Call for proposals

Comenius programme

Leadership Fellows
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background: the Comenius programme

On 7 July 2015, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science presented ‘The Value of Knowledge, a Strategic Agenda for Higher Education’ to both Chambers of the Dutch parliament. In this publication, the Minister put forward a number of proposals for investing the resources that will become available after introducing the new Student Loan System (Studievoorschot) in the quality of higher education in the Netherlands.

The Strategic Agenda sets out three ambitions:
1. World-class education
2. Accessibility, talent development and diversity
3. Social relevance

It is a conscious choice not to define precisely in this Strategic Agenda how the ambitions mentioned above should be achieved, the point of departure being that they can best be achieved by giving the professionals involved the desired scope. According to the Strategic Agenda, the teachers, education leaders and directors that work in Dutch higher educational institutions are inspired, successful and have a proven track record. They are crucial in signalling opportunities for innovative education and designing ways to achieve this.

In their day-to-day work, however, teachers do not always have sufficient opportunities to implement their plans and vision for innovation in education innovation. Lack of time and resources means that plans for innovations often remain pipe dreams.

The Comenius programme was set up to give these teachers sufficient scope to implement their vision. Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was a 17th century education innovator. He is often called the founder of modern education. In search of good education, Comenius combined education research with the development and implementation of innovative teaching methods.

The Comenius programme enables teachers to implement their vision of education in practice, in the spirit of the programme’s eponym. In the next few years, the Comenius programme will develop into a programme facilitating a wide range of educational innovations each year. The government is keen to contribute to more variety in the careers of teachers and researchers at universities and universities of applied sciences by demonstrably valuing excellent and inspired teaching.

The Comenius programme offers grants to Teaching Fellows (€50,000), Senior Fellows (€100,000) and Leadership Fellows (€250,000). The Fellows are distinguished on the basis of experience and the extent of their impact on education. They can use the grant\(^1\) to implement educational innovations and improvements in the context of one specific programme component (such as a course, learning pathway or skills trajectory), an entire degree programme, within a faculty or within several related programmes at collaborating institutions.

\(^1\) Although this is called a Comenius grant, it is formally an increase of the government grant. This grant will be awarded through modification of the higher education financing scheme (Regeling financiën hoger onderwijs) in connection with changes to the budget of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for the financial year concerned; as from then, it will be a legal obligation. The Comenius grant is not a personal grant.
Teaching Fellow: has at least two years’ teaching experience and shows ambition in the area of personal development as a teaching professional. The Teaching Fellow (supported by a team of colleagues if relevant) can use the grant of €50,000 from the Comenius programme within the study programme for which they are responsible, such as a specific course, subject, learning pathway or skills trajectory) to implement an educational innovation project. In their daily work, the Teaching Fellow has direct contact with the students the innovation is aimed at (as a teacher or lecturer, student adviser, internship coordinator, etc.). The project duration is 18 months (one academic year plus any start-up period from the date the grant is awarded to the start of the academic year).

Senior Fellow: an experienced education professional with least five years’ teaching experience and experience with one or more successful (small-scale) educational innovations. The Senior Fellow shows the ambition to further develop their educational leadership skills. They have a coordinating role within a programme (e.g. as a coordinator of a degree programme or annual study programme, or as director of education or a similar role). The Senior Fellow can use the €100,000 grant, in collaboration with teaching staff in the programme, to implement an educational innovation project that will have impact on an entire degree programme or a track within a large-scale programme. Projects have a duration of two academic years, plus any start-up period from the time the grant is awarded until the start of the academic year.

Leadership Fellow: has extensive experience in higher education and is involved in multiple degree programmes. At the time of the application, they have a leadership or coordinating role, e.g. as the director of a faculty or domain (higher professional education), as a dean or vice-dean of a faculty (university education) or as a programme leader of an institution-wide innovation programme. The Leadership Fellow has a track record of successful educational innovations. They demonstrate educational leadership and are able to inspire and give impetus to their vision on education. This grant amounts to €250,000. The Leadership Fellows’ projects are carried out under their leadership by teaching staff and relate to the entire faculty or even the entire institution. Collaboration between faculties or programmes at different institutions is also possible (in which case the project leader’s institution is the coordinating institution). The duration of the projects is three academic years, starting from the award date.

