Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021

Call for proposals

Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO)
Introduction

1.1 Background

On 2 December 2019, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) presented the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, *Houdbaar voor de toekomst* (Fit for the Future), to the Lower House of Parliament. The Strategic Agenda sets out ambitions for the development of higher education in the Netherlands.

One of the prerequisites for achieving these ambitions, according to the Agenda, is the recognition and appreciation of teachers’ teaching performance in relation to their research and to collaborating in teams. The Strategic Agenda builds on the Strategic Agenda of 2015, *De waarde(n) van weten* (The Value of Knowledge) – both in terms of themes and of emphasis on room for manoeuvre for professionals at Dutch institutions of higher education. Inspired teachers, leaders and directors in higher education who have proven to be successful are crucial in identifying opportunities for and designing good, innovative education.

With a view to giving these professionals the desired room for manoeuvre, the Comenius programme was set up in the autumn of 2016 with part of the resources freed up by the introduction of the *Studievoorschot* (student loan system). Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was a seventeenth-century pedagogue and education innovator; he is often called the founder of modern education. In his search for good quality education, Comenius combined education research with the development and implementation of innovative teaching methods. The Comenius programme allows teaching professionals to implement their vision of education in practice, in the spirit of the programme’s eponym.

The Comenius programme offers grants to Teaching Fellows (€50,000), Senior Fellows (€100,000) and Leadership Fellows (€500,000). These three categories of Fellows are distinguished on the basis of their experience and the extent of their impact on education. They can use the grant to implement education innovations and improvements in their own teaching practice on a scale suited to their position and the duration of the project.

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. You will find information below on the aim of this programme (Chapter 2), the guidelines for the grant application (Chapter 3) and how your application will be assessed (Chapter 4).

1.2 Available budget

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) will make a total of €6,200,000 available for grants in the 2021 round of the Comenius programme. The grants will be divided equally between universities of applied sciences (Dutch acronym: hbo) and research universities (Dutch acronym: wo).

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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 Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen*, OCW) for the financial year concerned; as from then, it will be a legal obligation. The Comenius grant is therefore not a personal grant.
The available budget for this ‘Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021’ funding round is €2,200,000 in total. The maximum amount of a grant for each project is €100,000.

The grants are divided between three fixed themes and one free theme (see 2.3) according to the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Universities of applied sciences</th>
<th>Research universities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: The first hundred days of the student</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Working on societal issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Successful graduation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free theme – <em>Fit for the Future</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

The deadline for submitting a letter of intent is 1 September 2020, 14:00 CEST.

The deadline for submitting a preliminary application is 29 September 2020, 14:00:00 hours CEST.

The deadline for submitting an application is 1 December 2020, 14:00 CEST.

Timely submission of a letter of intent is a prerequisite for submitting a preliminary application. The letter of intent will not be assessed on content. On the basis of the preliminary application, the applicant will receive a positive or negative recommendation to develop the preliminary application into a full application. Before submitting a full application, applicants must have submitted a letter of intent and a preliminary application in good time.
2 Aim

Section 2.1 describes how Comenius projects contribute to the objectives of the Comenius programme. Section 2.2 describes the specifics of a Senior Fellow project. The thematic spearheads for the Comenius Senior Fellows 2021 round are described in 2.3.

2.1 Projects in the Comenius programme

The Comenius programme’s aim is twofold. First, the Comenius programme funds education innovation projects that contribute directly to innovation and improvement of higher education in the Netherlands for the benefit of students. Second, the Comenius programme facilitates varied career paths for lecturers and researchers at universities of applied sciences and research universities by visibly appreciating excellent and inspired teaching. The projects of Teaching Fellows, Senior Fellows and Leadership Fellows are distinguished on the basis of their impact on education, which becomes broader at each ‘tier’ in the programme.

Improving education through evidence-informed innovation

The Comenius programme provides funding for innovation projects that are so innovative or entail such an ambitious improvement that they are also considered innovative outside the institution implementing the project.\(^2\)

In their proposal, the applicant must clarify the distinctiveness and added value of the project compared to other projects with the same objective. To do so, they must demonstrate that they have orientated themselves to what is already happening in higher education in the context of the project. If the applicant wishes to apply an existing innovation in the project that has proved successful elsewhere, they must show in the project proposal that the application requires a different, and therefore innovative, approach in their own teaching practice. If the project is building on a pilot, the applicant must demonstrate how further development and/or scaling up of the pilot requires an innovative, original approach and can produce new results.

The innovation must be aimed at improving education. The improvement must directly benefit students at a publicly-funded Dutch institution of higher education. The innovation must be implemented in the student’s (online) educational environment.\(^3\), \(^4\), \(^5\) The motivation and inspiration for the project must be derived from the educational environment and the Comenius Fellow’s own vision of education. This need for improvement should be substantiated by a problem analysis and a professional statement. The specific context and scope of the project should be clearly defined in the proposal.

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\(^2\) The proposed innovation must fall within the scope of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act applicable at the time the application is submitted.

\(^3\) See Section 1.8 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (only available in Dutch) for a complete list of publicly-funded institutions. Projects should focus on programmes in initial higher education or on pathways that improve access to initial higher education (e.g. transition programmes between intermediate vocational and higher professional education). This means that projects aimed at post-initial higher education, including pathways for PhD students, are excluded.

