



Call for proposals

Rubicon April 2012

1st round

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Rubicon is the river that Julius Caesar crossed in 49 BC before the series of victories that prompted his famous words 'veni, vidi, vici' ('I came, I saw, I conquered').

The Rubicon programme is directed at promising young postdoctoral researchers who are still at the start of their scientific careers but whose scientific qualities give them the potential to become established figures in Dutch scientific research.

Rubicon is part of the NWO Talent Line and is intended for the period preceding a possible Veni application.

The programme offers researchers the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and experience by spending up to 2 years at a top research institute outside the Netherlands. There is also a limited opportunity to apply for a research period at an excellent Dutch research institute.

1.2 Available budget

The changes that were made in November 2011 in the NWO Talent Line programmes it has been made possible to continue the Rubicon programme in 2012. NWO has reserved 7 million euro for three submission rounds in 2012. There is approximately 2.3 million euro available for each submission round.

1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

This call for proposals is valid for the Rubicon round with the submission deadline on 3 April 2012.

2 Aim

The aim of the programme is to encourage talented researchers at Dutch universities and KNAW and NWO research institutes to continue in academic research after they have gained their PhDs. It offers them the opportunity to enhance their career prospects by spending up to 2 years gaining relevant knowledge, skills and experience at a top research institute outside the Netherlands.

Rubicon also offers Dutch researchers the option of using the grant to conduct research in the Netherlands, primarily designated for applications that focus on Dutch topics, e.g. Dutch language, culture and law. However, preference will be given to researchers who apply for a grant to spend time outside the Netherlands, as international research experience is likely to be an advantage at a later stage in the applicant's academic career and in applying for other NWO grants.

The mobility of the researcher plays an important role in the evaluation and selection process.

3 Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply

Any postgraduate who is currently engaged in PhD research or who has been awarded a PhD within 12 months preceding the relevant deadline for the submission of applications may apply for a Rubicon grant.

NWO can extend the deadline of 12 months after the formal award of a PhD, if the candidate has taken extended sick, parental, maternity or care leave within that period. The deadline may also be extended if the candidate has combined a part-time research appointment with care responsibilities or has undertaken training in a clinical specialism recognised by the Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG). The maximum period of one year after the PhD can be extended by a maximum of one year, which means that candidates can submit an application up until 2 years after the PhD at the latest. Candidates who wish to be considered for an extension must submit a request to this effect to NWO before they submit their grant application. They can do this by e-mail (rubicon@nwo.nl).

Women in particular are invited to submit applications.

Applications are only admissible for selection if applicants fulfill the following formal conditions. Only applications that comply with these conditions will be considered:

- a. Applications must be submitted by individual researchers and not by pairs or teams of researchers).
- b. In the five years directly preceding the submission deadline, applicants must have conducted scientific research at an academic research institute in the Netherlands for a period at least equivalent to three years fulltime.
- c. Applicants may not apply for a Rubicon grant for a stay in the country in which they graduated, unless that country is the Netherlands. Graduating means here obtaining the degree which would formally make one eligible to start a PhD project.
- d. Applicants may not apply for a Rubicon grant for a stay in the country in which obtained their PhD, unless that country is the Netherlands.
- e. Applicants may not apply for a Rubicon grant to conduct research at the knowledge institute where they graduated from. Graduating means here obtaining the degree which would formally make one eligible to start a PhD project.
- f. Applicants may not apply for a Rubicon grant to conduct research at the knowledge institute where they obtained their PhD from.
- g. The PhD date (on the certificate) of an applicant must be within 12 months preceding the relevant deadline for the submission of applications.
- h. On the submission deadline, applicants may have been conducting postdoctoral research at the host institute for a period equivalent to no more than six months fulltime.
- i. Each candidate may only submit an application for a Rubicon grant once. An application is considered to have been submitted when NWO decides that it is admissible for the selection procedure.
- j. The Rubicon research should be conducted over an uninterrupted period.
- k. The researcher conducts the Rubicon research at a single host institute. Depending on the research subject, external data collection or field research may be approved.

- I. Candidates who are still completing their PhD research may only submit an application if their supervisor approves the thesis (by means of a written declaration with the Rubicon application). The candidate may start on the research as soon as the date for the defense of the PhD thesis is known, but no later than 1 December 2012.
- m. Applications in which the harvesting and use of new human embryos takes place are not admissible. Research that uses existing embryos is admissible on the condition that an ethical committee gives consent to the proposed research.