Fellows become members of the (growing) Comenius Community: a community of teachers and leaders in higher education where knowledge, experience and inspiration for educational innovation are shared and disseminated to society.

The Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO) is responsible for the application and assessment procedure of the Comenius programme. NRO is part of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). NRO coordinates and funds education research and facilitates the use of research results in education practice and policy. By doing this, NRO contributes to innovations and improvements in education.

This call for proposals provides an overview of the application procedure for a Comenius grant for a Leadership Fellow as well as the assessment and selection of applications. See Chapter 2, ‘Aim’, of this call for specific information about the nature of the projects and the thematic areas for 2017. The calls for proposals for Teaching Fellows and Senior Fellows are available on the programme page of the Comenius programme on NRO’s website.

1.2 Available budget

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will make a total of €6 million available for grants for the 2018 round of the Comenius programme. The grants will be divided
between universities of applied sciences (Dutch acronym: HBO) and research universities (Dutch acronym: WO).

A total of €1,500,000 is available for Leadership Fellow projects. The amount of a grant for each project is €250,000. This means that a total of six proposals can be honoured.

The grants will be divided equally between universities of applied sciences (Dutch acronym: HBO) and academic universities (Dutch acronym: WO). This means that there are three grants available for projects in higher professional education, and three for projects in research university education.²

1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

This call for proposals is valid until the closing date of 10 October 2017, 14:00 CEST.

A prerequisite for submitting a proposal is that a letter of intent must be submitted before 22 August 2017, 14:00 CEST.

See Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 'Submitting a letter of intent’ and ‘Submitting an application’ of this call for proposals.

² In case of cooperation between a university of applied sciences (HBO institution) and an academic university (WO institution), the coordinating institution determines the category under which the proposal will be treated.
2 Aim

As described in Chapter 1, the Comenius programme is aimed at encouraging education improvements and innovation by professionals in higher education. The innovations designed and implemented by the Teaching Fellows, Senior Fellows and Leadership Fellows will differ in scale, educational context and duration. However, each Fellow must commit to doing practical research (consistent with the scale of the project) in relation to the implemented innovation so that it is clear at the end of the project what the success and failure factors were and whether innovation has led to the intended improvement.

The extent and context of the Leadership Fellow projects and the practical research related to this are described in the first paragraph of this chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the conditions for the applicants, the budget and a number of specific conditions for developing teaching material.

2.1 Leadership Fellow projects

The Comenius Leadership Fellow projects involve implementing an educational innovation across an entire faculty or even an entire educational institution. The projects can give impetus to the education ambitions formulated in the institution’s Strategic Education plan. As opposed to the projects of the Teaching Fellows and Senior Fellows, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science does not prescribe substantive themes for these projects.

The Leadership Fellow, from their own administrative or coordinating role (possibly through the composition of a project team), has the mandate and the ‘sway’ to implement this innovation within the faculty or institution. In addition, the Leadership Fellow has a broad view of the education field through their experience and networks, both national and international. This means that the Fellow (and the project team) will be able to design and implement an innovation that not only has the potential to improve their own education field, but also the potential to have international prestige.

The Leadership Fellow’s vision on education will be the foundation of the Leadership Fellow project. This vision should be made concrete in the project proposal by means of a sophisticated education design and a project plan for implementing the innovation. In addition, the project proposal should include a research plan for making the effects of innovation visible and a plan for monitoring project progress. The results of this research and the evaluation will allow the Fellow and the team to present the project to interested parties (national and international) and to provide advice, after project completion, on how to implement a similar innovation.

The Leadership Fellow will be the project leader for the entire duration of the project. Because of the Fellow’s educational leadership skills, they will be able to lead the project members (teachers, researchers, support, any student assistants, etc.).