\(^4\) Projects whose primary objective is the professional development of teachers are therefore excluded. Of course, the professional development of teachers can be a component, even a necessary one, of successful implementation of an innovation in the student’s learning environment.

\(^5\) The development of educational resources that are not implemented or used in education until after the end of the Comenius project cannot be financed through a Comenius grant.
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The innovation must be set up in an evidence-informed manner. This means that the proposal should clarify why the proposed innovation is likely to lead to an improvement. References to relevant specialist literature and any examples from practice must be used for this purpose. If the applicant makes reference to arguments derived from their own teaching experience, they should demonstrate familiarity with relevant developments within and outside their own institution.

The project plan in the proposal must show the feasibility of the envisaged innovation. It should explain how the project will be set up and implemented, what expertise is required and what the project team composition is. It should also describe how students will be involved in the project. Furthermore, the project plan should include a concise risk analysis identifying potential obstacles and a description of the project evaluation.

Because of the innovative nature of the projects, the results will also be relevant for other teachers and teaching professionals in the Netherlands. Evaluating and being able to share experiences and results is an essential aspect of a Comenius project. It should be clear from the proposal how the innovation and implementation will be evaluated so that the results of the project are visible. This increases the value of the outputs for teaching professionals who are not directly involved in the project. The applicant must also consider how the results and experiences will be shared with teaching professionals within and outside their own institution.

Contributing to educational careers by appreciating excellent teaching

A grant for innovation in education is an explicit recognition and appreciation of excellence in teaching and in providing inspired education. The grant will offer Comenius Fellows the opportunity to focus on improving their own teaching practice during the project period and for further development as a teaching professional. Comenius Fellows are also admitted as members to the Comenius Network. This is a network of education innovators who share knowledge and experience and work together on projects to improve higher education. The network serves as a discussion partner for policy makers, politicians and citizens in the field of teaching in higher education.

In the professional statement of the proposal, the applicant should explain their vision on higher education and what the innovation is. The applicant’s own teaching experience and the intended project should also be explicitly positioned within this broader vision. Finally, the applicant should explain how a Comenius grant can contribute to their teaching career and how they hope to inspire other teaching professionals, including through membership of the Comenius Network.

2.2 Profile and projects of the Senior Fellow

Senior Fellows

With the proposed project, the Senior Fellow must have an impact on education at a faculty, large programme or substantial department of an institution of higher education. The Senior Fellow must have a comprehensive view on education in their own research field based on their current position and experience in education. The Senior Fellow must have contact with lecturers or lecturer-researchers and preferably also teaches (some or all of) the students to whom the proposed innovation is directed on a regular basis.

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* The tiers of the Comenius programme in which teachers can develop are based on Ruth Graham’s Career Framework for University Teaching. See: [https://www.teachingframework.com/](https://www.teachingframework.com/)
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The Senior Fellow must have at least five years of teaching experience in higher education and show ambition in the field of educational leadership and/or in research and development of education for their own research field or area of interest. The aim of a Comenius grant, for the Senior Fellow, is to develop into a recognised educational innovator within their own institution in terms of organisational or educational content. The Senior Fellow will, for the duration of the project, be given the opportunity to lead a project team of teaching professionals and possibly students to implement the envisaged innovation.

The Senior Fellow project

A Senior Fellow project should take place within the context of a faculty, a large programme or a substantial department of an institution of higher education. The project can be carried out with a grant of €100,000 and a duration of at least 24 months and at most 30 months. The aim of the project is to contribute to the knowledge base of education in the field of the intended innovation. The proposal should make clear how the project fits within recent developments in this field, and what the project can add to this. In the dissemination plan, the applicant should look ahead to possible publication channels within and outside their own institution.7

The Senior Fellow’s project team must have (educational) leadership but also experience with (practical) education research. It should also be shown that the Senior Fellow and team members have previously contributed to innovations in education, either small-scale or otherwise. The composition of the team should make it possible to:

- contribute to the pedagogical-didactic knowledge of higher education in a particular field (e.g. an academic research field; a specific group of students; in line with social and technological developments);
- implement the innovation across the entire breadth of where the project is implemented, and thus involve all the stakeholders in this, such as teachers, students, and so on.

2.3 Comenius programme 2021 themes

Senior Fellow projects should align with one of the four thematic spearheads of the Comenius programme 2021. In the application, the envisaged innovation must be explicitly linked to the theme under which it is submitted.

Theme 1: The first hundred days of the student

The first hundred days in higher education is a crucial period for students. It is important for students to establish a connection with the study programme at an early stage, before and during the start of the study. After all, A good transition will form a solid foundation for students for the rest of their studies. Topics that fall within this theme include the transition to higher education – including the period prior to enrolment – community building, first-year experience, a sense of belonging in education, and guidance for students so that they can find their place in higher education, for example through flexible education between study programmes and institutions (‘alternating current’).

7’Publication’ should be broadly understood to include public dissemination of information about the project, for example in a trade journal, on an online platform, through presentations at conferences or in a scientific journal.
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Theme 2: Working on societal issues

Society is changing rapidly, which means it is vital for education to have a direct link with everyday practice. By linking educational activities to current developments, students can prepare themselves to engage in regional, national and even international societal issues of the twenty-first century. An example of how this can be done is by having a conversation across disciplines (interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary), but other ways are also conceivable. In this way, education challenges students to contribute to solving societal challenges now and in the future.

