Call for proposals

Comenius programme

Senior 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 2015-2025 Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, ‘The Value of Knowledge’, to both Chambers of the Dutch parliament. In this publication, the Minister put forward a number of proposals to invest 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 above ambitions should be achieved, the point of departure being that they can best be achieved by giving the professionals involved sufficient opportunities to do so. According to the Strategic Agenda, the teachers, education leaders and directors that work in Dutch higher education 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 and educational leaders do not always have sufficient opportunities to implement their plans and vision for innovation in education. 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 opportunities to implement their vision. Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was a 17th century pedagogue and 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 grant1 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.

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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 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 study 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 major 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 (university of applied sciences, HBO), as a dean or vice-dean of a faculty (academic university, WO) 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 Senior 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 2018. The calls for proposals for Teaching Fellows and Leadership 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 equally between universities of applied sciences (Dutch acronym: HBO) and academic universities (Dutch acronym: WO).

A total of €2,200,000 is available for Senior Fellow projects. The maximum amount of a grant for each project is €100,000.

The grants are divided between the three themes and one free category (see Section 2.2 - 2.4) according to the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>HBO institutions</th>
<th>WO institutions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Equal opportunities in higher education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Personalised learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Socially engaged higher education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free category – The Value of Knowledge</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

This call for proposals is valid until the closing date of 7 November 2017, 14:00 CEST.

A prerequisite for submitting a proposal is that a letter of intent must be submitted before 29 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 Aim

As described in Chapter 1, the Comenius programme is aimed at encouraging educational innovation and improvements 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 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 Senior Fellow projects and the practical research related to this are described in the first paragraph of this chapter, after which the three themes and one free category are described.

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

2.1 Senior Fellow projects

The Senior Fellow implements an innovation in the area of education for which they are responsible. Because the Senior Fellow has a broad view of the education field through their current role and teaching experience, they can design an innovation that not only has the potential to improve their own teaching practice but is also interesting for other professionals in Dutch higher education.

Senior Fellow projects relate to an entire degree programme or a track within a large-scale programme. The duration of the projects is two academic years, plus any required start-up period from the date the application is awarded (April 2018).

The project must be founded on the Senior Fellow’s vision on teaching and a sophisticated education design.

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

- where and why an improvement is desirable in this locus of education;
- what the innovative focus of the project is;
- why and how this project could be valuable for other degree programmes or tracks in the Netherlands (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 projects with the same objective);
- 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 to make visible whether or not the improvement has been successful at the end of the project;
- how success and failure factors will be identified in the project and the project set-up;
- how the results (whether or not the improvement has been successful, as well as the success and failure factors of the project) will be shared.

The grant is intended for an innovation. If the Senior Fellow proposes to build on a previous pilot conducted on a smaller scale, the Senior 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.

### 2.2 Theme 1: Equal opportunities in higher education

The Dutch higher education sector aims to be accessible to anyone who can and wants to study. This is not just a matter of formal accessibility – it is equally important to consider the different backgrounds of students and the differences between students, and to structure education so that everyone has a real chance of success. This requires personalisation, understanding and innovation. Although the Dutch higher education system is highly accessible, especially in the international context, there are a number of issues in this respect.

Although the student population in Dutch universities and universities of applied sciences has become more diverse in recent years, it does not yet reflect Dutch society and certain groups are underrepresented. It also appears that the academic success of some groups of students, including students with a non-Western migration background, students from lower-income families and first-generation students (students whose parents did not attend higher education) but also other groups, such as students with disabilities, consistently lags behind that of other students. These students drop out more often, take longer to complete their studies and obtain lower grades. In light of the principle that education should contribute to equal opportunities for all students, this tendency is undesirable.

Moreover, diversity in general and the diversity of the student population are often underutilised in education. A pluralistic community of people with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, religion, ethnicity, gender, age and sexual orientation, or other characteristics that distinguish their position in society can be a catalyst for creative solutions. Open discussion between people from different backgrounds and perspectives can foster debating skills, allow students to reflect on their own values and those of others, and can promote the development of intercultural skills. Actively putting this diversity to use, including in the content of the curriculum, can contribute significantly to the quality of education.

For the ‘Equal Opportunities’ theme, projects are sought that contribute to a more diverse student population, to increased academic success of groups of students that are lagging behind and to utilising diversity in education.