Although innovation will always have unpredictable as well as predictable effects, the Leadership Fellow can explain the following in the project proposal:

- where and why an improvement is desirable in this locus of education, and how this relates to the institution’s strategic plan;
- what the innovative focus of the project is;
- why and how this project could be valuable for other faculties or institutions (e.g. by means of a short ‘field exploration’);
why it is likely that the proposed innovation will be an improvement (by referring to relevant literature or previous (smaller-scale) projects with the same objective that were successful);
what the composition of the team is, how the project will be set up and carried out, what expertise is required and how this is provided for in the team;
how the research into the impact of the implemented intervention will be set up (including an explanation of the methods used);
how project progress will be monitored during and after the project;
how the results (whether or not the improvement has been successful, as well as the success and failure factors during project progress) will be shared, and through which channels.

The duration of the projects is three academic years, plus any required start-up period from the date the application is awarded (April 2018).

The grant is intended for an innovation. If the Leadership Fellow proposes to build on a previous pilot conducted on a smaller scale, the Leadership Fellow can demonstrate that scaling up requires more innovation than ‘simply expanding’ previous successful innovation.

The innovation must be carried out within the project term. Developing teaching material that will only be implemented in an educational setting after the end of the period for which the grant is requested cannot be funded with a Comenius grant.
3 Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply

Applications can be submitted by education professionals working in publicly funded higher education institutions in the Netherlands. (See Article 1.8 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act).

One application may be submitted for each institution. The Executive Board endorses the proposal with a substantive recommendation and a statement that the project leader and the project team will be given sufficient scope to implement the project if an application is awarded.

A main applicant acts as the project leader, and can designate up to four co-applicants in their application. The proposal should set out the composition of the entire project team, including the expertise required for the project and the scope of the project members’ mandate. In any case, the project should also include educational expertise from within or outside the institution (e.g. by liaising with an educational research group or lectorate or by involving education advisers). Student assistants who actively contribute to educational innovation can also be part of the team.

The applicant must:
• have an appointment for at least the duration of the project and at least 0.5 FTE;
• have at least seven years’ experience in higher education;
• have a coordinating or administrative role and be able, in this capacity or through the team composition, to implement the innovation across the entire scope of the proposed project;
• designate at most three co-applicants when submitting the application;
• demonstrate, with a recommendation from the Executive Board, that the project is ‘supported’ within the institution and that the project team will be given sufficient scope to implement the project when the grant is awarded.

Conditions for submitting applications within the Comenius programme and membership of the Comenius Community of Fellows

• An applicant may submit an application for only one of the three fellowships in the Comenius programme (Teaching, Senior and Leadership) per year.
• A Fellow who has previously been awarded a Comenius fellowship can ‘move up’ within the programme, but cannot apply again for the same fellowship, or a fellowship at a lower level.\(^3\)
• During the term of their project within the Comenius programme, Fellows will be excluded from submitting applications in the next round.
• If a Leadership Fellow project is awarded to an institution, that institution cannot submit an application in the following year.
• In principle, only the main applicant (and not the rest of the team) will be appointed as Leadership Fellow and will be admitted to the Comenius Community. See Section 3.5.3., ‘After award’.

The applicant submits the application in ISAAC and, during the assessment procedure, receives all relevant communication from NRO and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. After the application is awarded, the main applicant will be the point of contact for NRO and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

\(^3\) An applicant who submitted an unsuccessful application previously may submit an application in the following year. The possibility to submit applications for two consecutive years will also be possible for the 2019 round. Whether this option will be maintained will be reviewed when establishing the calls for proposals in 2020 (to be published in spring 2019).
Members of the assessment committee and referees in this round of the Comenius Leadership Fellows are excluded from submitting applications, both as a main applicant and a co-applicant.4

3.2 What can be applied for

See Section 1.2, ‘Available budget’, for the total budget available in this round.

Applications can be submitted for projects with a duration of at least 36 months and at most 42 months. The start date of a project cannot be before the planned announcement of the decision, so not before 16 April 2018.

A budget of up to €250,000 is available for each application. The requested budget may not exceed €250,000 and may not be less than €237,500.

The total budget of a project may, however, exceed the maximum amount of the grant, on condition that the role and the guarantee of co-financing (by the institution or a third party) is detailed and explained in the application. Co-financing may not exceed the requested budget (the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science must remain the main financier of the project). Co-financing must be guaranteed at the time the application is submitted.