Theme 3: Successful graduation

In the final phase of their educational programme, students in higher education increasingly stand on their own two feet, and prepare for their future and the transition to the labour market. This last phase of the programme does not always go smoothly. Students may experience a delay in their studies, for instance when there is no more face-to-face instruction. Amongst other things, projects related to this theme can focus on innovative or improved guidance of students, new forms of graduation and alternative graduation assignments.

Theme 4: Free theme – the entire scope of *Fit for the Future*

Free theme across the full scope of the ‘Fit for the Future’ Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research. Projects within this theme should align with the topics and ambitions set out in the Strategic Agenda.

The full text of the Strategic Agenda ‘Fit for the Future’ can be found at: [https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/12/02/bijlage-1-strategische-agenda-hoger-onderwijs-en-onderzoek-houdbaar-voor-de-toekomst](https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/12/02/bijlage-1-strategische-agenda-hoger-onderwijs-en-onderzoek-houdbaar-voor-de-toekomst) (summary available in English).

**Selecting a theme**

Applications are submitted and assessed within one specific theme. Consistency with the theme is one of the assessment criteria on which the application will be assessed. A project may have areas of overlap with multiple 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.

Applications can be submitted for innovation projects relating to distance learning but also learning on campus. This means that the Comenius programme is explicitly open to education innovations that emerged during the period in which Dutch institutions of higher education could only provide distance learning because of the measures taken to limit the spread of the new COVID-19 virus, provided that the aim of the intended project is in line with one of the above themes.
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3 Guidelines for applicants

This chapter provides an overview of the guidelines that apply to your grant application. First, it sets out who can apply for a grant (3.1), what kind of grant you can apply for (3.2) and the deadline for submitting your application (3.3). Subsequently, you will find the guidelines for preparing the application (3.4) and specific grant conditions (3.5).

3.1 Who can apply

Conditions for applicants in the Comenius programme

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

An applicant will act as project leader and may, in their application, specify a team of colleagues, advisers and students (the ‘project members’). The applicant must submit the preliminary application and full application in ISAAC and will, during the assessment procedure, receive all relevant communication from NRO and OCW. After the grant is awarded, the applicant will be the contact person for NRO and OCW.

Applicants in the Comenius programme must satisfy the following conditions:

- An applicant can only submit one application per year in the Comenius programme.
- A Comenius Fellow who previously received a Comenius grant can ‘move up’ within the programme, but cannot apply again for the same grant, or for a grant at a lower tier. To ensure the continuity of projects, an application for a grant in the next-level tier may be submitted in the last year of the current Comenius project, but they cannot overlap.
- If a grant is awarded, only the applicant – so not the rest of the team – will be appointed a Comenius Fellow and will be admitted to the Comenius Network.
- From the 2020 round onwards, an applicant may submit a maximum of two full applications in consecutive years in the same tier of the Comenius programme. This condition does not apply to preliminary applications in the same tier, or to full applications submitted in other tiers.

Conditions for applicants in the Comenius Senior Fellows round

One application may be submitted for each faculty. The dean and/or the head of the faculty endorses the application with a substantive recommendation and a statement that the project leader will be given sufficient scope to implement the project if an application is awarded.

In addition, the applicant must satisfy a number of conditions:

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8 It is not possible to register a co-applicant in ISAAC.
9 The Comenius programme consists of three funding rounds: Teaching, Senior and Leadership Fellows.
10 In this call for proposals, the word ‘faculty’ is used as the most common term for ‘organisational unit in an educational institution that comes directly under the Executive Board in the organisational chart’. Interdisciplinary education centres (like Centres of Expertise) that offer full education programmes and are not linked to one specific faculty but fall directly under the remit of the Executive Board of the institution can also submit a maximum of one application. Specific limits apply to a number of institutions with a non-standard organisational structure. See the Annex to this call for proposals.
The applicant must, at the time the grant is awarded, have a contract of employment with the institution where the project is intended to be implemented for at least the duration of the project and for at least 0.5 FTE. If the applicant has a contract of employment for less than 0.5 FTE with the institution at the time of submitting the application, the statement of the dean/head of the faculty (part of the preliminary application) must indicate that the contract will be extended for at least the duration of the project at the time the grant is awarded.

The applicant must have at least five years’ experience in higher education at the start of the project.

The applicant is responsible for the design and/or organisation of the education in the context in which the project will be implemented (this responsibility may be shared by the project members).

The applicant must be able to demonstrate, with a statement of the dean/head of the faculty, that the project is ‘supported’ within the institution and that the project team will be given sufficient scope to implement the project if the grant is awarded.

The NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests applies to all persons, including NWO staff, who are involved in the assessment of and decision-making on applications submitted under this call for proposals. This code lists personal interests that clearly exclude participation in the assessment procedure and personal interests that require consideration of whether and under what conditions the applicant may participate in the assessment procedure. Pursuant to Section 2:4 of the Dutch General Administrative Law Act, the appearance of bias must also be excluded. In terms of eligibility to submit an application, this means that members of the Assessment Committee cannot be applicants or a member of the project team in this funding round.\textsuperscript{11}


### 3.2 What can be applied for

The budget available for the ‘Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021’ funding round is €2,200,000 in total. The available budget for each application is at least €90,000 and at most €100,000. You can submit applications 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 1 May 2021.

