Call for proposals

Comenius Programme
Leadership Fellows

2020

The Hague, June 2019
Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

On 7 July 2015, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science presented the 2015-2025 Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, ‘The Value of Knowledge’, to both Chambers of the Dutch parliament. In this publication, the Minister put forward a number of proposals to invest the resources that will become available after introduction of the Studievoorschot (student loan system) in the quality of higher education in the Netherlands.

The Strategic Agenda sets out ambitions for the development of Higher education in the Netherlands. It is a conscious choice not to define precisely in this Strategic Agenda how these ambitions should be achieved, the point of departure being that they can best be achieved by giving the professionals involved the desired freedom of scope. According to the Strategic Agenda, the teachers, education leaders and directors that work in Dutch institutions of higher education are inspired, successful and have a proven track record. They are crucial in signalling opportunities for innovative education and designing ways to achieve this.

The Comenius programme was set up to give these education professionals sufficient scope to implement their vision. 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 education, Comenius combined education research with the development and implementation of innovative teaching methods. The Comenius programme allows education professionals to implement their vision of education in practice, in the spirit of the programme’s eponym.

The educational innovation projects funded by the Comenius programme contribute directly to innovation and improvement of higher education in the Netherlands.

By valuing excellent and inspired teaching in a visible way, the Comenius programme contributes to making varied career paths possible for teachers and researchers at research universities and universities of applied sciences.

The Comenius programme offers grants to Teaching Fellows (€50,000), Senior Fellows (€100,000) and Leadership Fellows (€500,000). The Fellows are distinguished on the basis of their experience and the extent of their impact on education. They can use the grant\(^1\) to implement educational innovations and improvements in their own teaching practice on a scale suited to their position and the duration of the project (for instance within a course, in a degree programme or faculty or in the entire institution).

This call for proposals provides an overview of the application procedure for a Comenius grant for a Leadership Fellow as well as the assessment and selection of applications.

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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) for the financial year concerned; as from then, it will be a legal obligation. The Comenius grant is therefore not a personal grant.

The calls for proposals for Teaching Fellows and Senior Fellows are available on the Comenius programme page of the NRO website.

### 1.2 Available budget

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will make a total of €6,200,000 available for grants for the 2020 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).

A total of €2,000,000 is available for Leadership Fellow projects. The grant amount for each project is €500,000, which means that four proposals can be honoured.

The grants will be divided equally between universities of applied sciences and research universities. This means that two grants are available for projects at research universities and two for projects at universities of applied sciences.²

### 1.3 Validity of the call for proposals

The deadline for submitting letters of intent is **5 September 2019**, 14:00 hours CEST.

The deadline for submitting applications is **10 October 2019**, 14:00 hours CEST.

A prerequisite for submitting an application is the timely submission of a letter of intent.

See 4.1 of this call for proposals for the procedures for submitting a letter of intent and an application. See 4.2 of this call for proposals for the assessment criteria of the application.

² In case of cooperation between a university of applied sciences and a research university, the coordinating institution determines the category under which the proposal will be treated.
2 Aim

2.1 Projects in the Comenius programme

As described in Chapter 1, the aim of the Comenius programme is to give impetus to educational innovation and improvements by professionals in higher education. Teaching Fellows, Senior Fellows and Leadership Fellows and their projects are distinguished on the basis of their impact on education, which becomes broader at each ‘tier’ in the programme.

This section describes how the Comenius projects contribute to the objectives of the Comenius programme as outlined in Chapter 1. How this should be reflected in a project proposal is always mentioned.

Chapter 2.2 describes the specifics of a Leadership Fellow project.

Improving education through evidence-informed innovation

The Comenius programme is aimed at enabling innovation projects to the extent that they are also considered innovative outside the institution implementing the project.3

The innovation must be aimed at improving education. The improvement must directly benefit students at a publicly-funded Dutch institution of higher education and the innovation must be implemented in the student’s (online) educational environment.4,5,6 The proposal should clearly define the specific context and scope of the project.

The motivation and inspiration for the project must be derived from the educational environment and the Comenius Fellow’s own vision of education. The envisioned project results must be made plausible by substantiating the problem definition and the intended intervention and by means of a clear project plan.

The innovation must be set up in an evidence-informed manner. This means that it must be clear from the proposal why an improvement in education is desirable and why it is likely that the proposed innovation will be 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.

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3 The proposed innovation must fall within the scope of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act applicable at the time the application is submitted.
4 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.
5 Projects whose primary objective is the professional development of teachers are therefore excluded. Of course, the professional development of teachers can be a component of successful implementation of an innovation in the student’s learning environment.
6 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.
In their proposal, the applicant must clarify the distinctiveness and added value of the project compared to other projects with the same objective. If the applicant wishes to apply an 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.

A description of the evaluation of the innovation and its implementation should be included in the project plan.

The project plan must outline how the project will be set up and implemented, what expertise is required and what the team composition is. It should also set out clearly how students will be involved in the project.

