/her window and to make sure that he/she locks the entrance door (of the container building) properly.

### **Coffee and Cleaning Duties**

Every month, two group members are responsible for buying the 'essentials' for the coffee break (coffee, tea, sugar, coffee milk/creamer, etc.) and for doing some basic cleaning in H010. "Basic cleaning" means: Doing the dishes (cups, plates, cutlery, etc.) at least once in two weeks and cleaning microwave and fridge thoroughly once during 'your' month. Ask Franjo or the secretary for the key of room H015 to have access to the hot water facilities in there. If you don't know by now, the secretary will show you where to find dishcloths, washing-up liquid, and the like.

On the notice board in H010 a "Coffee & Cleaning Duty" list can be found, so that everybody knows when it is his/her turn. When buying the 'essentials', keep the receipts, since you get your money back from the group's budget (ask the secretary for the refund). 'Essentials' do neither include cookies nor beer (see below).

### **Switching off Coffee Machine**

When leaving the container, everybody is asked to check whether the coffee machine has been switched off. However, in principle the one who sets coffee is also responsible for switching off the coffee machine.

Please use the thermos flasks whenever possible. For obvious reasons, the tea pot should never be used for fixing coffee.

### **Beer O' Clock**

Drinking beer in the container is encouraged, but subject to certain rules. Nobody should start drinking beer before 17:00 (= beer o' clock...). It makes a bad impression on visitors if group members start drinking within working hours. It also makes a bad impression if empty bottles are standing around the next morning. It is therefore an absolute necessity that the people involved in a 'beer party' clean up afterwards.

## **5 Computer Matters**

### **5.1 Network and Email Account**

#### **RUG-number (p-number)**

At your appointment / the start of your PhD project at the RUG, you will be registered in the personnel registration system 'Peoplesoft' and a personnel registration number (RUG number or 'p-number' as it consists of a 'p' plus 6 numbers, like for instance p123456) as well as a network account and an e-mail address will be created automatically. A letter containing all necessary information about this will be sent to your home address. Your p-number can be used for the following university programmes and systems:

- to log in on the network and email
- the "Keuzemodel arbeidsvoorwaarden" (employees only)
- Surfspot winkel (for ordering software)
- electronic data and magazines of the RUG libraries
- declaration forms business trips

### **Email Address / RUGmail**

The university offers a university-wide email service called RUGmail. Your email address will basically be a combination of your initials and surname, separated by full stops. You will be informed about your email address and corresponding password by ordinary mail (see above). An extensive documentation in English about your mail account, FAQ, and the settings you need to set can be found at

<http://www.rug.nl/medewerkers/voorzieningen/RuGmail/index?lang=en>.

### **Change Password**

To change your password go to the following site:

<https://salsa.service.rug.nl/engwachtwoord.html>.

### **IMAP Protocol**

For email the IMAP protocol is used.

Incoming mail server: mailbox.rug.nl

Outgoing mail server: smtp1.rug.nl

### **URL of Server**

With a computer with internet access, you can have everywhere access to your e-mail. You only need the URL of the server (<https://mailbox.rug.nl/>), your username (which is your p-number), and the related password.

More information can be found on the web site of the Information Technology Department ("ICT-beheer"): [www.rug.nl/fwn/voorzieningen/ICTbeheer/](http://www.rug.nl/fwn/voorzieningen/ICTbeheer/) (English version available).

### **University Workstation (Universitaire werkplek = UWP)**

In the beginning of 2007 the FWN Windows environment has been replaced by the new standard Windows environment called 'University Workstation' on almost all the Windows computers of the Biology Department. This workstation allows you to access your own work environment from any RUG Windows computer. In addition, staff and students are (almost) offered the same programmes and programme versions now. The range of computer programmes will include the standard university applications, supplemented by specific programmes for the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (for more information on applications and software license see <http://www.rug.nl/fwn/voorzieningen/ictbeheer/-applicaties/index>). You can start all programmes via the 'Start'-button and the option 'RUG Menu'.

More information about the University Workstation can be found at

<http://www.rug.nl/medewerkers/voorzieningen/universitairewerkplek/index?lang=en>.