You can apply for a grant to cover the direct staff costs and material costs associated with the project. All costs must be substantiated. You can only apply for a grant to cover the costs of persons and institutions established in the Netherlands.

The Comenius grant will be disbursed, through government funding, to the institution where the project will be implemented. This means that an account for the financial settlement of the project must be included in the institution’s annual report.

A separate form (Excel file) is available for processing the budget associated with your application. You must fill in this budget form and send it as an appendix to your full application if you submit it digitally. A budget need not be submitted with the preliminary application.

Funding can be requested to cover direct staff costs as well as the material costs associated with the project.

\textsuperscript{11} Members of the Assessment Committee are not excluded from submitting an application in the other tiers (Teaching Fellows, Leadership Fellows) of the Comenius programme.
Staff at educational institutes

The following maximum rates (hour/day) are used to finance the wage costs of staff working at a publicly-funded institution of education (secondary education, vocational education or higher education), in accordance with the Guide to Government Fees for 2017. The fees are based on the cost-effective fee plus additional fees.

Staff at publicly-funded institutions of education and research, including staff with a permanent employment contract, must be remunerated according to the following maximum rates (hour/day):

- Secretariat/students: €53/424
- Junior/research assistant academic staff and non-academic staff/teaching staff: €72/576
- Mid-level/university teaching staff/lecturer-researchers: €87/696
- Senior/associate professor: €95/760
- Director/professor/lecturer: €119/952

These rates are explained in further detail in the Guide to Government Fees for 2017, which is available at www.nro.nl/projectbeheer (only available in Dutch).

You should specify in the application how you wish to allocate the requested staff costs to the different members of the project team (where relevant), stating your considerations for this allocation. You should specify the day rates for each staff category in the budget. These may not exceed the above rates, but you may specify a lower rate.

Wage costs for project staff who are not employed by a publicly-funded institution of secondary or higher vocational education should be entered under material costs. Even if these costs are covered by co-financing, whether in cash or in kind, they should still be entered under material costs.

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;
- remuneration for professionals who are not affiliated with a publicly-funded institution of higher education (for example: external advisers, software developers, designers, and so on);
- 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.

Costs of purchasing previously developed digital educational resources and licences for such resources are not eligible for funding under the Comenius programme, even if they have to be purchased specifically for the project. The time spent on further development of these educational resources by the applicant or project staff, however, can be entered under staff costs.

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

**Co-financing**

It is possible to contribute co-financing, in cash or in kind, in the form of staff and material costs. Co-financing may not, however, exceed the requested budget (a maximum of €100,000) as OCW must remain the main financier of the project. Furthermore, the budget form must clearly indicate which staff costs or material costs are covered by co-financing. The applicant must add a letter of guarantee to the application form (as a single merged PDF file) in which co-financing is guaranteed by the institution. No standard form is available for a letter of guarantee. A letter of guarantee must, in any event, meet the following requirements:

- The letter of guarantee should not exceed 250 words.
- It should indicate that the institution in question is the guarantor of the specified co-financing.
- It should specify the total amount of co-financing.
- The letter of guarantee must be signed by an authorised member of the institution’s staff. If co-financing is in kind, this generally concerns the project member’s manager. If co-financing is in cash, this concerns the staff member responsible for the institution’s business operations.

### 3.3 When can applications be submitted

The deadline for submitting letters of intent is **1 September 2020, 14:00 CEST**.
The deadline for submitting preliminary applications is **29 September 2020, 14:00 CEST**.
The deadline for submitting full applications is **1 December 2020, 14:00 CEST**.

When submitting your letter of intent, preliminary application and full application in ISAAC you will have to enter some additional details online. You should therefore start submitting your application at least one day before the deadline of this call for proposals. Letters of intent, preliminary applications and full applications submitted after the deadline will not be admitted to the procedure.
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3.4 Preparing and submitting the letter of intent, preliminary application and full application

Applications should always be submitted to NWO through ISAAC, our electronic application system. Applications not submitted in ISAAC will not be admitted to the procedure.

As the applicant, you are obliged to submit your letter of intent, preliminary application and full application through your own ISAAC account. If you do not have an ISAAC account, be sure to create this at least one week before submitting. This will ensure that any possible registration problems can be resolved in a timely manner. If you already have an ISAAC account, you do not need to create a new account to submit a new application.

If you work for an organisation that is not included in the ISAAC database, you can report this to relatiebeheer@nwo.nl. We will add the organisation to the database. As this takes several days, we ask that you report this no later than one week before the deadline.

Should you have any technical questions about ISAAC, contact an ISAAC helpdesk employee (see 5.1).

Submitting a letter of intent

The applicant indicates that they will submit an application in this round by means of a letter of intent. Timely submission of a letter of intent is a prerequisite for submitting a preliminary application and a full application.

Letters of intent must be submitted no later than 1 September 2020 14:00 CEST through the online application system, ISAAC.

After submission of the letter of intent, the applicant applying for a grant can no longer be changed.

The letter of intent must be completed directly in ISAAC; no standard form is available for this. A letter of intent in ISAAC consists of two input fields: the title and the summary. Enter the title of the application in the first input field. This can still be changed when submitting the preliminary application. In the summary input field, enter the following:

- Enter the following default text in the first line: This letter of intent is submitted under theme [theme number] from the faculty of [name of organisational unit].
- In the above text, you specify the theme under which the application is submitted and the faculty from which the application is submitted. Neither the theme nor the faculty can be changed after submission of the letter of intent.
- You should then provide a brief summary of the project proposal of up to 250 words. This can still be changed when submitting the preliminary application.