3.2 What can be applied for

Candidates can apply for a stay of at least 12 months and no longer than 24 months at a top academic research institute outside the Netherlands. There is also a limited opportunity to apply for a research period of at least 12 months and no longer than 24 months at an excellent Dutch research institute. It is not possible to combine a stay in the Netherlands and abroad.

Eligible costs for funding are salary costs for the researcher including the relevant social fees and taxes, research costs and travel costs. Costs for infrastructure (housing and office equipment) and overhead are not eligible for funding.

3.2.1 Research outside the Netherlands

For a stay at a foreign institute, the host institute employs the laureate under comparable conditions to those for an average postdoc employed at the host institute. The host institute must be a mostly publicly financed and recognised academic research institute.

The size of the grant depends on the country of where the host institute is situated and the length of the stay and is determined according to a basic payment of 58,500 euro per 12 months and a list of correction coefficients per country. On top of this the grant includes 230 euro per month for research costs and NWO covers travel costs; once if the stay is 12 months and twice if the stay is longer than 12 months. NWO's standard rates for various destinations can be found on the NWO website (www.nwo.nl/rubicon).

3.2.2 Research in the Netherlands

The Dutch host institute will be assumed to be the employer and NWO will pay it a lump-sum grant of 59,000 euro per 12 months. NWO will not act as the employer and the Regeling Overlaten Werkgeverschap will not apply.

The following Dutch knowledge institutions are eligible as a host institute for Rubicon:

- Dutch universities;
- NWO and KNAW institutes;
- the Netherlands Cancer Institute, and
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen.

3.3 When can applications be submitted

The closing date for the submission of proposals is **3 April 2012**, 23:59 hours.

3.4 Drawing up an application

Your grant application has two parts: a fact sheet and the application form.

- You complete the fact sheet directly in NWO's electronic application system Iris.
- The application form is on the grant page for this programme on the NWO website. As soon as you have completed it you can add this form to the Iris fact sheet as a PDF file.

The application (to be filled in the form) consists of a research proposal written in English (max. 3 pages A4, 1700 words), the candidate's CV (max. 3 pages A4) and a list of publications, including in attachment two letters of recommendation and one acceptance form from the intended host institute. Applications from candidates who have not yet been awarded a PhD must also be accompanied by a form approving their thesis.

The application form, the form for letters of recommendation, the acceptance form from the host institute and the form for the written statement approving the thesis will be available on the website approximately 8 weeks before the deadline.

3.5 Specific conditions

Rubicon grants are to be used to acquire knowledge and experience via postdoctoral research and not to obtain a degree at a foreign university.

The research must start between 1 September and 1 December 2012. If the research is terminated prematurely, NWO will decide whether all or part of the grant is to be repaid.

Any research proposals that raise ethical questions must be carefully considered before the scientific research is carried out. Certain research require a statement of approval from a recognised medical ethics review committee or an animal experiments committee. For some research proposals a licence in accordance with the Population Screening Act (WBO) is required. More information on METCs is available at the Central Committee On Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO), on DEC's the Dutch Association for Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees provides information and for the WBO The Health Council of the Netherlands can provide information.

A Rubicon applicant is responsible for determining whether his/her research proposal might raise ethical questions and for obtaining a statement of approval from the correct ethics review committee and/or obtaining a licence on the basis of the Population Screening Act, if necessary.

NWO subscribes to the Openheid Dierproven (Freedom of Information on Animal Experiments) and the Biosecurity Code. Rubicon applicants must subscribe to and comply with the prevailing codes.

A research project can only start when NWO (if applicable) has received a copy of the approving ethical statement and/or Population Screening Act licence. NWO also expects that the candidates pay due consideration to the timetable of the Rubicon evaluation and the time needed for the assessment by the ethics review committee or the application for a Population Screening Act licence. For complex questions related to ethical issues, NWO reserves the right to consult an external adviser.

If after consulting the applicant, NWO is of the opinion that an ethical assessment is needed for an application then the applicant is obliged to take the necessary measures for such as assessment. If the applicant fails to obtain the necessary statement of approval from an ethics review committee then the grant shall be immediately withdrawn. Applicants can pose any questions they may have to the Rubicon programme coordinator, see 5.1 for contact information.