### **Account Administrator**

Guests of the TB group have to contact the account administrator (which is the TheoBio secretary) in order to receive a network account. They will have to be registered in Peoplesoft as well to this purpose.

(MSc) Students can login with their student account. In case they also need access to applications which are usually only available to employees, a so called "F-account" can be applied for (contact your supervisor or the secretary).

### **X:\ and Y:\ disk**

With your network account you do not only get access to the applications of the fileserver but also to your own data storage, the X:\ disk (your home directory, standard size: 200 Mb). Apart from your own disk there is a group disk (Y:\ disk) to which only the group members have access to exchange information and data.

## **Netstorage**

With Netstorage and a browser you can have everywhere access to your files on X:\ or Y:\. Just log in on <https://netstorage.id.rug.nl/Netstorage> with your p-number.

## **Nestor**

Nestor is the name given to the Electronic Learning Environment (ELO) at the RUG. The computer programme used to place course information on Nestor is called Blackboard. You can use Nestor to download documents for your course (assignments, presentations, past examinations). You can find information about the weekly timetable, the literature you have to read, and the lecturers giving the courses, etc. For certain courses you can use Nestor to exchange ideas with the lecturer and other students via e-mail, chat rooms and online discussions.

## Nestor Accounts

Students: You can login with your student number and password.

Employees: Contact the TheoBio secretary or the Nestor coordinator of the Biology Department (Mr. Jaap Leppink, e-mail: [j.j.n.leppink@rug.nl](mailto:j.j.n.leppink@rug.nl)) for an account by mentioning your name, p-number, and e-mail address.

## **Helpdesk BC**

For problems with the network, e-mail, etc. please contact the Information Technology Helpdesk at the Biological Centre:

location: G wing, 2nd floor, room 216  
phone: 2374  
email: [helpdesk@biol.rug.nl](mailto:helpdesk@biol.rug.nl)

## **5.2 PC's, Notebooks, and Software**

### **Regulations Concerning PC's**

For your working period at the Biological Centre a pc will be put at your disposal. You have to register your PC with Joke immediately. Please mind also that there is the rule that whenever a PC is transferred to another person or to another room, this has to be announced to Joke. Otherwise the computer administration would break down within a few weeks. Furthermore it is under NO circumstances allowed to exchange parts of a computer (e.g. keyboards) without prior consultation of Joke or Franjo.

### **Installing and Using Software**

Most of the software you will need is available via the network. However, you might also want to use different software or stand-alone versions of certain programmes. Therefore, we maintain a collection of software copies (e.g. Maple, C++, Sigma Plot, etc.) at Joke's office. Every group member has open access to these copies, but of course you are expected to bring them back immediately after use.

### **PC Cluster**

The Theoretical Group owns a pc cluster, consisting of 7 computers which are linked to each other in order to run complex simulations. Consult Martin ([m.hinsch@rug.nl](mailto:m.hinsch@rug.nl)) if you want to make use of this facility.

### **Using Notebooks**

If you want to use a notebook/laptop and have internet access, you need to take it to the Helpdesk of the Biological Centre for registration.

## 6 Ph.D. Life

### 6.1 Overview

#### Duration of a Ph.D. project

A Dutch Ph.D. project lasts four years and thus one year longer than in many other countries. In former times, Ph.D. students tended to spend five or six years on writing their thesis, but this is no longer encouraged. In fact, you may run into serious trouble if you do not finish in time. It is therefore of great importance that, from the start, you make a good and realistic planning of your project. Your supervisor will assist you in this, but it is for a large part your own responsibility to keep the deadlines and to have your thesis finished by the end of the fourth year. As a rule of thumb, *all* results should be in after 3.5 years, leaving half a year for giving your thesis a finishing touch. (Also see Section 6.2 below.)