Letters of intent that do not specify the theme and faculty concerned in this standard text will not be taken into consideration.

After submitting the letter of intent, the applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt at the email address registered in their ISAAC account.

The purpose of the letters of intent is to provide an idea of the (maximum) number of applications. 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. The Assessment Committee does not assess the letters of intent.
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If, after submission of the letter of intent, an applicant decides not to submit an application, for whatever reason, they are requested to withdraw their letter of intent in ISAAC. The applicant is not obliged to provide a reason for withdrawing the letter of intent; if the applicant nevertheless wishes to explain this, they can do so via comenius@nro.nl.

Submitting a preliminary application

The preliminary application is a concise application with a summary of the project proposal, a brief problem outline, substantiation of the innovative nature and the expected output, and a professional statement of the applicant. A budget need not be submitted with the preliminary application.

To submit a preliminary application, the applicant must use the application form available on the grant page of the NWO website. Applicants must adhere to the questions and associated explanatory notes in this form, as well as the guidelines for the maximum number of words and pages. No substantial changes may be made to the layout of the form.

Fully completed preliminary applications must be submitted no later than 29 September 2020 14:00 CEST through the online application system, ISAAC. Applicants will be notified of receipt of their preliminary application.

The preliminary application will be reviewed against the admissibility criteria and assessment criteria set out in 4.2.

Along with the preliminary application and the full application, the applicant must include a statement of the supervisor (dean/head of the faculty) demonstrating that the project is ‘supported’ within the institution and that the applicant will be given a sufficient opportunity to implement the project if the grant is awarded.12, 13 There is no standard form for a statement of the supervisor. This statement must, in any event, meet the following requirements:

- The statement should not exceed 250 words.
- The signatory should indicate that they are in a position to decide on the applicant’s scope of tasks.
- The signatory declares that if the grant is awarded, the applicant and the project team are free to arrange their schedules in accordance with the project proposal submitted.
- The signatory declares to make the applicant the budget holder of the material budget.
- The statement should be written directly in the application form or submitted with the application as a single, merged PDF file.
- A substantive recommendation by the signatory on the relevance of the project for the educational programme and the commitment of the institutions involved is permitted, provided the maximum number of words is not exceeded.

Submitting a full application

After the preliminary application has been processed and assessed, the applicant will receive a recommendation regarding development of the preliminary application into a full application. As a supplement to the preliminary application, the full application should also include a detailed project plan and a project budget.

12 If the project members are from more than one faculty, the statement of the dean of the budget-holding faculty may state that the deans of the other faculties have been consulted. No additional statements are required.
13 If the supervisor is also the authorised staff member in the case of co-financing, the supervisor’s statement and letter of guarantee may be combined in a single letter.
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The summary, description of the problem outline, the innovative nature and the expected output, as well as the professional statement that were also submitted in the preliminary application, may still be modified at this stage. To submit a full application, the applicant must use the application form that is available on the grant page of the NWO website.

Fully completed application forms must be submitted no later than 1 December 2020 14:00 CEST through the online application system, ISAAC.

Applicants will be notified of receipt of their application.

Research field codes
You must specify, in ISAAC, one or more research field codes that apply to the proposed research. You should enter these in the ‘General’ tab at ‘Research fields’ before submitting the application. You can only use the NWO research field codes for this. These are available at www.nwo.nl/research field codes. In any event, you should always specify the discipline code for ‘Educational Sciences’ (41.90.00). Below that, you should state the main research fields and sub-fields in order of importance. There are no requirements regarding the number of research field codes to be entered.

3.5 Grant conditions

The NWO Grant Rules 2017 and the Approval of Funding for Scientific Research apply to all applications.

Scientific integrity
Research funded by NRO must, in accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2017, be carried out in conformity with nationally and internationally accepted standards of scientific research as laid down in the Dutch Code of Conduct for Scientific Integrity (2018). By submitting the application, the applicant commits to this code. In the event of a breach (or possible breach) of the aforementioned standards in the case of research funded by NRO, the applicant must immediately inform NRO and submit all relevant documents to NRO. You can find more information about the code of conduct and the policy on scientific integrity on the following website: www.nwo.nl/integrity.

Deadlines for the start and end dates of a project
An awarded project must start at the latest in the academic year following award (1 September 2021). The start date of a project cannot be before the planned announcement of the decision, so not before 1 May 2021. The end date of a project is no later than 31 October 2023.

Developing educational resources
Developing educational resources and carrying out education research can be part of a project, but not the final aim. Any educational resources developed must be implemented in teaching practice within the duration of the project. Developing educational resources that can only be implemented in practice after project completion cannot be the main aim of a project within the Comenius programme.

Creative Commons
Educational resources 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 that is easy to find. Project leaders should in any event make the proceeds available via SURFsharekit, a storage environment provided by SURF, so that NRO can link them to NRO’s national digital higher education knowledge hub for innovations in education.
Chapter 3: Guidelines for applicants / Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021

Open access

If you receive a grant under this call for proposals, all scientific publications related to your research must be freely accessible worldwide (open access) at the time of publication. There are several ways for researchers to publish through open access. A detailed explanation can be found at www.nwo.nl/en/policies/open+science. You should refer to these publications in the national digital higher education knowledge hub (see below).

