

## THE PROPOSITION

PhD candidates explain the most thought-provoking proposition in their thesis. This time it's **Chunzhe Lu**, who obtained a PhD in Bioprocess Engineering on 17 March. He investigated options for using *Pseudomonas* bacteria as sustainable cell factories.



‘Once you lower your expectations, life becomes much easier’

‘Like most PhD students, I did a Time and Project Management course. But I discovered that expectation management is also very important. When I started as a PhD student, I expected to make rapid progress with my project, but that did not happen. It was nobody’s fault; I just needed more time. At first, it made me anxious and I started doubting myself, until I realized that my expectations were just too high.

There are two worlds: the real world and the world you expect. In between is the expectation gap. Too big a gap has a big influence on your feelings. I saw this with some of the students I supervised: their happiness with a particular assessment depended on what grade they expected.

Apart from your own expectations, you also have to deal with the expectations of others. Actually, sometimes it’s more the expectations you think others must have. My parents and supervisors didn’t put any pressure on me, but I still wanted to make them happy and proud. That can make you put unnecessary pressure on yourself.

It is better to just be yourself and *think* about your own expectations, and whether they are realistic. In my new job as a postdoc in Groningen, that’s going to be fine. I’ll be working in a slightly different field, so I’m allowing for the fact that I will need time to become familiar with it.’ RL