#### Components of a Ph.D. project

Most Ph.D. students start their project with the idea that they have four years at their disposal that can full-time be spent on research for their thesis. This, however, is only partly true. Of course, work directly related to your thesis is by far the most important aspect of your project. Throughout the project you can expect to get a good training on how to do (theoretical) research. However, this is not sufficient for becoming a mature, self-reliant researcher with a good position on the “labour market”. To improve your career prospects after promotion it is of great importance that you also invest time into professional education that goes beyond work on your specific research question. For this reason, in the Netherlands about half a year of a Ph.D. project (up to 15%) has to be spent on “educational activities”. As a member of the TheoBio group you are supposed to follow the educational programme of the Graduate School of Science (see Sections 2.3), which aims at broadening the scientific perspective of Ph.D. students and improving their professional skills like project planning, writing articles and grant proposals, efficiently presenting their work to the outside world, and becoming familiar with the functioning of the scientific community. You should definitely consult the GSS website ([www.rug.nl/biol/fe](http://www.rug.nl/biol/fe)), which provides information about the programme and the educational requirements. In addition to these educational activities, non-bursary Ph.D. students (= AIOs) are supposed to spend about 10% of their time on teaching duties (see Section 6.3).

#### Requirements of a Dutch Ph.D. Thesis

A Dutch Ph.D. thesis consists of a collection of articles, together with a general introduction, a general discussion, and an overall summary (in English and in Dutch). It is strongly recommended that you have a look at various theses (which are available, for example, in Joke’s office) in order to get an impression of what is expected from you. You will see that Dutch theses can be very impressive and that they sometimes contain ten or more articles that were all published in international, peer-reviewed journals. Do not be intimidated by this – a work of such quality (or at least quantity) is not expected from everyone, since not everyone is a genius. For you, it is perhaps more important to get an impression of the *minimal* requirements that have to be met by a Ph.D. thesis. It is difficult to be really specific on this, but as a rule of thumb a thesis should at least contain four “substantial” chapters plus a general introduction, a general discussion, and an overall summary. A chapter is considered “substantial” if it is of sufficient quality (and novelty) to be published by an international high-quality journal. Ideally, at the end of the four-year period one or two chapters have already been published, one or two have been submitted, and the others are very close to submission. (Also see the paragraph on the (co-)authorship of chapters in Section 6.4.)

## 6.2 Project Planning and Evaluation

As mentioned above, a Ph.D. project should not last longer than four years. To achieve this, a careful planning of the project is required. It may be useful to consider the project as being split into five distinct periods:

- (1) the planning phase (first half year)
- (2) the start-up phase (next half year)
- (3) the “work in progress” phase (1.5 years)
- (4) the “focus on thesis” phase (one year)
- (5) the “finishing touch” phase (last half year).

No two projects are the same, and it is possible that in your specific case there are good reasons to deviate from this scheme. Nevertheless, it is of great importance to ask yourself on a regular basis whether your project is still on schedule and, in case of a negative answer, what to do in order to put it back on track again. To assist you in this, there will be an official assessment at the end of each of the five periods indicated above.

### **Two Types of Assessment: “Ontwikkelings-“ and “Beoordelingsgesprekken”**

Throughout your project, you will have regular meetings with your supervisors (at least once a month, and perhaps several times a week during core periods of your project). However, most of these meetings will be on specific topics like technical problems encountered or the set-up of a manuscript. From time to time, the project as a whole should be evaluated by all people involved. To this end, an official assessment meeting will be planned to mark the end of each of the five periods mentioned above.

Most of these meetings take the form of an “ontwikkelingsgesprek”, i.e., of a “formalized discussion” on the state of affairs between Ph.D. student and her/his supervisors. More generally, *each* employee of our university (including the director of CEES or the dean of the faculty) is supposed to have an annual ontwikkelingsgesprek with his/her boss. In an ontwikkelingsgesprek all kinds of questions will be discussed that are relevant for your project (How much progress has been made? Are we still on schedule? Is there a necessity to change former plans? What is the time planning for the next year or two? Do we have sufficient knowledge and resources for our plans?). In addition, all kinds of aspects related to your well-being, your functioning in the group, your scientific and career development, or the quality of your supervision will be discussed as well. An ontwikkelingsgesprek takes place in a relaxed atmosphere, but it is a serious affair. All participants should reserve sufficient time for it (two to three hours), and it may be a good idea to prepare beforehand a written report with the state of affairs of your project and the most important points that definitely should be touched upon. Your supervisors will indicate whether they are satisfied with your performance and your progress, and they will point out aspects that need improvement. But an ontwikkelingsgesprek is definitely a two-sided affair. This is the chance to tell your supervisors in a frank and open way whether you are satisfied with the working environment, the atmosphere in the group, and – most importantly – with the quantity and quality of supervision. Your supervisors will often not be aware of problems, and a functioneringsgesprek is often a first step to their solution. Even if problems cannot easily be solved, it is almost always a good idea to make others aware of them.