Obligations after grant award

Whether the project will deliver the intended result cannot yet be determined at the start of the project, which is why the project leader explicitly assumes an obligation of effort after the grant has been awarded. There is, however, no obligation of result. In addition to complying with the obligations laid down in the Dutch General Administrative Law Act, the NWO Grant Scheme 2017 and the grant award, the effort expected of the Comenius Fellow consists of the following elements:

- The Fellow should carry out the project plan proposed in the application to the best of their abilities.
- Fellows should report in the interim (December 2021 and 2022) and no later than three months after the end date of the project on the progress and completion of the project. They should do this through NRO’s national digital higher education knowledge hub for innovations in education (under development, to be launched in December 2020), so that outputs and interim results can be shared quickly with the higher education sector. Project leaders will receive more information about this in due course.
- At the end of the project, NRO will ask for a final report. Part of this is an evaluation of the project (approx. 1 page), intended for the public, briefly explaining what the purpose of the project was, what results were achieved and what lessons were learned.
- The financial accounts of the projects are included in the annual report of the institution where the project is implemented. At the end of the project, it must be possible for the directorate of Student Grants and Loans in Higher Education (HO&S) to request a project statement from the institution where the project has been implemented.
- A brief report on the project is published in the institution’s annual report.
- Active membership of the Comenius Network.

Reporting interim changes

Any changes in the project team that affect the duration of the project or that concern the Comenius Fellow must be reported to NRO immediately by the applicant. NRO will advise OCW, on a case-by-case basis, of possible consequences of these changes for grant award.
Chapter 4: Assessment procedure / Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021

4 Assessment procedure

This chapter describes how the assessment procedure is carried out (4.1). Subsequently, in 4.2, you will see which criteria the Assessment Committee uses to assess your application.

4.1 Procedure

This section explains the funding round procedure on a step-by-step basis. The procedure consists of the following steps:

- Submitting letters of intent
- Submitting preliminary applications
- Processing of preliminary applications by NRO
- Assessment of the preliminary applications by the Assessment Committee
- Notification of the recommendation to submit a full application
- Submitting full applications
- Processing of full applications by NRO
- Assessment Committee’s preliminary assessments
- Submitting a rebuttal
- Assessment by the Assessment Committee
- Decision by the Minister

Submitting the letter of intent and preliminary application

The procedure starts with the submission of a letter of intent, after which a preliminary application can be submitted. See Chapter 3 of this call for proposals for the guidelines for submitting a letter of intent and a preliminary application.

Processing the preliminary application

As soon as possible after submitting the proposal, the applicant will be notified whether or not the preliminary application will be processed. The NRO secretariat determines this based on a number of administrative criteria (see the admissibility criteria in 4.2).

After the admissibility check, applicants are given a one-time period of five working days to correct any errors found by NRO (only). Applicants are advised to remain available in the week after the deadline for submitting the preliminary application so that they can make any corrections.

If a preliminary application does not meet any of the stated criteria after this period, the Minister will qualify it as ‘inadmissible’ and the application will not be processed.

Assessment of the preliminary application

Each admissible preliminary application is submitted to the Assessment Committee. The Assessment Committee assesses the preliminary applications based on assessment criteria 1, 2 and 4 set out in 4.2 of this call for proposals. The Assessment Committee will issue a negative or positive recommendation about elaborating the preliminary application into a full in application. Preliminary applications will not be compared, scored or prioritised.

Notification of the recommendation to submit a full application

At the beginning of November 2020, the applicant will be notified about the outcome of the assessment of the preliminary application. This notification includes a positive or negative recommendation to
develop this preliminary application into a full application. The applicant receives a brief substantive explanation of the recommendation.

The applicants most likely to receive funding for the proposal will be advised to submit a full application. Applicants whose applications are least likely to succeed will be advised by the Assessment Committee not to write a full application. Since this concerns a recommendation, it is not open to objection or appeal.

Submitting a full application

Once applicants have received advice on whether or not to elaborate their preliminary application into a full application, they can submit a full application. See Chapter 3 of this call for proposals for the guidelines on submitting a full application.

Processing the full application

As soon as possible after submitting the proposal, the applicant is notified of whether their full application will or will not be processed. The NRO secretariat determines this based on a number of administrative criteria (see the admissibility criteria in 4.2).

After the admissibility check, applicants are given a one-time period of five working days to correct any errors found by NRO (only). Applicants are advised to remain available in the week after the deadline for submitting the application so that they can make any corrections.

If a full application does not meet any of the stated criteria after this period, the Minister will qualify it as ‘inadmissible’ and the proposal will not be processed.

Preliminary assessment of the full application

All full applications are submitted for comments to at least two members of the Assessment Committee (the preliminary assessors). The preliminary assessors give substantive and substantiated written comments on the proposal. They formulate these comments on the basis of the assessment criteria (see 4.2). The preliminary assessors also assign a score for each major criterion. The preliminary application will no longer be included in the Committee’s considerations at this stage.

Submitting a response

The preliminary assessments are then anonymised and presented to the applicant. The applicant only receives the substantive comments, not the provisional scores. NRO aims to send the preliminary assessments to the applicants in the week of 18 January 2021. Applicants are advised to be available in the second half of January 2021 to prepare a response.