A budget can be requested to cover the direct staff costs relating to the project as well as the material costs of developing teaching material. See Section 3.4.1. for the prerequisites of developing teaching material in relation to a project in the Comenius programme.

The Comenius grant will be disbursed to the institution where the project will be carried out through a government grant. This is done in three instalments of €100,000, €100,000 and €50,000, respectively.5

3.2.1 Staff costs

A budget can be requested for the salary costs of the staff to be appointed for the research. This involves, in any event, the salary costs of teachers and teaching assistants who actively contribute to the project.

To budget the costs of staff at education and research institutions that receive public funding, the fees may be based on the fees applicable at the institutions, provided these do not exceed the maximum (per hour/per day) fees in the 2017 Government Fees Guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Cost (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>53/424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior/research assistant for academic &amp; non-academic staff/teaching staff</td>
<td>72/576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level/university teaching staff/ lecturer-researchers</td>
<td>87/696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior/associate professor</td>
<td>95/760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director/professor/lector</td>
<td>119/952</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stated fees are based on the cost-effective fee plus additional fees. The cost-effective fee includes the average gross salary plus expected wage development, holiday pay, year-end bonus, employer’s charges and an additional fee for overhead costs.

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4 Note: members of the assessment committee are not excluded from submitting an application in the other rounds (Teaching Fellow, Senior Fellow) in the Comenius Programme.

5 Although this is called a Comenius grant, it is formally an increase of the government grant. This grant will be awarded through modification of the higher education financing scheme (Regeling financiën hoger onderwijs) in connection with changes to the budget of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for the financial year concerned; as from then, it will be a legal obligation. The Comenius grant is not a personal grant.
These fees are explained in further detail in the Guide to Government Fees for 2017, which is available at www.nwo.nl/nroprojectbeheer.

The application must indicate how the requested staff costs will be allocated to the different members of the project team, and it must also explain the reasons behind this allocation. The maximum fees set out above are binding, which means that the stated hourly fees will not change in the event funding is awarded and when the budget is determined.

3.2.2 Material costs

The requested budget for material costs may not exceed 20% of the total budget requested. All costs must be substantiated.

A budget can also be requested to cover material costs such as:
- training sessions or courses for the applicant and members of the project team, as needed for the project;
- travel (e.g. to visit research institutions in the Netherlands and abroad that contribute substantively to the project);
- attending national and international conferences, as needed for the project;
- costs associated with the dissemination of project results, knowledge transfer and knowledge utilisation, including the costs associated with publishing academic publications about the project through Open Access.

The costs of purchasing previously developed digital teaching materials (and associated licences), even if these have to be purchased specifically for the project, are not covered by the grant. The costs of continued development of these teaching materials by the applicant or project staff, however, can be entered under staff costs.

The costs of equipment, consumables or administrative or technical assistance that are part of the normal facilities package of an educational institution and the costs of using laboratories and computers in data centres are not eligible for funding, unless the research requires the use of facilities that demonstrably exceeds normal use. Only costs relating directly to the research are eligible for funding, which means that accommodation, overhead, maintenance and depreciation costs may not be funded from the budget.

3.3 When can applications be submitted

The closing date for submitting an application is 10 October 2017, 14:00 CEST.

A prerequisite for submitting an application is that a letter of intent must be submitted before 22 August 2017, 14:00 CEST.

3.4 Specific conditions

3.4.1 Developing teaching material

Developing teaching material can be part of a project, but it cannot be the final aim – any teaching material that is developed must be implemented in teaching practice within the project. Developing material that can only be implemented after project completion cannot be the main aim of a Senior Fellow project.
3.4.2 Creative Commons

Teaching material developed within the framework of the projects must be made available under a Creative Commons Licence (at least “Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike” or less restrictive) at a publicly accessible location.

3.4.3 Open Access

All scientific publications resulting from research funded by grants awarded through this call for proposals must immediately (at the time of publication) be freely accessible worldwide (Open Access). There are several ways to publish Open Access. A detailed explanation of Open Access can be found at www.nwo.nl/openscience.