The assessment after the first year (i.e., after the second period) is somewhat different, since it takes the form of a formal evaluation (“appraisal interview” or “beoordelingsgesprek”). In the presence of the personnel advisor, your promotor and your supervisors will judge your performance and your abilities in a number of categories (e.g. knowledge and abilities, technical skills, research planning and organization, presentation, and writing skills). A formal procedure has to be followed, since a beoordelingsgesprek may, in principle, have serious consequences. In rare cases, the appraisal interview leads to the conclusion that the Ph.D. candidate does not match well with the project in question. In such a case, the beoordelingsgesprek will result in the termination of the Ph.D. studentship.

### **The Planning Phase (1<sup>st</sup> half year)**

The first half year is the introductory and planning phase, where you get familiar with the research question and where you develop your research plan. The most important activity in this phase is writing your Introductory Essay (see Section 6.4). In this essay you should review the state of the art in your specific field of interest. Most importantly, you should develop your own research plan and your own research strategy. In other words, you should describe in quite some detail what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve your goals. Of course, this should be coordinated with your supervisors. But above all, the Introductory Essay should give *your* view of your project. The final version of the essay will be made available to the whole TheoBio group and a copy will be sent to GSS, which awards 8-10 EC for it. Moreover, you should present your plans at a Theory Club meeting. The Introductory Essay is a very important component of a Ph.D. project, and you should invest sufficient time and energy in it (two to three months). Start well in time with it, since it may take several versions until you and your supervisors have agreed upon the final version and, accordingly, on the structure and contents of your project. The essay should definitely be handed in before the end of the first half year, since it will form the basis for the first ontwikkelingsgesprek. During this assessment meeting, all aspects of the planned project should be discussed in considerable detail, and after the meeting everyone should agree about the future direction of the research. Prepare well for this ontwikkelingsgesprek, ensure that your supervisors have reserved sufficient time, and take notes that can later be distributed among all members of the research team. Experience from the past shows that the success of a Ph.D. project may crucially depend on the Introductory Essay and the discussions inspired by it!

### **The Start-Up Phase (2<sup>nd</sup> half year)**

The second half year is the start-up phase, where you develop your first models or where you perform your first pilot experiments. Above all, you should make yourself familiar with the most important techniques required for your project. It may, for example, be a good idea to follow a topical or a methodological course of the Graduate School of Science. The end of the first year is marked by a beoordelingsgesprek (or “appraisal interview”; see above). Beforehand, you have to produce a written report that lists all important activities of the first year (Introductory Essay, courses followed, presentations given, etc.). As mentioned above, a beoordelingsgesprek is a formal affair, where your abilities and performance are judged by your promotor and your supervisors. In extreme cases, a negative evaluation results in the termination of the Ph.D. studentship, but fortunately this only happens once in a while (say, in 5% of all cases).