The applicant has eight working days to write a rebuttal of up to 1000 words by means of a standard form. This form can be sent to comenius@nro.nl. In the rebuttal, the applicant may specify any factual errors in the preliminary assessment and clarify possible ambiguities in the application as noted by the preliminary assessors. Submitting a rebuttal is not compulsory. Furthermore, an applicant may decide, based on the preliminary assessment, to withdraw the proposal from further assessment.  

In that case, the applicant can notify the secretary at comenius@nro.nl. The secretary will then ask the applicant to register the application as ‘withdrawn’ in ISAAC.
Chapter 4: Assessment procedure / Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021

Assessment by the Assessment Committee

The applications, preliminary assessments and rebuttals are the starting point for discussion by the Assessment Committee. Following this discussion, the Assessment Committee will provide OCW with a written advice on the quality and prioritisation of the applications for each theme and education sector. The Assessment Committee will base this advice on the assessment criteria.

All applications are assigned 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

To qualify for funding, an application as a whole must be assigned at least the qualification ‘good’. In addition, it must be assigned at least the qualification ‘good’ for all the main criteria. For more information about the qualifications, see: www.nwo.nl/qualification_system.

If, after assessment, two or more applications with the same weighted total score (two decimal places after the decimal point) receive equal scores and these applications are at the threshold of qualifying for a grant within the grant limit, the application that received the highest score on the criterion ‘Innovative nature of the project’ will be given the highest score. If applications still end with equal scores after this, the application that received the highest score on the criterion ‘Educational profile of the applicant’ will receive the highest score. If applications also end up with equal scores after this step, the Assessment Committee will determine the order of priority by means of an anonymous majority vote (Article 2.2.7., paragraph 3(a), sub iv of the NWO Grant Rules 2017). In the event of a tie, NRO will determine the priority by means of a drawing of lots by a civil-law notary.

Composition of the Assessment Committee

In the Comenius Senior Fellows round, the Assessment Committee consists of four different divisions. Members of the Assessment Committee currently work, or have recently worked, in higher education.

Each division of the Assessment Committee must have at least the following expertise:
- Research expertise (researchers in educational sciences)
- Practical expertise (educational professionals with experience in designing and implementing educational innovation projects)
- Thematic expertise (education professionals who link research and practice on this theme)
- Student-related expertise (students with experience in educational evaluations and/or participation)

The different divisions of the Assessment Committee assess the applications submitted in the different themes. Each division assesses proposals from research universities as well as universities of applied sciences. If the number of applications within a theme is too large to be assessed by one division, NRO may decide to have applications by research universities separated from those by universities of applied sciences.

Applications will be assessed by the full ‘science-wide’ committee. When forming the Assessment Committee, NRO aims to achieve as wide a background in research fields as possible. However, it cannot guarantee that all research fields will be represented in the committee.
Chapter 4: Assessment procedure / Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021

Decision by the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science

The Minister makes the final decision on the submitted applications. Applications will be honoured on the basis of the criteria set out in 4.2, the prioritisation determined by the Assessment Committee and the available budget.

Applicants will be notified about the outcome as soon as possible, along with a summary setting out the reasons for the Assessment Committee’s review.

Objection and appeal

An interested party may object in writing to a decision relating to the 2021 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 OCW. More information on lodging an objection can be found at www.bezwaarschriftenocw.nl (only available in Dutch).

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 September 2020, 14:00 CEST</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting the letter of intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 September 2020, 14:00 CEST</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting a preliminary application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2020</td>
<td>Processing of preliminary applications; assessment of preliminary applications, establishing the recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early November 2020</td>
<td>Recommendation about elaborating the preliminary application sent to applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 December 2020, 14:00 CEST</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting full applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2020/January 2021</td>
<td>Processing full applications; Assessment Committee prepares preliminary assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second half January 2021</td>
<td>Applicants will receive the preliminary assessments before preparing a response (five working days before submitting the response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2021</td>
<td>Assessment Committee prepares for assessment meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2021</td>
<td>Assessment meetings; the Assessment Committee provides the Minister with an advice on awarding/rejecting the proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2021</td>
<td>Minister’s decision to award/reject the proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-April 2021</td>
<td>Applicants notified of whether their application has been awarded or rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amendments to the procedure

NRO or OCW may consider it necessary to adapt the timeline during the course of the ongoing procedure. Applicants will be informed of this as soon as possible.

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15 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.
4.2 Criteria

Formal admissibility criteria

NRO will only process your preliminary application if it meets a number of formal conditions, which are as follows:

- The preliminary application/full application has been submitted by a person who meets the requirements set out in 3.1.
- The letter of intent, preliminary application and full application have been submitted on time and by the same applicant.
- The letter of intent, preliminary application and full application have been submitted through the applicant’s ISAAC account.
- After any requests to supplement or amend the application form have been processed, the application form is correct, complete and has been filled in according to the instructions.
- The preliminary application/full application has been written in Dutch or English.
- The preliminary application/full application falls within the scope of the aim and themes of this call.
- The theme for which the preliminary application/full application was submitted matches the theme for which the letter of intent was submitted.
- The applicant has not submitted a preliminary application/full application in one of the other ‘tiers’ of the 2021 Comenius Programme.
- The preliminary application/full application is accompanied by a signed statement of the dean and/or head of the faculty from which the application is being submitted and meets the requirements of 3.4.
- The period for which a grant is requested is at least 24 months and at most 30 months. The planned start date of the project is between 1 May 2021 and 1 September 2021. The end date of the project is no later than 31 October 2023.
- The budget accompanying the full application has been drawn up in accordance with the guidelines in the call for proposals, including any letter of guarantee in the event of co-financing.
- Apart from the budget, no appendices may be attached to the preliminary application or full application. The application form, the statement of the dean/head of the faculty and the guarantee must be submitted as a single, merged PDF file.

