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Roaming the virtual campus

Nearly 900 alumni toured a digital campus on Wageningen Experience Day. They paid virtual visits to the buildings and were brought up to date with Wageningen's research. The idea is that the annual event will grow into a festival for more and more target groups.

Alumna Helma Slierendrecht (WUR Biology 1990) found the virtual campus a nice way to see what was going on in Wageningen. 'I've lived and worked in Denmark since 1990. The virtual guided tour was great, especially as I haven't yet seen the new campus in real life. I would like to take a look when I'm next in the Netherlands.'

The Wageningen Experience Day is the new version of the Alumni Open Day, which has been held annually since 2019. This year, it took the form of an online event with a live programme centred on the theme of 'Finding answers together to global challenges'. People could attend lectures virtually in the various buildings on campus. For example, professor of Plant Ecology and Nature Conservation Liesje Mommer talked about declining biodiversity, ERRAZE@WUR programme manager Joukje Siebenga discussed the research on preventing pandemics and

climate programme leader Tim van Hattum spoke about nature-based solutions to climate problems. Visitors were also able to meet the experts in real time and talk to them.

The organizer Nieske Castelein got positive reactions about the digital campus. 'We are the first Dutch university to have such a platform. One of the aims was to reach young alumni and we definitely succeeded in that. We had far more people in their

twenties and thirties than with the old-style Alumni Open Day.'

'Unfortunately, the reunions for the cohorts of 25 and 50 years ago were less successful,' says Castelein. 'The tool we had on the platform for this didn't work well enough. We plan to have in-person reunions again next year.' The Experience Day in 2022 will be a hybrid event, Covid permitting. 'We also want to gradually expand the event and turn it into a festival for more and more target groups, such as WUR's business contacts.'

'I took part in the online sessions on land and water management,' says M. Shariot-Ullah (WUR International Land and Water Management 2016) from Bangladesh. 'In addition, I did a virtual tour of my favourite building, the Forum, and the new buildings Aurora and Omnia. I was also impressed by the carillon. I didn't feel I was drifting virtually.'

Info: www.wur.eu/wed