### **The “Work in Progress” Phase (next 1.5 years)**

At the start of your second year, you should have made sufficient progress to start with the “real work”. Since your thesis is still way ahead, you still have considerable freedom in this period. Follow some courses in this phase, and attend a Ph.D. meeting and a conference. If possible, present your ideas and your results, and actively seek discussions with fellow Ph.D. students or experts in your field. There is no need to be shy, and it is often a good idea to contact the “big shots” by email whenever you have an interesting idea or an interesting question. Your supervisors will assist you in this. It might also be a good idea to invite some of these experts for a CEES colloquium. For most Ph.D. students, the “work in progress” phase is a combination of trial-and-error progression and focused work. There is nothing wrong with this, but be aware not to strive too far away from your path. It is of great importance that you do not postpone the “production” of your thesis until the last year of your project. Whenever your project allows this, at the end of the “work in progress” phase your first paper should be submitted and considerable progress should have been achieved on a second one. If you have not produced anything “sizable” after 2.5 years, this should be a matter of concern, since a major effort is required to catch up in the remaining 1.5 years. Anyhow, at the end of the third phase you should have a clear idea about what your thesis will look like (how many chapters; contents of each chapter). This will be the main topic of the ontwikkelingsgesprek with your supervisors. As a basis for this meeting, you should produce

a written report that gives a good impression of what your thesis will look like and that contains a detailed list of what still has to be done in order to achieve your goals. The ontwikkelingsgesprek should result in a month-to-month time planning for the year to come. The thesis outline, together with a specification of the status of all chapters and the time schedule, has to be sent to the director of CEES. Again, you should ensure that your supervisors reserve sufficient time for this important milestone on the route to your thesis.

### **The “Focus on Thesis” Phase (next year)**

While the first 2.5 years of the project are usually relatively relaxed, you will now start to feel the pressure of the approaching deadlines. For the rest of the project, all side paths should be avoided and clear focus on your thesis (and the time thereafter) is required. If you follow additional courses at all, you should prefer either courses with focus on professional skills (like writing a scientific paper or a grant proposal) or on master classes bringing you in close contact with experts in your field. You should now actively strive for presenting your work at one or two international conferences, and should give the time after promotion a first thought. Discuss, for example, with your supervisor whether and when to write a grant proposal for your first post-doc position. For the rest, you should only have one goal in mind: completion of your thesis. At the end of this phase, with just half a year to come, all the “practical” work on your thesis should have been completed. Moreover, to avoid unnecessary stress in the phase to come, you should have finished three chapters of your thesis by then. If possible, all these chapters should have been submitted to a scientific journal. The focus of the ontwikkelingsgesprek marking the end of the “focus on thesis” period should be on two aspects: completion of your thesis and plans and opportunities for the time after promotion. As a preparation for the ontwikkelingsgesprek, you should make a detailed outline of your thesis with a status report of all chapters. The ontwikkelingsgesprek should explicitly address whether or not it will be possible to complete the thesis in time. If the answer is no, steps towards a solution will have to be taken by the supervisors. In any case, the director of CEES has to be informed about the state of affairs by sending him the progress report and a scheme with your month-to-month planning of the last half year of your project.

### **The “Finishing Touch” Phase (last half year)**

The final half year should be spent only on writing. Do not underestimate the importance of the general introduction and the general conclusions of your thesis and reserve sufficient time for writing these parts. In fact, many readers will not read much more than these summarizing and synthesizing chapters. Accordingly, the summary and discussion of your thesis determine to a large extent the impression that your thesis will make on the scientific community. It is perhaps not too surprising that the promotion itself involves a lot of paperwork. Your promotor will assist you in this. Detailed guidelines can also be found on the faculty website [www.rug.nl/fwn/onderzoek](http://www.rug.nl/fwn/onderzoek) (-> Obtaining a Ph.D.). Do not start too late with this paperwork. Foreign students, for example, should ask well before the deadline to obtain a “vrijstelling doctoraal examen” (exemption Master’s exam), i.e., a declaration that your educational background is equivalent to a Dutch Master’s degree (see Section 6.4). It might actually be a good idea to ask for such an exemption already in the first year of your project. The last phase of your project is concluded with the most challenging assessment meetings, the public defense of your thesis in the aula of the university. Let us hope that this will be one of the highlights of your scientific career!

## **6.3 Teaching Duties**

All non-bursary Ph.D. students (= AIOs) are supposed to spend about 10% of their time on teaching duties. Typically, this means that a Ph.D. student assists in one of the courses organized by the Theoretical Biology group. The supervision of Master’s students working on a project closely associated with the project of the Ph.D. student also counts as a teaching duty. What your specific teaching responsibilities are should be discussed with your

supervisor(s) at the start and throughout your project. You can be assured that you are freed from teaching duties in the “finishing touch” phase (the last half year) of your project.

