

# Toptalent

Programme brochure round 2008



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# 1 Introduction

**In a recent memorandum entitled *Onderzoekstalent op waarde geschat*, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science proposes a number of new measures to make it more attractive for graduates to go on to take a doctorate. One of these is to give creative young graduates the scope to design and organise their own doctoral research.**

To achieve this, the minister is making a total of € 16 million available over the 2007-2010 period for a programme of grants directed at this target group. In consultation with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), NWO has set up a prestigious programme directed at highly talented students who are about to complete their Master's degrees and have creative research ideas of their own. There will be two granting rounds, the first in 2007 and the second in 2008. Successful candidates will be able to proceed to their own doctoral research immediately after completing their Master's degrees.

## 2 Aim

**The program is intended for students who wish to present their own research ideas in a PhD research proposal. The proposal will be, once selected by the governing board of the university, presented to an independent assessment committee appointed by NWO.**

The program is intended for highly talented students enrolled in the final year of a two-year research-based Master's course at the university<sup>1</sup>. Candidates of a comparable<sup>2</sup> level may be allowed by the university to participate as well.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this programme this is defined as a NVAO-accredited research Master in the arts or social sciences, a Dutch Master's in the natural sciences, agriculture, medical sciences or technology with a nominal duration of two years, or a Master's programme of a comparable standard at a foreign institution.

<sup>2</sup> Universities are entitled to extend the definition of two-year research-based Master's course (e.g. one year Master's or drs.) if they wish to do so.

## 3 Guidelines for applicants

**The terms and conditions of the Casimir programme are different from the general terms and conditions of NWO grants. When different the specific terms and conditions of the Casimir programme prevail. In all other cases the general terms and conditions are valid.**

### 3.1 Who can apply?

The Executive Boards of the University of Utrecht, the University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Free University of Amsterdam, University of Leiden, Radboud University Nijmegen, Delft University of Technology, University of Maastricht, University of Tilburg, University of Twente, Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University and Research Centre and the Open University of the Netherlands can each submit a set number of applications to NWO (see 3.6.3 Quota system).

Students should have obtained their Master's degree not before September 1st 2007 and due to complete it no later than September 30, 2008. Students are allowed to participate only once as candidates in the Toptalent programme. Candidates that participated in 2007 are not allowed to participate again in 2008. Also, candidates that have already obtained a PhD position cannot participate in the Toptalent programme.

### 3.2 What can be applied for?

Grants will take the form of lump sum funding for the award of a doctoral research post to the applicant. The maximum amount will be € 180,000 (based on the staff costs for a four-year promovendus appointment plus a very small amount for associated research costs). NWO will provide the grant, while the university must guarantee to meet any additional costs and to provide support services and supervision.

### 3.3 When can applications be submitted?

Announcement of programme details no later than 1 September 2007, deadline for submission of applications to universities autumn 2007 (exact dates to be announced by universities), deadline for submission of applications by Executive Boards to NWO January 8, 2008, outcome to be communicated in spring 2008.

### 3.4 Drawing up an application

The Executive Boards must submit applications to NWO no later than 8 January 2008. Use of the electronic Iris system ([www.iris.nwo.nl](http://www.iris.nwo.nl)) is obligatory. Each application must comprise of a completed Toptalent application form accompanied by (maximum) two letters of recommendation. One letter must be from the intended doctoral supervisor. The author of the (optional) second letter may be chosen by the candidate. By the same date, the universities must also inform all candidates whether or not their applications are being forwarded to NWO.

## 3.5 Specific conditions

### 3.5.1 Screening for compliance with formal requirements<sup>3</sup>

To qualify for consideration, each application must comply fully with the requirements set out in this brochure. Applications which do not comply with them or which are in excess of the university's set quota cannot be considered.

### 3.5.2 Selection by the universities

Candidates will be given an autumn deadline for the submission of their applications to the universities. The universities will announce their own internal submission procedures and deadlines. For further information, contact the designated person at the relevant university (see 5.2 University address list).

## 3.6 Submitting an application

### 3.6.1 Selection by the universities

The initial selection of candidates will be performed internally by the universities. It will be based on brief outline research proposals prepared by candidates in the format prescribed by NWO. The research proposals must cover the entire period of 4 years (or up to 5 years part-time). In addition, candidates must obtain a letter of recommendation from a full professor at a Dutch university who is prepared to act as doctoral supervisor if the grant application is successful. The Executive Boards (Colleges van Bestuur) of the universities will be responsible for the internal shortlisting and nomination of candidates in accordance with a set quota (see 4. Quota system). It will be up to them to establish open and transparent procedures for this.