3.4.4 Deadlines for the start and end dates of a project

The projects must be completed in the three academic years following the year of award (2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021). The final phase of a project may continue until two months into the following academic year at most (October 2021). The start-up phase of a project can start as soon as the award decision has been publicly announced; the planned start date cannot be before 16 April 2018.

3.4.5 After award

Obligation of effort

Whether the project will deliver a result cannot yet be established at the start of the project, which is why after the grant has been awarded, the project leader explicitly takes on an obligation of effort. There is, however, no obligation of result.

The ‘effort’ expected of the Comenius Fellow consists of the following elements:

- The Fellow carries out the project plan proposed in the application to the best of their abilities.
- Fellows report to NRO and each other about project progress and completion (in the interim and no later than three months after the end date of the project). NRO reports to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the project results.
- A brief report on the project is published in the institution’s annual report.
- ‘Paving the way’ and active membership of the Comenius Community: shortly after the grant is awarded, the main applicant will receive an invitation for an initial meeting with all the other applicants awarded a grant. During this meeting, they will be asked to actively contribute ideas about and work on setting up the Community.

Changes in the project team

In the event of major changes in the composition of the project team, the project leader is required to report this to NRO immediately. NRO will advise the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, on a case-by-case basis, of the possible consequences of these changes for awarding the grant.
4 Assessment procedure

The application and assessment procedure is carried out by NRO. NRO forms an assessment committee of experts for the substantive assessment of the applications. The Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science decides whether or not to award the grant based on the opinion of the NRO assessment committee.

The relevant conflict of interest code applies to all individuals and NRO staff involved in the assessment or decision-making process.

4.1 Procedure

The procedure consists of the following steps:
- Publication of the call for proposals
- Submitting letters of intent
- Submitting applications
- Check by NRO of the admissibility of applications
- Possibility of pre-selection by the assessment committee before further processing of applications
- Assessment of the application by international referees
- Opportunity for the applicant to respond to the referees’ report
- Assessment by the assessment committee
- Decision by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

4.1.1 Submitting a letter of intent

The applicant indicates that they will submit an application in this round by means of a letter of intent. The timely submission of a letter of intent is a prerequisite for submitting a full application. An institution can submit only one application (see Section 3.1), which means that only one letter of intent can be submitted by each institution.

Letters of intent must be submitted by no later than 22 August, 14:00 CEST, through the online application system, ISAAC. Applicants will be notified of receipt of the letter of intent.

When submitting the letter of intent, the main applicant must provide some administrative details. After the letter of intent has been submitted, the main applicant can no longer be changed. The applicant must also list in the letter of intent, under the heading ‘summary’, the following:

- Title and summary of the project proposal. These can still be changed when submitting the application
- Composition of the project team
- One or more suggestions for international referees, although this is not compulsory

The letters of intent will be used to gain insight into the maximum number of applications, the composition of the assessment committee (determining any involvement with the main applicant) and the distribution of applications among the members of the assessment committee depending on their areas of expertise. The suggestions for referees will be checked for formal involvement; if the referees are found suitable, they will be contacted by NRO. The content of the letters of intent (e.g. the summary) will not play a role in the further assessment process.
As soon as possible after the deadline for submission of letters of intent, the applicants will be notified of the total number of letters of intent submitted and the distribution over the different themes.

If, after submission of the letter of intent, an applicant decides not to submit an application, for whatever reason, they are requested to notify the Secretary of the Comenius Programme of this as soon as possible at comenius@nro.nl.

**Applications can only be submitted through the online application system, ISAAC.**

The application must be submitted through the main applicant’s ISAAC account. Applicants who do not have an ISAAC account are advised to create this at least one day before submitting the application.

When creating an account, the applicant must specify the institution they work for. If this institution is not yet registered in ISAAC (this may be the case with some universities of applied sciences; larger universities of applied sciences and all academic universities are registered in the database), this can be reported to the Secretary of the Comenius Programme at comenius@nro.nl. As it takes a few days to process the request, it must be made no later than one week before the deadline.

If you have any questions about ISAAC, please see Section 5.1.2.