For all Rubicon grants, the host institute should state in the letter of invitation that it is willing to offer the applicant facilities for at least the duration of the research, and that it shall employ the laureate. A Rubicon grant does not constitute a contract of employment with NWO.

Rubicon research may be conducted on a part-time basis provided that the time the researcher devotes to it amounts to at least 75% of the normal 40-hour working week. If less than 100% of the time is devoted to Rubicon research then the grant shall be proportionately reduced or the grant period extended in accordance with the percentage reduction in the working hours.

Researchers are not allowed to receive any funding from other sources for the research that is financed by Rubicon. Researchers who expect to receive other funding should contact the Rubicon programme coordinator.

NWO Regulation on Granting applies, except where it is at variance with the specific terms and conditions of Rubicon research grants (see this brochure and the Terms and Conditions of Rubicon Research Grants 2012, available on the NWO website: www.nwo.nl/rubicon).

3.6 Submitting an application

An application can only be submitted to NWO via the electronic application system Iris. Applications not submitted via Iris will not be admitted to the selection procedure. A main applicant is obliged to submit his/her application via his/her own Iris account.

If the main applicant does not have an Iris account yet then this should be created at least one day before the submission. Then any possible registration problems can still be solved on time. If the main applicant already has an Iris account then he/she does not need to create a new account to submit a new application.

For technical questions, please contact the Iris helpdesk.

Only applications that are submitted on time and completed in accordance with the guidelines in this brochure (see 3.2 "What can be applied for") will be taken into consideration. Use of the Rubicon application form is compulsory. You may not submit the application or any enclosures by e-mail or post. The application must also state in which of the 3 disciplines the applicant wishes to be considered (see 4.1). The available choices are specified within the Iris system.

4 Assessment procedure

4.1 Procedure

The first step in the assessment procedure is to determine the admissibility of the application. This is done using the conditions stated in Chapter 3 of this call for proposals. Applications that do not comply with these requirements will not be considered.

The NWO Code of Conduct on Conflicts of Interest applies to all persons and NWO staff involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process. Because Rubicon grants are quite small with a modest budget, article 2.5 of the NWO Regulation on Granting applies, which means that for certain programmes no external reviews will be used. Therefore the views of external referees will not be sought. This makes the procedure as short as 4,5 months.

Applications must be rated at least as 'very good' by the committee to be eligible for a grant. Grants will be awarded by the boards of the responsible NWO divisions based on the basis of priority and available budget.

3 April 2012	Deadline submission of proposals
May - June 2012	Meetings of the multidisciplinary assessment committee
Mid June 2012	Decisions made by the divisional boards of the three clusters
End of June 2012	Announcement of the awards to the candidates
1 September 2012	Earliest possible starting date for research
1 December 2012	Latest possible starting date for research

4.2 Criteria

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following quality criteria:

Quality criteria:

- *Quality of the applicant*
NWO will judge whether the candidate is among the best members of his or her generation in the relevant field of study. Evidence for this will be sought in the CV, including publications (number and quality), the 2 letters of recommendation and the acceptance form from the host institute.
- *Quality of the proposal*
The quality of the proposed research and its significance for the relevant field of study (whether it is innovative and pioneering) and the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the research plan (the length of the proposed period of research must be in proportion to the work to be done).
- *Quality of the host institute*
The host institute, including the research group and direct supervisor should offer the applicant a stimulating research environment and possess good facilities for academic research. The quality of the host institute will be considered in relation to the proposed research.

5 Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

5.1.1 Specific questions

For specific questions about Rubicon and this call for proposals please contact:

- Ms H.R. Varwijk MA
Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
Policy Development
- PO Box 93138
- 2509 AC The Hague
- Telephone: +31 70 349 44 37 (secretary)
- E-mail: rubicon@nwo.nl
- www.nwo.nl/rubicon

5.1.2 Technical questions about the electronic application system Iris

For technical questions about the use of Iris please contact the Iris helpdesk. Please read the Iris manual before consulting the helpdesk.

The Iris helpdesk is available from Monday to Friday from 11.00 to 17.00 hours on +31 900 696 4747. Unfortunately not all foreign phone companies allow you to phone to a 0900 number in the Netherlands. You can also send your question by e-mail to iris@nwo.nl.

5.2 Other information

There is no other information.

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