### 2.3 Theme 2: Personalised learning

Each student is different, and has their own interests, ambitions, challenges and learning style. A one-size-fits-all approach is therefore not suitable in higher education. To allow each student to benefit optimally from higher education in their degree programme, it is important to personalise education even more than is currently the case. This will intensify education and make it more tailored to individual students’ situations, interests and abilities. This can be done, within specific subjects, through active forms of collaboration based on co-creation, small-scale tutorials, one-on-one education, differentiated assignments, individual remedial teaching or adaptive forms of testing. Education-wide and institution-wide innovations, such as more open curricula, new ways of measuring and demonstrating academic progress, or a different type of relationship between student and teacher can also contribute to education that is more suited to individuals. Digital innovations can be an excellent tool for this, but other types of educational innovations can also lead to more personalised education. It is
particularly important to create opportunities that will give students control of their own learning process, and to support them in this respect.

For the ‘Personalised Education’ theme, educational innovations are sought that will bring higher education more in line with the interests, circumstances, capacities and needs of individual students. These innovations provide significant added value in terms of the intensity, support or differentiation of education.

2.4 Theme 3: Socially engaged higher education

Through higher education, young citizens learn how to function in our society. Naturally this requires subject knowledge and professional skills, but that is not enough. Future leaders and innovative professionals also need to understand societal issues in their immediate environment. They must comprehend the challenges facing society and learn how to use their knowledge and skills to help solve these problems. In that sense, society offers a rich learning environment. It is, after all, the ideal context for studying societal issues, getting students out of their comfort zone and giving them the opportunity to use their talents for the benefit of the community.

The education and training of students therefore requires higher education that is embedded in society and that actively seeks to connect with societal themes and parties. Institutions should give students the opportunity to experience the kind of rich learning environment that emerges in the intersection between education, research and society. This can be done in many ways, for example by focusing education on research questions from society, having students analyse societal issues, having students apply existing knowledge to societal challenges and working together with municipalities and governments, companies and NGOs, or by means of community-service learning and other kinds of practical services.

For the ‘Socially engaged higher education’ component, educational innovations are sought that strengthen the connection between society and education. This is not so much about using practical examples in lectures or references to societal developments, but making society an essential part of the educational environment. This requires new forms of education in which students can address societal issues in society, with the guidance of teachers, and which provide for specific forms of examination and lasting cooperation with social partners. Projects should give students a better understanding of societal issues, help them to develop knowledge and skills they can use later in life to contribute to society, but also help them contribute to the community now, or encourage sustainable regional and sectoral cooperation between institutions and social partners.

2.5 Free category – the entire scope of The Value of Knowledge

The 2015-2025 Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, ‘The Value of Knowledge’, charts a course for the future of higher education. A central tenet of the Strategic Agenda is that higher education must, in the coming years, take a leap into the future. The moment to take this leap into 21st-century education is now. The Strategic Agenda has three central policy themes:

- World-class education
- Accessibility, talent development and diversity
- Social relevance

In order to achieve the ambitions in these areas, it is important to give education professionals and teachers sufficient opportunities to develop and implement their
own plans. They are best qualified to identify where opportunities lie and which innovations can significantly contribute to the quality of higher education.

Projects suitable for the free category, The Value of Knowledge, are those that match the topics and ambitions set out in the Strategic Agenda. It is the express intention that applicants use their experience in teaching practice to reflect on which innovations will make the greatest contribution to higher education but which, due to lack of time and resources, cannot be accomplished.

The full text of the Strategic Agenda can be found at: https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2015/07/01/the-value-of-knowledge

**Selecting a theme/category**

Applications are submitted and assessed within one specific theme. Connection with the theme is one of the criteria for admissibility. A project may have areas of overlap with two or even all three of the described themes. In that case, it is advisable to submit a proposal within the theme closest to the applicant’s main motivation for carrying out the project. This may be the promotion and utilisation of diversity within the student community, optimal support for individual students or engagement with issues or relevant partners in society.

If the main motivation for the project is not directly related to one of these themes, the application can be submitted in the free category.
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 faculty\(^2\) \(^3\). The dean and/or the faculty
director endorses the application with a substantive recommendation and a
statement that the project leader will be given sufficient opportunities to
implement the project if an application is awarded.

A main applicant acts as the project leader, and can designate up to three co-
applicants in their application. The application should clarify what expertise is
required for the project and how this is provided for in the team, or will be
provided for after the application is awarded. Preferably, the applicant should
demonstrate that the project will also include educational expertise from within or
outside the institution. 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 five years’ experience in higher education;
- have a coordinating role, (e.g. as a director of education or, in the event of
  major programmes\(^4\), coordinator of an annual study programme or
  specialisation within the programme);
- designate at most three co-applicants when submitting the application;
- demonstrate, with a recommendation from the dean/faculty director, that the
  project is ‘supported’ within the faculty/institute and that the project team will
  be given sufficient opportunities 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 grants in the
  Comenius programme (Teaching, Senior and Leadership) per year;
- A Fellow who has previously been awarded a Comenius grant can ‘move up’
  within the programme, but cannot apply again for the same grant, or a grant
  at a lower level;\(^5\)
- Fellows will be excluded from submitting applications in the following round for
  the duration of their project within the Comenius programme;

\(^2\)Interdisciplinary education centres (like Centres of Expertise) that offer fully-funded
education programmes but are not linked to one specific faculty and (therefore) fall
directly under the remit of the Executive Board of the institution can also submit a
maximum of one application.

