

# Rubicon: Frequently Asked Questions

(valid as from January 2018)

1. Am I eligible for a Rubicon grant if I only hold a Master's degree?
2. Can I apply for a Rubicon grant if I have not yet received my PhD?
3. I received my PhD more than twelve months ago. Can I still apply for a Rubicon grant?
4. I am a Dutch citizen but obtained my PhD/Master's degree outside the Netherlands. Can I still apply for a Rubicon grant?
5. I obtained my PhD/Master's degree outside the Netherlands. Can I still apply for Rubicon research?
6. I want to conduct my research at the same country where I received my Master's degree. Is that possible?
7. I want to continue my research at the same institute where I received my PhD. Is that possible?
8. I want to continue my research at the host institute where I'm working now as a postdoctoral researcher. Is that possible?
9. I would like to do part of my research at an institute in the Netherlands and part of it abroad. Is that possible?
10. Do the forms need to be signed?
11. Can I apply for a Rubicon grant more than once?
12. What must I do if I think that my research proposal raises ethical questions?
13. Under what circumstances can I request an extension to the eligibility time limit for my Rubicon application on the grounds of care responsibilities or training in a clinical specialism?
14. Can I supplement Rubicon with financial resources from another party?
15. Can I combine the Rubicon grant with a second grant?
16. Can I submit my application by e-mail?
17. Who can I ask to write my recommendation letters for me?
18. The persons that are willing to write a recommendation for me do not want me to be able to read it. Can the forms be submitted in a different way than through my ISAAC/ProjectNet-account?
19. The institute where I currently work is not registered in ISAAC. How can I submit my application?
20. How should I write a public summary of my research proposal?
21. Which terms of employment can I expect?
22. How does NWO/ZonMw determine the size of a grant for a period abroad?
23. Will my Rubicon grant be taxable income?
24. Do I have to account for my expenditures after the project?
25. Rubicon guarantees 16 weeks paid maternity leave, how can I appeal?

Extension clause

**1. Am I eligible for a Rubicon grant if I only hold a Master's degree?**

No, to be eligible for a Rubicon grant you must have received a PhD in the previous twelve months.

**2. Can I apply for a Rubicon grant if I have not yet received my PhD?**

If you have not yet received your PhD at the deadline of the Rubicon round but your dissertation has been approved by your supervisor then you may apply for a Rubicon grant. However, you must include a 'Manuscript Approval Form' with your application. You can download the form about 2 months before the deadline from the Rubicon website (<https://www.nwo.nl/en/funding/our-funding-instruments/nwo/rubicon/index.html>). The date on which the doctoral thesis shall be defended has to be formally set before you can start your Rubicon research.

**3. I received my PhD more than twelve months ago. Can I still apply for a Rubicon grant?**

The time limit for applying for a Rubicon grant is twelve months following the formal award of the PhD. If you received your PhD more than 12 months ago then you can apply for an extension to the time limit on the grounds of care responsibilities or training in a clinical specialism. You will find more information on the Extension clause at the end of this document.

**4. I am a Dutch citizen but obtained my PhD/Master's degree outside the Netherlands. Can I still apply for a Rubicon grant?**

You may only submit an application if you have conducted scientific research in the Netherlands for a provable period at least equivalent to three years fulltime in the five years directly preceding the submission deadline. This may concern paid or unpaid time (e.g. (PhD research without an actual employment) research time. Nationality does not play any role in the terms and conditions for Rubicon.

**5. I obtained my PhD/Master's degree outside the Netherlands. Can I still apply for Rubicon research at a research institute outside the Netherlands?**

You may only submit an application if you have conducted scientific research (including research Master or PhD research without an actual employment) in the Netherlands at an academic research institute in the Netherlands for a period at least equivalent to three years fulltime in the five years directly preceding the submission deadline. Nationality does not play any role in the terms and conditions for Rubicon.