In contrast to AIOs, bursary Ph.D. students (= bursalen or promotiestudenten) are not employees of the university, and they do not have teaching responsibilities. In fact, they are officially not even allowed to have teaching responsibilities. Accordingly, if you are a bursary student, your supervisors will not exert any pressure on you to take on teaching responsibilities. If, however, a bursary student actively asks for getting involved in teaching (in order to get teaching experience that may turn out to be valuable after promotion), a suitable solution can certainly be found.

## **6.4 Miscellaneous Topics**

### **Introductory Essay: Some Guidelines**

During the first six months of your Ph.D. appointment you have to write an introductory essay about your Ph.D. project. The introductory essay should give an overview of what you hope to achieve during your project, and it serves a number of purposes: First, it forces you to structure your ideas on your research project, which is always an important first step for achieving scientific progress. Second, it is a baseline for discussions with your supervisors. An essay gives a much better and a more complete picture of your thoughts than any verbal conversation could do. Third, it is a good thing to get experience in writing and to improve your writing skills in a feedback process with your supervisors. When you later start writing scientific articles or your thesis, you have a major advantage if you have already developed a mature personal writing style. Fourth, the essay can be of direct use for your thesis, since it may serve as a basis for your introduction. And last, but not least, the introductory essay is an important ingredient of the assessment procedure by CEES, the Graduate School of Science, and the faculty. In fact, prolongation of your contract after the first year is only possible if an introductory essay of sufficient quality has been delivered in time.

What is expected from you? A typical introductory essay is 10 to 30 pages long. You are free to choose your own structure, but a typical essay consists of the following elements:

- introduction, with an outline of the research question(s) to be addressed;
- a review of the literature on this topic;
- a detailed description of research goals and the approach taken to achieve them;
- an overview of open questions, potential problems, equipment needed, etc.;
- a working plan for the whole four-year period with special emphasis on the next year;
- a list of courses and other educational activities that you plan to follow.

Writing an introductory essay is like writing a grant proposal for your own project. It may be a good idea to have a look at the introductory essays written by other Ph.D. students in the TheoBio group. A collection of such essays can be found on the H-drive.

Usually, an introductory essay goes through various rounds of revision, with continuous input and feedback from your supervisors before completion. At the very least, your promotor (Franjo) should get a “next to final” copy two weeks before the deadline, i.e., two weeks before the ontwikkelingsgesprek marking the end of the “planning phase”. In the end, all supervisors should get a copy of the final version, Joke will keep a copy for the archive, and one copy should be sent to Joke Nunnink.

### **(Co-)Authorship of Chapters**

In contrast to other countries, a Dutch Ph.D. thesis is considered a joint project, typically involving a number of collaborators. Quite regularly, Ph.D. students take the results of Master’s projects supervised by them as the basis for a chapter of their thesis. In such a case, the Master’s student usually occurs as one of the co-authors, but not necessarily as the first author. The Ph.D. student should be the first author of the majority of chapters in a

thesis (at least of three “substantial” chapters), but it is possible to include chapters with somebody else as first author. In principle, it is also possible that the same chapter appears in two different theses. If both Ph.D. students have equally contributed to the chapter, it counts as “half a chapter” in each of the two theses.

A potential cause of conflict is the common practice that the supervisor of a Ph.D. project is included as an author of many if not all papers resulting from the project. This may sound unfair, but there are at least two reasons for this: (1) the supervisor has typically closely been involved in developing the ideas underlying the project (e.g. by writing the underlying grant proposal); and (2) the budget of the group is partially dependent on the group’s scientific output, and only those papers (co-)authored by a staff member are counted for this purpose. Despite this external pressure, the staff members of the TheoBio group will typically not insist on a co-authorship if their contribution to an article is very limited. However, you should be aware of the fact that inclusion of your supervisor as a co-author is the standard option, and that changing this option requires a discussion with him/her. Notice also that co-authorship also creates an obligation on the part of your supervisor. In that case, you have the fullest right to request a substantial contribution to the paper. At the very least, your supervisor should be available for regular discussions and give timely and high-quality feedback in the writing phase.