\(^3\) Specific limits apply to a number of institutions with a non-standard organisational
structure. See the Annex to this call for proposals.

\(^4\) More than 200 students enrolled in the first year of the Bachelor’s programme;

\(^5\) 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).
Chapter 3: Guidelines for applicants

- If a Senior Fellow project is awarded to a faculty, that faculty cannot submit an application in the following year;
- In principle, only the main applicant (and not the rest of the team) will be appointed a Senior 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 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. After the application is awarded, the main applicant will be the point of contact for NRO and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Members of the assessment committee in this round of the Comenius Senior Fellows are excluded from submitting applications, both as a main applicant and a co-applicant.  

### 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 24 months and at most 30 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 €100,000 is available for each application. The requested budget may not exceed €100,000 and may not be less than €95,000.

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 two instalments of €50,000.

#### 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.

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

7 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 financiering 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.
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>Position</th>
<th>Fee (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>53/424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior/research assistant for academic and 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.

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 education 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 07 November 2017, 14:00 CEST.

A prerequisite for submitting an application is that a letter of intent must be submitted before 29 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 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 two academic years following the year of award (2018-2019 and 2019-2020). The final phase of a project may continue until two months into the following academic year at most (October 2020). 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 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 Minister of Education, Culture and Science decides whether or not to award the grant based on the opinion of the 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
- Assessment of the application by preliminary assessors
- Opportunity for the applicant to respond to the preliminary assessment
- 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 faculty.

Letters of intent must be submitted by no later than 29 August 2017, 14:00 CEST, through 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:

- For which theme (see Section 2.2 - 2.4) the application will be submitted. After submission of a letter of intent, the theme can no longer be changed.
- Title and summary of the project proposal. These can still be changed when submitting the application
- Composition of the project team

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 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 7 November 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 Assessment of the application by preliminary assessors

Each application is submitted for comments to two members of the assessment committee (the preliminary assessors). On the basis of the assessment criteria set out in Section 4.2.2, the preliminary assessors provide substantive and substantiated written comments on the proposal. 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 assessment committee
Depending on the number of applications (in total or for each theme), the assessment committee in the Comenius Senior Fellows round will consist of two, three or four ‘divisions’, each with its own theme-related area of expertise.

Each division of the assessment committee must have at least the following expertise:
– Practical experience in educational innovation projects
– For each theme handled by the division, at least one expert in that theme, namely a higher education professional who incorporates research and practice into this theme in their own work
– Education researcher/educationalist
– Student-related expertise

The different divisions of the assessment committee assess the applications submitted in the different categories. Each division assesses proposals from universities as well as universities of applied sciences. Members of the assessment committee currently work, or have recently worked, in higher education. Students in the assessment committee have proven experience in representative bodies and/or with teaching evaluations. Applications will be assessed by the full ‘science-wide’ committee. When forming the assessment committee, the aim is to achieve as wide a background as possible in academic disciplines and education sectors. However, it cannot be guaranteed that all academic disciplines will represented in the committee. Applicants are advised to keep this in mind when preparing the application.

4.1.5 Opportunity to respond to the preliminary assessment

The preliminary assessment is then anonymised and presented to the applicant. The position of the proposal in the – provisional – ranking is also mentioned.

The applicant will be given the opportunity to submit a response, of 500 words at most, within one week. In the response, the applicant may identify factual errors in the preliminary assessment and clarify any ambiguities in the application as noted by the preliminary assessors. Submitting a response is not compulsory. Furthermore, an applicant may decide, based on the preliminary assessment, to withdraw the proposal from further assessment.

The application, the preliminary assessment and the applicant’s response to the preliminary assessment.

4.1.6 Assessment meeting and final opinion

During the assessment meeting, members of the (relevant division of the) assessment committee meet and discuss all proposals, after which they assign a score to each proposal.
Chapter 4: Assessment procedure

All applications are given a qualification based on the final 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

Only applications that receive at least a score of 5.4 or higher for all criteria will be eligible for funding. For more information about the qualifications, see: https://www.nwo.nl/en/funding/funding+process+explained/nwo+qualification+system.