**6. I want to conduct my research at the same country where I received my Master's degree. Is that possible?**

No, the aim of Rubicon is to promote mobility of researchers in the Netherlands. In case you have obtained more than one Master's degree, you cannot apply for a stay in the country (countries) where you obtained your degree/degrees. Rubicon also offers researchers from the Netherlands 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.

**7. I want to continue my research at the same institute where I received my PhD. Is that possible?**

No, the aim of Rubicon is to promote mobility among Dutch researchers. You can apply for a Rubicon grant at a foreign host institute. Rubicon also offers of researchers in the Netherlands 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.

**8. I want to continue my research at the host institute where I'm working now as a postdoctoral researcher. Is that possible?**

This is possible only if you have been working at the Rubicon host institute as a postdoctoral researcher for less than six months on the day of the submission deadline.

**9. I would like to do part of my research at an institute in the Netherlands and part of it abroad. Is that possible?**

No, combining host institutes is not permitted. Depending on the research subject, it is however possible to do some fieldwork outside the host institute.

**10. Do the forms need to be signed?**

Your ISAAC/ProjectNet account is a personal account which you alone can access. Therefore the application form does not need your signature. The other signatures on the annexes are however necessary. Especially the signature by the host institute which must guarantee your employment, is important to prevent any problems with your possible employment.

Please note that ProjectNet asks applicants who just submitted their proposal to send in a confirmation. Please send this confirmation to [rubicon@zonmw.nl](mailto:rubicon@zonmw.nl).

**11. Can I apply for a Rubicon grant more than once?**

No, you can only apply for a Rubicon grant once in your life, irrespective of the research institute concerned.

**12. What must I do if I think that my research proposal raises ethical questions?**

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 if the research proposal might raise ethical questions and for obtaining a statement of approval from the correct ethics review committee and/or obtaining a licence in accordance with the Population Screening Act, if necessary.

NWO/ZonMw 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 if NWO/ZonMw (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.

If after consulting the applicant, NWO/ZonMw 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. If the research involves human embryo stem cells, the Marie Curie programme committee and the ethics review committee must both approve the research before the project can start.

Applicants may contact the Rubicon programme coordinator with any questions or doubts they have ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

**13. Under what circumstances can I request an extension to the eligibility time limit for my Rubicon application on the grounds of care responsibilities or training in a clinical specialism?**

You can request an extension of the time limit for your application if you have devoted time to care responsibilities or training in a clinical specialism since the award of your PhD. You will only need to do

this if the formal award of your PhD took place more than twelve months before the final date for the submission of Rubicon applications. You will find more information on the extension clause at the end of this document.

**14. Can I supplement Rubicon with financial resources from another party?**

The Rubicon grant is a basic grant which provides a contribution to the salary costs and the necessary costs to conduct the research funded. It is possible to supplement the Rubicon grant with other financial resources, as long as these cover costs that are not already provided for by Rubicon. If you intend to use additional financing, you must contact the Rubicon programme co-ordinator ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

**15. Can I combine the Rubicon grant with a second grant?**

No, when you acquire a second grant next to the Rubicon grant you have to choose which one you want to receive.

**16. Can I submit my application by e-mail?**

No, applications must be submitted via the online application system ISAAC system. Applications submitted by e-mail will not be accepted by NWO.

**17. Who can I ask to write my recommendations for me?**

You may yourself choose who you ask to write the two recommendation (also researchers who are not your PhD-supervisor, co-supervisor or a close colleague). Point of attention in making your choice can be that 'over-the-top' positive letters or short non-informative letters may work to your disadvantage. Please use the recommendation forms you will find on our website.

**18. The persons that are willing to write my recommendations do not want me to be able to read them. Can the forms be submitted in a different way than through my ISAAC/ProjectNet-account?**

If the persons writing your recommendations object to the fact that you read them, they can also send their forms by e-mail to [rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl). However, NWO prefers the forms to be integrated in your application and submitted through your ISAAC/ProjectNet-account.