**Sharing of results with the teaching community**

Because of the innovative nature of the projects, the experiences and results will be interesting and valuable for other teachers and/or education professionals.

The ability to evaluate and share the experiences and results gained from the project 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. The applicant must also consider how the results and experiences will be shared with educational professionals within and outside their own institution.

**Contributing to the professional development and career of the Comenius Fellows**

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 an education professional. Comenius Fellows become members of the Comenius Network of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (*Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, KNAW). This is a network of education innovators who can share knowledge and experiences 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 higher education teaching.

The applicant’s professional statement must reflect their own vision of higher education and the development of higher education; how they express this in their own work and how they will do this in the proposed project; and how they hope to inspire others in their role as educational professionals.

### 2.2 Leadership Fellow and Leadership Fellow projects

With the Leadership Fellow project, the Leadership Fellow must have an impact on education in several faculties or in an entire educational institution.

The Leadership Fellow must, through their experience and network, have a comprehensive view of the field of education and be familiar with current developments in the field of the intended innovation – both nationally and internationally.
The Leadership Fellow must have educational leadership qualities and a demonstrable impact on the educational climate in their own institution. The applicant must demonstrate, with the Comenius project and through membership of the Comenius Network, their ambition to become an educational leader at the national level and to inspire other professionals.

In addition, the Leadership Fellow (possibly through the composition of the project team), must have the mandate and ‘sway’ to implement this innovation within the faculty or institution. The teaching CV of the Leadership Fellow and the team members must demonstrate how they have previously implemented innovations in education (individually or in partnership).

A Comenius Leadership Fellow project must give impetus to the education ambitions formulated in the institution’s strategic education plan. This will enable the institution to showcase itself in this area and to take a leading role at the national or even international level.

The project must be in line with recent developments in the national (and international) discourse on the project’s theme. The proposal must clarify how the project will contribute to this, including through the research linked to the innovation.

In the dissemination plan, the applicant should look ahead to possible publication channels within and outside their own institution.\(^7\)

The proposed project must take place within several faculties or an entire educational institution. Collaboration between faculties of different institutions of higher education is also possible. The grant amount is €500,000. The project has a minimum duration of 36 months and a maximum duration of 42 months.

\(^7\) In this context, ‘publication’ should be understood in the broadest sense possible, i.e. 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.
3 Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply?

Conditions for submitting applications in the Comenius programme
Applications can be submitted by education professionals working in publicly-funded institutions of higher education in the Netherlands (Section 1.8 of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act; only available in Dutch).\(^8\)

Each institution may only submit one Leadership Fellow application. The Executive Board endorses the proposal with a substantive recommendation and a statement that the project leader and the project team will be given sufficient scope to implement the project if the grant is awarded.

An applicant will be acting as project leader and may, in their application, specify a team of colleagues, advisers and students (the project members).\(^9\)

- An applicant may submit an application for only one of the three grants in the Comenius programme (Teaching, Senior and Leadership Fellows) per year.
- 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\(^10\).
- 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 (see 3.5 ‘After grant award’).

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 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. After the grant is awarded, the applicant will be the contact person for NRO and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Conditions for submitting applications in the Comenius Leadership Fellows round
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, it must be indicated in the statement of the Executive Board that the contract will be extended for at least the duration of the project at the time the grant is awarded;

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\(^8\) To encourage the distribution of Comenius Leadership Fellows across the country, institutions that received a Leadership Fellow grant in 2019 are excluded from participation in the 2020 round. (Note: this does not apply to institutions that received a Leadership Fellow grant in the 2018 round.)

\(^9\) It is no longer possible to register a co-applicant in ISAAC; all members of the project team can be stated on the application form.

\(^10\) An applicant who unsuccessfully submitted a full application for a grant in the 2018 or 2019 round of the Comenius programme may again submit an application in the 2020 round. As from 2020, however, the maximum number of full applications in the same tier in the Comenius programme will be set at two applications in consecutive years.
• have at least seven years of experience in higher education;
• have a coordinating or administrative role and be able, in this capacity or through the team composition, to implement the innovation across the entire scope of the proposed project;
• demonstrate, with a recommendation from the Executive Board, 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.

Members of the Assessment Committee in this round of the Comenius Leadership Fellows are excluded from submitting applications and may not be part of an applicant’s project team.

3.2 What can be applied for?

See 4.3, 'Available budget', for the total budget available in this round.

Applications can be submitted for projects with a duration of at least 36 months and at most 42 months. The start date of a project cannot be before the planned announcement of the decision, so not before 1 May 2020.

A budget of up to €500,000 is available for each application. The requested budget may not exceed €500,000 and may not be less than €450,000.

A separate format (Excel file) is available for processing the budget associated with your application. You must fill in this budget format and send it as an appendix to your application if you submit it digitally.