All applications within the same category (theme) and educational sector will be prioritised on the basis of scores given to the proposals. On the basis of this prioritisation, the assessment committee prepares an opinion on the proposals to be honoured. This is presented to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

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

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science takes the final decision on the submitted applications. Applications will be honoured on the basis of the criteria set out 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.

4.1.8 Objection and appeal

An interested party may object in writing to a decision relating to the 2018 round of the Comenius programme – Senior 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.

4.1.9 Time schedule

| June 2017 | Publication of the call for proposals |
| 29 August 2017, 14.00 | Deadline for submitting the letter of intent |
| 7 November 2017 | Deadline for submitting the application; NRO checks all applications for admissibility |
| 20 November 2017 | Determine the number of admissible applications |
| November – December | Proposals sent to the preliminary assessors; the assessment committee prepares preliminary assessment |
| January | Preliminary assessment sent to the applicants; deadline for responding to the preliminary assessment is one week after receiving this |

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8 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.
Chapter 4: Assessment procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January – February 2018</td>
<td>Members of the assessment committee prepare assessment meetings (each file includes the application, preliminary assessment and response to preliminary assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early March 2018</td>
<td>Assessment meetings; the assessment committee provides the Minister with an opinion on awarding/rejecting the proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of March 2018</td>
<td>Minister’s decision to award/reject the proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No later than 16 April 2018</td>
<td>Applicants notified of whether their application has been awarded or rejected</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>

4.1.10 Amendments to the procedure

NRO or the 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, including the restrictions on submitting more than one application within the entire Comenius programme;
- 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 Dutch or English;
- The main applicant has submitted a letter of intent on time;
- The category for which the application was submitted matches the category for which the letter of intent was submitted;
- 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 faculty;
- The application is accompanied by a statement by the dean of the faculty;
- 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 24 months and at most 30 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 2020.
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 innovative within the context of Dutch higher education?

2. **Expected result of the project: (20%)**
   a. Is the scale and context of the project and the intended result consistent with a Senior 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)?
   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 plan (20%)**
   a. Have the methods used been sufficiently defined and are they adequate?
      • Has the purpose of the innovation been clearly defined?
      • Does the project plan provide for an evaluation of the impact of the innovation? Are the methods proposed for this 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?
      • Does the project plan provide for an evaluation of project implementation? Are the methods proposed for this suitable?

4. **Result for the teaching community (20%)**
   a. Has it been convincingly substantiated why and how the project could be of value for other – similar – study programmes?
   b. Is the dissemination plan (plans for disseminating the results) suitable and sufficiently ambitious?

5. **Teaching experience and vision of the applicant (20%)**
   a. Does the applicant match the Senior Fellow profile (as described in Sections 1.1 and 3.1), given their teaching experience and current role at the institution?
      • 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:
      • a sophisticated vision of education and how they apply this in their teaching practice?
      • educational leadership?
      • the contribution the Comenius grant (being able to carry out the project, membership of the Comenius Community) will make to the applicant’s teaching career?

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.
Chapter 5: Contact details and other information

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:

Marchje van der Veen MSc, Secretary of the Comenius programme – Senior 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 a response within two working days.
6 Annexes

6.1 Summary of specific agreements for education institutions with a non-standard organisational structure

6.1.1 Universities

6.1.1.1 Wageningen University & Research (WUR)
Each of the five departments (Agrotechnology & Nutrition Sciences, Animal Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Plant Sciences, Social Sciences) in which (formal) education is organised at WUR may submit one application at most.

6.1.1.2 Universities based on religious or philosophical principles
Universities based on religious or philosophical principles listed under Article I of the Annex to the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act may submit at most one application per institution.

6.1.2 Universities of applied sciences

6.1.2.1 Hogeschool Utrecht
Eight applications can be submitted by institutions affiliated with Hogeschool Utrecht. Cooperation between institutions and with knowledge centres is possible and recommended. Applications from the institutions that will submit applications for funding under the Comenius programme will be coordinated by the educational innovation programme. An application from Utrecht University must therefore be provided with a signature by the programme director. This must be submitted as a PDF file along with the application in ISAAC.

6.1.2.2 Van Hall Larenstein
Each of the three domains of Animals and Business, Delta Areas and Resources and Food and Dairy may submit one application at most.

6.1.2.3 Small-scale or specialised universities of applied sciences
Small-scale or specialised universities of applied sciences with fewer than 2000 enrolments a year, as published on the website of the Dutch association for universities of applied science (Vereniging Hogescholen), may only submit one application.