### **Exemption Master’s Exam (for *foreign* Ph.D. students only)**

Every foreign Ph.D. student who wants to obtain his doctorate at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences needs a “vrijstelling doctoraal examen” (“exemption Master’s exam”). This is a declaration that your educational background is equivalent to a Dutch Master’s degree. In principle, you only need this document just before your promotion. But in order to avoid complications at this later stage, foreign Ph.D. students are advised to ask for such an exemption already at the start of their appointment. To do so, you need to complete the form “Aanmelding promotie” (Doctorate application) that you can download from the website of the office “Stafbureau Wiskunde en Natuurwetenschappen”:

<http://www.rug.nl/Bureau/expertisecentra/abiz/abiz/producten/wetEnRegelgeving/-promotieregeling/formAppendix1engels.htm>

Send the completed and signed form to the Faculty Office, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Nijenborgh 4, 9747 AG Groningen. A hallmarked copy of the diploma has to be enclosed. The hallmarking can be done at the Registration Office (“Centrale Studenten Administratie”, Uurwerkersgang 10). In case of further questions contact Mrs. Van der Weerd from the Faculty Office (email: [Y.van.der.Weerd@rug.nl](mailto:Y.van.der.Weerd@rug.nl), phone: 050 3634616).

## 7 Other Information

### 7.1 Mailing Lists

#### Internal

- *TheoBio* (administrator: Joke):  
Internal group info and announcements
- *Weekly schedule* (administrator: Joke):  
Distribution of an overview of events inside and outside the TheoBio group
- *Pub list* (administrators: Tim & Daan):  
Info about the weekly pub meetings on Thursday evenings

#### Other interesting mailing lists might be:

- ASAB: Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour
- ESEB: European Society for Evolutionary Biology
- ESMTB: European Society for Mathematical and Theoretical Biology
- Evoldir (Evolution Directory): evolutionary biology and population genetics
- NVTB: Dutch Society for Theoretical Biology
- SMB: Society for Mathematical Biology

### 7.2 Links to Useful Web Sites

- Theoretical Biology group: [www.rug.nl/biol/theobio](http://www.rug.nl/biol/theobio)
- Centre for Ecological and Evolutionary Studies (CEES): [www.rug.nl/biol/cees](http://www.rug.nl/biol/cees)
- Functional Ecology (FE): [www.rug.nl/biol/fe](http://www.rug.nl/biol/fe)
- RUG International Students: [www.rug.nl/prospectiveStudents](http://www.rug.nl/prospectiveStudents)
- RUG Library ('Bibliotheek'): [www.rug.nl/bibliotheek](http://www.rug.nl/bibliotheek)
- Web of Science: This link changes every month. The most actual link can be found on the website of the RUG Library (→ Catalogues and Databases → Databases → Alphabetical list).
- Workgroup Internationalization Groninger Students (WINGS): [www.wings-esn.nl](http://www.wings-esn.nl)
- Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO): [www.nwo.nl/](http://www.nwo.nl/)
- NWO Earth and Life Sciences (ALW): [www.nwo.nl/alw](http://www.nwo.nl/alw)
- Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic): [www.nuffic.nl](http://www.nuffic.nl)
- Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB): <http://asab.nottingham.ac.uk/>
- European Society for Evolutionary Biology (ESEB): [www.eseb.org/](http://www.eseb.org/)
- European Society for Mathematical and Theoretical Biology (ESMTB): [www.esmtb.org/](http://www.esmtb.org/)
- *Evoldir* (evolutionary biology and population genetics):  
<http://evol.mcmaster.ca/brian/evoldir.html>
- Dutch Society for Theoretical Biology (NVTB): <http://www.bio.vu.nl/nvtb/>
- Society for Mathematical Biology (SMB): [www.smb.org](http://www.smb.org)

More interesting links can be found on the TheoBio site 'Links'.

(version August 2008)