### 4.1.2 Submitting applications

A standard form is available for submitting the project proposal. Applicants must adhere to the research questions and associated explanatory notes in this form, as well as the guidelines for the maximum number of words and pages.

The main applicant is obliged to submit the application through their own ISAAC account. Full applications must be submitted no later than **10 October 2017, 14:00 CEST**. Submission after this time is not possible. Applicants will be notified of receipt of the application.

When submitting your application in ISAAC, you will have to enter some additional details online, including a summary of the project proposal. You should therefore start submitting your application at least one day before the deadline of this call for proposals. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

In case of technical questions, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk (see Section 5.1.2).

### 4.1.3 Admissibility check and processing the application

As soon as possible after submitting the proposal, the main applicant will be notified of whether or not the application will be processed. The NRO secretariat determines this based on a number of admissibility criteria. These are set out in Section 4.2.1.

If an application does not meet one of these criteria, the Minister will qualify it as ‘inadmissible’ and the application will not be processed.

### 4.1.4 Pre-selection in the event of a large number of applications

If the number of applications submitted exceeds four times the maximum number that can be awarded, a pre-selection may be part of the procedure.
The maximum number of awards has been set for each education sector (maximum of three for each sector). NRO reserves the right to apply pre-selection in only one of the two sectors.

Pre-selection is intended to prevent overburdening the assessment procedure and to be able to give applicants of unsuitable proposals clarity in the short term.

After determining admissibility, the NRO secretariat determines whether there will be a pre-selection of applications. Applicants will be notified of this immediately.

In the event of pre-selection, the proposals will be submitted to a number of members of the assessment committee. They will be asked to assess the proposals based on the assessment criteria set out in Section 4.2.2.

The assessment committee will then present the Minister with its opinion on whether or not to admit the applications for further assessment. If the assessment committee intends to advise the Minister not to admit a proposal for further assessment, the applicant will be notified of this, along with an explanation of the committee’s opinion. The applicant will be given the opportunity to respond to the assessment committee’s opinion within three working days. This response will be submitted for consideration to a number of members of the assessment committee, after which the committee may decide to modify its opinion to the Minister.

The Minister takes the final decision on admission of applications for further assessment.

If an application is not admitted for further assessment, the applicant will be notified of this in writing, along with a brief explanation of the opinion.

If the application is admitted for further assessment, the applicant will receive confirmation of this by email.

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**The assessment committee**

The assessment committee in the Comenius Leadership Fellows round assesses applications from university education institutions as well as higher professional education institutions.

The assessment committee consists of at least:
- Two to four academic researchers
- Two to four directors or former directors in Dutch or Flemish Higher Education
- Two students with experience in representative bodies/teaching evaluations at institution-wide level
- One formal chairperson

Applications will be assessed by the full ‘science-wide’ committee. In forming the assessment committee, the aim is to achieve as wide a background as possible in academic disciplines and education sectors. The applicant is advised to take this wide composition of the assessment committee into account when writing the application.

4.1.5 **Assessment of the application by referees and the applicant’s response**

**Assessment by referees**

The applications admitted for processing are submitted to three independent referees (from the Netherlands and abroad) for comments: They are asked to give substantive and substantiated comments on the proposal. They formulate their comments on the basis of the evaluation criteria.
The referees are selected based on their expertise and may not be involved in the applications. When submitting a letter of intent or an application, applicants may suggest potential referees with whom they have no direct working relationship. Suggesting referees is no guarantee that these referees will be approached to assess the application. The members of the assessment committee may also be asked to make suggestions.

NRO determines who will be approached as a referee. If it appears that a referee’s comments are overly focused on the person of the applicant or researcher, or otherwise unprofessional, the programme committee reserves the right to have these comments modified before submitting them to the applicant, or not to submit them.

Response
The applicant receives anonymised comments on their application and is given a week’s time to formulate a response.

If the tenor of the referees’ comments is mostly negative, the applicant is urged to withdraw their application. Experience from previous NWO funding rounds has shown that the probability of a positive assessment in the case of predominantly negative comments by referees is generally very small. If the applicant decides to withdraw the application, they must notify the NRO bureau in writing as soon as possible.