**19. The institute where I currently work is not registered in ISAAC. How can I submit my application?**

In ISAAC, you can only register via a Dutch knowledge institute. If your current institute is not registered, you can get into the system and submit your proposal by naming your proposed host institute or the institute where you gained your PhD. In your actual application, however, you must give the correct details.

**20. How should I write a public summary of my research proposal?**

You are asked to draft a public summary of your research proposal (preferably **in Dutch**). Directions for this are given below.

- **Why is a public summary needed?**

If your application is successful and you are eventually awarded a grant, the public summary will be used in NWO publicity surrounding the announcement of the grant award decisions.

- **What should the public summary contain?**

<popular title (a 'hook' to catch people's attention, around five words)>  
<academic title> <initials> <(the first name you generally use, in brackets)>  
<surname> <(m/f)>, <institute where you received your PhD> <country, university, department where you intend to conduct your Rubicon research> <number of months>  
Summarise your proposed research in 40 words. Use everyday language and be specific. Do not say 'the mechanism underlying apoptosis will be examined' but 'the researcher will use

microscopes to look for the reasons for spontaneous cell death.' Do not talk about 'I' and 'me' but about the researcher, the biologist, the literary specialist, et cetera. Write the piece in such a way that you are inclined to insert terms such as 'generally speaking', 'in short', 'roughly', 'not scientifically formulated' but do NOT use these terms!

- **Two examples**

**Tinkering with the heart pump**

**Dr J. (Jolanda) van der Velden** (f), VU University Medical Center - Physiology

The heart pumps thanks to an ingenious system of proteins. The researcher will analyse this system by altering the proteins one by one. The researcher will also study these proteins in patients with heart failure.

**Self-correction in speaking**

**Dr N.O. (Niels) Schiller** (m), Heidelberg (Germany), Maastricht University - Neurocognition

Speech is a largely an automatic human activity. We usually speak without problems but sometimes we make a mistake. When that happens, we stop and correct ourselves. This research project aims to find out which neurocognitive process enables us to do this.

- **More examples?**

**Further examples of public summaries can be found on the NWO website:**

[www.nwo.nl/rubicon](http://www.nwo.nl/rubicon)

## **21. Which terms of employment can I expect?**

If you have been awarded a Rubicon grant for a period at a host institute outside of the Netherlands then you will be employed at the host institute. Your situation is comparable to other postdocs at the host institute.

NWO's/ZonMw's preference is that during your period abroad, you remain in the employment of/enter into employment at a Dutch knowledge institute that will manage the project and second the researcher to the foreign guest institute. This allows female researchers to make use of the Dutch legislation of 16 weeks paid pregnancy leave. If this possibility does not exist then you can also enter into the employment of the foreign guest institute and will then fall under the applicable employment conditions there. In both cases NWO/ZonMw will guarantee that the salary is paid during a pregnancy leave.

If you receive a Rubicon grant for a stay at a Dutch host institute, the host institute will employ you under the usual conditions for postdoc researchers at that institute.

## **22. How does NWO/ZonMw determine the size of a grant for a period abroad?**

The awards are based on the calculations for the Marie Curie fellowships (see terms and conditions).

## **23. Will my Rubicon grant be taxable income?**

Your Rubicon grant is intended to fund a period abroad, in order to give you the opportunity to gain research experience outside the Netherlands.

The researchers enter employment at the foreign host institute on the basis of employment conditions comparable to other postdocs who are employed there. If, for the purpose of Dutch tax levies, the researcher remains a resident of the Netherlands, the incomes from the foreign research institute shall have to be included in the global income and in all likelihood avoidance of double taxation can be claimed. Where the research NWO/ZonMw advises applicants to contact the Dutch Inland Revenue and/or the inland revenue of the host country with any questions they may have.