Assessment criteria

The preliminary applications will be assessed on the basis of the main criteria 1, 2 and 4. All criteria have equal weight in the decision to issue a negative or positive advice.

Full applications will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria.

1. Innovative nature of the project (30%)
2. Expected results of the project (20%)
3. Quality of the project plan (20%)
4. Educational profile of the applicant (30%)

1. Innovative nature of the project (30%)
   a. To what extent does the project seek to implement an innovative solution or ambitious improvement that meets a need in higher education?
   b. To what extent does the proposed solution differ from initiatives in other institutions with a similar objective?
2. **Expected results of the project (20%)**
   a. Is it convincingly explained in the problem analysis in which educational component an improvement is desirable and why?
   b. Does the applicant demonstrate that the proposed innovation can lead to an improvement (for instance on the basis of relevant literature and examples from practice)?
   c. Are the intended outputs, such as learning outcomes and specific products, clearly defined? Are they of added value for students, and possibly others?
   d. Is the scale and context of the project consistent with a Senior Fellow project as described in Chapter 2?
   e. Does the project align with the chosen theme as described in Chapter 2?
   f. Has the applicant convincingly substantiated how the project could be of value for other education professionals?

3. **Quality of the project plan (20%)**
   a. Are the activities, methods used and planning clearly defined in the project plan and are they appropriate for achieving the intended results?
   b. Do the project plan, planning and concise risk analysis convincingly demonstrate the feasibility of the project?
   c. Does the project team have the necessary expertise to carry out the project? Are the different roles and division of tasks clear and appropriate?
   d. Are the activities and outputs of the project evaluated in an appropriate manner, based on evaluation criteria and procedures?
   e. Is the dissemination plan suitable and sufficiently ambitious?

4. **Educational profile of the applicant (30%)**
   a. Does the applicant match the profile of a Senior Fellow (as described in Chapter 2), given their teaching experience and current role at the institution?
   b. To what extent does the professional statement testify to excellent teaching and an inspired vision of innovation in education? Does the project stem from this broader vision of education?
   c. Does the professional statement show how a Comenius grant and membership of the Comenius Network can contribute to the applicant’s ambitions and teaching career?

**Policy considerations**

When honouring the proposals, the Minister can also take budgetary considerations into account in addition to the quality criteria.

If any budget remains for a theme within this call for proposals, the Minister may decide to add this to one of the other themes in the same education sector for which this budget was intended (research university or university of applied sciences) within this call for proposals, or to add this budget to a concurrent call for proposals within the Comenius programme.
5 Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

Specific questions
For specific questions about the ‘Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021’ round and this call for proposals, please contact:

Lars de Bruin MA (programme secretary)
Tel.: +31 (0)70 344 0928
Email: comenius@nro.nl

Technical questions about the electronic application system ISAAC
If you have any technical questions about ISAAC, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk. 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 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.

5.2 Other information

NRO advises applicants to contact the institution’s grant adviser at an early stage if they are considering submitting an application for a grant under the Comenius programme.
6 Appendices

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

6.1.1 Universities

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.

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.

6.1.2 Universities of applied sciences

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.

Universities of applied sciences with a different organisational structure
All universities of applied sciences that are organised in institutes, academies, domains or units other than faculties may submit a maximum of one application per organisational unit referred to above, subject to the maximum numbers indicated below:

Avans Hogeschool
Eight applications can be submitted by different institutions affiliated with Avans Hogeschool. Jetta Wille is responsible for coordinating applications from these institutions. Interested parties can contact her at ja.wille@avans.nl.

Hanzehogeschool Groningen
Eight applications can be submitted by different institutions affiliated with Hanzehogeschool Groningen. Judith Volker is responsible for coordinating applications from these institutions. Interested parties can contact her at j.j.m.volker@pl.hanze.nl.

Fontys
Eight applications can be submitted by different institutions affiliated with Fontys Hogeschool. Jeanine van Geest is responsible for coordinating applications from these institutions. Interested parties can contact her at j.vangeest@fontys.nl.

HAN University of Applied Sciences
Eight applications can be submitted by different academies affiliated with HAN University of Applied Sciences. The Grants Advisory Office is responsible for coordinating applications from these academies. Interested parties can contact subsidies@han.nl.
Chapter 6: Appendices / Comenius programme Senior Fellows 2021

**Hogeschool Saxion**

Eight applications can be submitted by different institutions affiliated with Hogeschool Saxion. William Sanchez is responsible for coordinating applications from these institutions. Interested parties can contact him at w.c.sanchez@saxion.nl.

**Hogeschool Utrecht**

Eight applications can be submitted by different institutions affiliated with Hogeschool Utrecht. The HU Grant Office is responsible for coordinating applications from these institutions. Interested parties can contact Femke During at hugrantoffice@hu.nl.

**Van Hall Larenstein**

Each of the two domains of Delta Areas and Resources and Food and Dairy may submit one application at most.