4.1.6 Assessment of the application file by preliminary assessors

After receiving the referees’ comments and the applicant’s response, the application file (consisting of the original application, the referees’ comments and the applicant’s response) is submitted for comment to two members of the assessment committee (the preliminary assessors).

On the basis of the assessment criteria, the preliminary assessors provide substantive and substantiated written comments on the referees’ report and the applicant’s response. The members of the assessment committee must take into consideration the comments already raised by the referees and which the applicant has had the opportunity to respond to. In addition, the preliminary assessors assign a score for each major criterion. The preliminary assessors may not be involved in the applications on which they provide an assessment.

The application, the referees’ comments, the applicant’s response and the preliminary assessment serve as input for the assessment meeting.

4.1.7 Assessment meeting and final opinion

During the assessment meeting, members of the assessment committee meet and discuss all proposals, after which they assign a score to each proposal.

All applications are given a qualification based on the weighted average score. The following scale is used:
- 1.0 up to 1.4: excellent
- 1.5 up to 3.4: very good
- 3.5 up to 5.4: good
- 5.5 up to 9.0: insufficient

For more information about the qualifications, see: https://www.nwo.nl/en/funding/funding+process+explained/nwo+qualification+system.

The committee then prioritises the applications according to likelihood of success. On the basis of this prioritisation, the assessment committee prepares an opinion to the Minister with the recommendation to invite at most six applicants (of the highest-scoring proposals) per education sector for an interview with a delegation of the assessment committee, and not to honour the other proposals.
The Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science takes the final decision on selection for the interview round. The applicants will be invited on the basis of the criteria set out in Section 4.2, the prioritisation determined by the assessment committee and the available budget.

After the decision, the applicants will be notified as soon as possible of the outcome (invitation or rejection), along with a brief explanation of the opinion of the assessment committee.

4.1.8 Final opinion after the interview

During the interview, the applicant will have the opportunity to comment on the questions or the opinion of the committee, as explained in the written invitation. The applicant and the assessment committee then discuss the project proposal.

At the end of the interview, the assessment committee again assigns a score to the proposal. The interview may result in a re-assessment of the proposal’s qualification and its score.

All applications are – again – assigned a qualification based on the weighted average score, for which the above scale is again used. Only applications that receive at least the qualification ‘good’ for all criteria will be eligible for funding.

The assessment committee prioritises the proposals and advises the Minister of Education, Culture and Science on the applications to be honoured.

4.1.9 Decision by the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science takes the final decision. Applications are honoured on the basis of the criteria in Section 4.2, the prioritisation determined by the assessment committee and the available budget.

Applicants are notified about the outcome as soon as possible, along with a brief explanation of the opinion of the assessment committee.

4.1.10 Objection and appeal

An interested party⁶ may object in writing to a decision relating to the 2018 round of the Comenius Programme – Teaching Fellows within six weeks of the date on which the decision was communicated to the interested party. The interested party should lodge their objection to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. More information on lodging an objection can be found at www.bezwaarschriftenocw.nl.

4.1.11 Time schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Publication of the call for proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 August, 14:00 CEST</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting the letter of intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 October 2017</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting the application. NRO checks all applications for admissibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 October 2017</td>
<td>Determine the number of admissible applications + determine if a pre-selection will take place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No later than 15 November 2017</td>
<td>Notification of decision on pre-selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November - December</td>
<td>Proposals submitted to (international) referees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶ The Comenius grant is paid in the form of an increase in the government grant to the institution where the applicant is employed. This means that if the applicant wishes to lodge an objection, it is the institution that formally lodges the objection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mid-December</th>
<th>Referees’ comments sent to applicants; opportunity to respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January - February 2018</td>
<td>Application files presented to members of the assessment committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early March 2018</td>
<td>Assessment meeting: selection of candidates to interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of March 2018</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No later than 16 April 2018</td>
<td>Announcement of decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of April/Early May 2018</td>
<td>Festive kick-off meeting with all 2018 Comenius Fellows (Teaching, Senior &amp; Leadership)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1.12 Amendments to the procedure

NRO or the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science may consider it necessary to adapt the time schedule during the course of the ongoing procedure. This will be communicated to the applicants as soon as possible.