#### 24. Do I have to account for my expenditures after the project?

A statement from the host institute that the laureate was appointed to conduct the Rubicon research for the period stated and a short scientific report is sufficient. The statement must also be signed by the laureate. For research conducted in the Netherlands, the grant is covered by the regular audit specified in the university education audit guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

With regard to your tax return, it would be wise to keep a careful record of your expenses in case the tax authorities decide to inspect your tax return. If you receive a tax demand requiring you to pay tax over your Rubicon grant, we advise you to contact the Rubicon programme coordinator ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

#### 25. Rubicon guarantees 16 weeks paid maternity leave, how can I appeal?

You can submit a request in writing to NWO/ZonMw ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

To be able to assess your request NWO/ZonMw needs the following information:

The dates of your maternity leave and the type of employment you have with the host institute (if part-time what %).

Also the host institute has to confirm that they have no arrangement or a derogation.

If there is a derogation, the scheme should be included in the confirmation.

### Rubicon Extension Clause

As a rule, an application under the Rubicon programme must be submitted within one year of obtaining a PhD. However, this period may be extended if the applicant can establish that she or he has had family commitments (i.e. has been caring for a dependent child), or has been attending an accredited course leading to qualification as a Clinical Specialist.

If you want to make use of an extension of the maximum time limit since you received your PhD, you must indicate this on your application form. Please do so only if the period that has elapsed since the award of your doctorate exceeds one year. **Before** submitting your application, you must contact the Rubicon programme co-ordinator to request an extension ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

In case you will be employed by the host institute for more than six months at the time of submitting your application, you can also request an extension on the basis of family commitments (i.e. child care) or of attendance of a course leading to a qualification as a Clinical specialist. The extension will be calculated in the same way as other requests (see below).

The formulae for calculation will be strictly applied in all cases and the outcome is not open for discussion.

- *Family commitments (care) or pregnancy*

Applicants wishing to claim an extension on the grounds of family commitments (childcare) or pregnancy, occurred in the first year after obtaining the PhD, must be able to show that they are (or have been) on approved parenting leave, maternity leave or carer's leave, or engaged in a combination of part-time work and a personal childcare commitment. The care must have been provided to a member of the same household under the age of twelve years. The rules under which extension can be applied are mentioned below and concern the period after obtaining the PhD.

*Maternity leave (women)*

Women who gave birth to a child (children) in the first year directly after obtaining the PhD will automatically receive an extension of 16 weeks. In addition, extension can be requested for parental leave.

*Parental leave/Family commitments (women and men)*

If the applicant's working hours in the period since his or her doctoral award were reduced as a direct result of a leave or family commitments (as described above), the period in which an application may be submitted under the Rubicon programme will be extended by up to one year

(i.e. the application may be submitted up to two years after the doctoral award). Where childcare has been provided to more than one child simultaneously, only that pertaining to the *youngest* child will qualify for this concession. Where the applicant has been providing childcare while also following a training course leading to qualification as a Clinical Specialist, the maximum extension of the application period remains one year.

Eligibility is calculated according to the following formulae:

Care for children aged one to three years: (...) year x (1/0,?) fte care x 1 year extension

Care for children aged four to twelve years: (...) year x (1/0,?) fte care x 0.5 year extension

Example: 2 years' part-time (0.5 fte) care, starting on date of doctoral award, in respect of one or more children aged one to three years: 2 years x 0.5 fte care x 1 fte extension = 1 year extension of maximum period between doctoral award and submission of Rubicon application.

- *Training leading to qualification as Clinical Specialist*  
Applicants who have taken part in a KNMG-accredited course leading to qualification as Clinical Specialist are also eligible for an extension of the grant application period, whereby:

The total (aggregated) time spent in training since the award of a doctorate may be added to the one-year period normally allowed, subject to a maximum of one year. The period during which an application may be submitted is therefore no more than two years.

The following formula is applied:

(...) year x (1/0,?) fte training x 1 year extension