### 3.6.2 Selection by NWO

Following the initial shortlisting and nomination by the universities, NWO will select the most talented students. Both the Curriculum Vitae and the project proposal are regarded as significant for the assessment of the quality of the candidate (see also 4.2 Criteria). Assuming that sufficient candidates of excellent quality are available, about 42 grants will eventually be awarded.

### 3.6.3 Quota system

The number of candidates that each Executive Board can nominate will be governed by a quota system based on student numbers at each institution. The quotas will be:

University	Number of candidates
Universiteit Utrecht	17
Universiteit van Amsterdam	15

<sup>3</sup> The original Dutch-language text of the brochure is the authoritative version. Where the English-language text is open to a different interpretation, no additional rights may be derived from it.

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen	14
Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam	11
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam	11
Universiteit Leiden	10
Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen	10
Technische Universiteit Delft	8
Universiteit Maastricht	7
Universiteit van Tilburg	7
Universiteit Twente	5
Technische Universiteit Eindhoven	5
Wageningen Universiteit en Researchcentrum	5
Open Universiteit	5

The number of grants awarded will not be subject to quota.

# 4 Assessment procedure

## 4.1 Procedure

The applications will be assessed, compared and ranked in order of priority by an assessment committee representing a wide range of disciplines. External referees will not be consulted. Candidates awarded the highest priority rating will be called for interview so that the committee can gain a clearer impression of their merits and those of their research proposals.

### 4.1.1 Decision

The NWO Governing Board will take its final decision in spring 2008 and the outcome will subsequently be communicated to candidates and universities.

### 4.1.2 Follow-up action and reporting

If a grant is awarded, the professor will offer the candidate a trainee researcher (promovendus) appointment as soon as possible (in any event by October 1st 2008) and arrangements will be agreed for the submission of progress and final reports and for funding.

## 4.2 Criteria

### **The merits of the candidate and the research proposal**

Assessment will be done on the basis of three, equally important, criteria:

1. Excellent performance as a student, among the 10-15% of his/her peer group (on the evidence of marks obtained, prizes awarded etc.) and relevant academic experience (e.g. work experience placements, international activities, membership of committees)
2. Indications of a talent for academic research. Motivation and persuasiveness
3. Clear research question(s), effectiveness of the chosen approach and the ability to place the proposed research within a broader context, originality and creativity. Potential to make a significant contribution to society and to the advancement of science or technology.

# 5 Other information

## 5.1 NWO contact information

If you have any further questions regarding the information in this brochure, you are welcome to contact NWO. However, the latest information on the Toptalent programme can all be found on the NWO website. Please check the Frequently Asked Questions on the website before contacting NWO.

- Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) / Toptalent Programme
- P.O. Box 93138
- 2509 AC The Hague
- tel. 070-3440639
- e-mail: [toptalent@nwo.nl](mailto:toptalent@nwo.nl)
- Contact: Nick den Hollander
- Phone number +31 (0)70 344 06 38
- email: [toptalent@nwo.nl](mailto:toptalent@nwo.nl)
- website [www.nwo.nl/toptalent](http://www.nwo.nl/toptalent)

## 5.2 University address list

### **Erasmus University Rotterdam**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
Ms F. Duijndam, [duijndam@oos.eur.nl](mailto:duijndam@oos.eur.nl)  
Education and Research Department  
University Office  
P.O. Box 1738, 3000 DR Rotterdam

### **University of Tilburg**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
Ms S.A.M. Baert, [s.a.m.baert@uvt.nl](mailto:s.a.m.baert@uvt.nl)  
Institutional Policy Office  
P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg

### **Radboud University Nijmegen**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
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Marketing, Strategy & Development Department  
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### **University of Groningen**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
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Academic Affairs Department  
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### **Delft University of Technology**

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**Eindhoven University of Technology**

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General Affairs Department/University Council  
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**University of Leiden**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
Ms dr. M.E. Kroon, m.e.kroon@bb.leidenuniv.nl  
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**University of Maastricht**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
Dr. E.H.S. Drenthe, erik.drenthe@bu.unimaas.nl  
Strategic Planning and International Relations Office  
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**University of Twente**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
Drs. P.P. Hoetink, p.p.hoetink@utwente.nl  
Office of the Executive Board  
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P.O. Box 217, 7500 AE Enschede

**Universiteit of Utrecht**

Executive Board, Toptalent  
Ms drs. G. Thoen, g.e.thoen@uu.nl  
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**University of Amsterdam**

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**Free University of Amsterdam**

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**Wageningen University and Research Centre**

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**Open University of the Netherlands**

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