### 4.2 Criteria

#### 4.2.1 Formal eligibility criteria

For an application to be eligible for admission to the assessment procedure it must meet a number of formal conditions, as described below. Applications will first be reviewed against these conditions. Only applications that meet the following conditions will be admitted to the assessment procedure.

- The application has been submitted by a person who meets the requirements set out in Section 3.1 of this call for proposals.
- The application has been submitted through the main applicant’s ISAAC account.
- The application has been submitted on time.
- The application has been written in English.
- The main applicant has submitted a letter of intent on time.
- The main applicant has not submitted an application in one of the other ‘tiers’ of the Comenius programme.
- No other application has been submitted by the applicant’s institution.
- The application is accompanied by a signature of the Executive Board.
- The application form has been completed accurately and in full, in accordance with the instructions.
- The application falls within the subject matter of this call for proposals, as set out in Section 2.1.
- The budget has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines in Section 3.2 of this call for proposals.
- The period for which the budget is requested is at least 36 months and at most 42 months. The planned start date of the project is after 16 April 2018 and on or before 1 September 2018. The planned end date of the project is before 16 November 2021.

#### 4.2.2 Substantive assessment criteria

The applications will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. **Innovative nature of the project: (20%)**
   - a. Does the project proposal sufficiently describe the innovative nature of the project?
   - b. Is this truly innovating within the Dutch or the international context?

2. **Expected result of the project: (20%)**
   - a. Is the scale and context of the project and the intended result consistent with a Leadership Fellow project as described in Section 2.1?
b. Does the proposal clearly describe where and why an improvement is desirable (within the institution’s field of education) and how this relates to the institution’s strategic plan?

c. Has it been made plausible in the application, e.g. by referring to relevant literature and or practical examples, that the proposed innovation could lead to an improvement?

d. Has the intended result of the project been clearly defined?

3. Quality of the project and research plan (20%)
   a. Have the methods used been sufficiently defined and are they adequate?
      • Has the purpose of the innovation been clearly defined?
      • Has the purpose of the research into the impact of the innovation been clearly defined? Are the proposed methods suitable?
   b. Has it been clearly defined which roles and expertise are necessary for the project, and how these are provided for in the team? Is this sufficiently solid?
   c. Has the planning been clearly defined and is it achievable?
      • Has it been clearly defined how project progress will be evaluated (interim and final evaluation)? Are the methods proposed for this suitable?

4. Result for Dutch higher education (20%)
   a. Has it been convincingly substantiated why and how the project could be of value for other programmes or institutions?
   b. Is the dissemination plan (plans for disseminating the results, both in terms of the impact of the innovation and the evaluation of the project) suitable and sufficiently ambitious?

5. Teaching experience and vision of the applicant (20%)
   a. Does the applicant or the team of co-applicants match the Leadership Fellow profile (as described in Sections 1.1 and 3.1), given the experience and current roles of the project leader and team members?
      • Does the applicant or the team have the right experience, given the subject matter of the proposed project?
   b. Does the applicant’s professional statement demonstrate:
      • Educational leadership?
      • A sophisticated vision of education, educational leadership, and how they apply this in their own work?
      • The contribution the Comenius grant (being able to carry out the project, membership of the Comenius Community) will make to the teaching career of the applicant or the members of the project team?

4.2.3 Policy considerations

When honouring the proposals, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science can also take budgetary considerations into account in addition to the quality criteria.
5 Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

5.1.1 Specific questions

For specific questions about the Comenius programme and this call for proposals, please contact:

Judith Huisman MA, Comenius programme secretary, Leadership Fellows
comenius@nro.nl

+31 (0)70 – 344 0928

5.1.2 Technical questions about the electronic application system, ISAAC

You can contact the ISAAC helpdesk if you have any technical questions about ISAAC. Please read the ISAAC manual before consulting the helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between 10:00 and 17:00 hours CEST on +31 (0)20 346 71 79. You can also send your queries by email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive an answer within two working days.
Netherlands Organisation for
Scientific Research

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2593 CE The Hague
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17 July 2017