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

If co-financing is made available, the total budget of a project could exceed the maximum amount of the grant (€500,000). Co-financing may, however, not exceed the requested budget as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science must remain the main financier of the project. Furthermore, the budget format must clearly indicate which staff costs or material costs are covered by co-financing, whether in cash or in kind. Co-financing must be guaranteed (by means of a letter of guarantee) at the time the application is submitted. The application form, the statement of the Executive Board and the letter of guarantee (in the event of co-financing) must be submitted as a single, merged PDF file.

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

3.2.1 Staff costs

A budget can be requested for the salary costs of the staff to be appointed for the research. This includes in any event the salary costs of teachers and teaching assistants who actively contribute to the project and are employed by institutions of higher education.

To budget the costs of staff at higher education and research institutions that receive public funding, the fees may be based on the fees applicable at the institutions, provided these do not exceed the maximum (per hour/per day) fees in the Guide to Government Fees for 2017:
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Secretariat/Students €53/424
Junior/research assistant for AS and NAS/teaching staff €72/576
Mid-level/university teaching staff/ lecturer-researchers €87/696
Senior/associate professor €95/760
Director/professor/lecturer €119/952

The stated fees are based on the cost-effective fee plus additional fees. The cost-effective fee includes the average gross salary plus expected wage development, holiday pay, year-end bonus, employer’s charges and an additional fee for overhead costs.

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

Note: salary costs for project staff who are not employed by a publicly-funded institutions 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.

The application must indicate how the requested staff costs will be allocated to the different members of the project team, and it must also explain the reasons behind this allocation.

3.2.2 Material costs

The requested budget for material costs may not exceed 20% of the total budget requested. All costs must be substantiated.

A budget can also be requested to cover material costs such as:

- Training sessions or courses for the applicant and members of the project team, as needed for the project;
- Remuneration for professionals who are not affiliated with a publicly-funded institution of higher education (for example: external advisers, software developers, designers, etc.);
- 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 teaching 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 teaching 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 that accommodation, overhead, maintenance and depreciation costs may not be funded from the budget.
3.3 When can applications be submitted?

The deadline for submitting a letter of intent is **5 September 2019, 14:00 hours CEST**.

The deadline for submitting an application is **10 October 2019, 14:00 hours CEST**.

When submitting your 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. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

3.4 Preparing the letter of intent and application

### Applicant’s account in ISAAC and registration of the institution

The applicant must submit the letter of intent and application through their ISAAC account. Applicants who do not have an ISAAC account are advised to create this at least one day before submitting the application.

When creating an account, the applicant must specify the institution (and department of that institution) they work for. In a few cases, the institution may not yet be registered (small or new universities of applied sciences; all research universities and major universities of applied sciences are registered). In that case the registration can be applied for at relatiebeheer@nwo.nl. Indicate at least the full official name, address (correspondence and visiting address) and general telephone number of the institution. As it takes a few days to process the request, it must be made no later than one week before the deadline.

If you have any questions about ISAAC, please consult 5.1.2.

3.4.1 Submitting a letter of intent

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

Letters of intent must be submitted no later than **5 September 2019, 14:00 CEST**, through the online application system, ISAAC.

There is no form for preparing a letter of intent available on the NRO or NWO websites. If you click on ‘Digital application for this grant’ on the grant page of the NWO website for this specific round you will reach the ISAAC application page, where you can create an account. Once you have done this you can follow the next steps as set out in the ISAAC manual.

When submitting the letter of intent, the applicant must provide some administrative details. After the letter of intent has been submitted, the applicant can no longer be changed. The applicant must also specify in the letter of intent, under the heading ‘summary’, the following:

- the title of the project proposal;
- a summary of the project proposal;
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- the composition, provisional or final, of the project team;
- suggestions for national and international referees.

Applicants will be notified of receipt of the letter of intent.

The letters of intent will be used to:
- Gain insight into the maximum number of applications. As soon as possible after the deadline for submitting letters of intent, the applicants will be notified of the total number of letters of intent submitted within the Leadership Fellows ‘tier’;
- Approach referees. The suggestions for referees will be checked for formal involvement; if the referees are found suitable, they will be contacted by NRO. Based on the summary of the proposal, these and other referees will be contacted and asked to assess the full application. The referees are not expected to assess the content of the summary;
- Set up the Assessment Committee. The necessary scope, involvement of committee members with the applicant and the distribution of the applications across individual members according to their expertise must be taken into account.

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 manual explains how this should be done.

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 at comenius@nro.nl.

3.4.2 Submitting an application

A standard form for submitting the project proposal is available on the grant page of the NWO website. Applicants must adhere to the research questions and associated explanatory notes in this form, as well as the guidelines for the maximum number of words and pages.

The applicant is obliged to submit the application through their ISAAC account. Full applications must be submitted no later than 10 October 2019, 14:00 CEST. Submission after this time is not possible. Applicants will be notified of receipt of the application.

When submitting your application in ISAAC you will have to enter some additional details online, such as a summary of the project proposal. You should therefore start submitting your application at least one day before the deadline of this call for proposals. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

If you have any technical questions, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk (see 5.1.2).

Research field codes
You must specify one or more research field codes that apply to the proposed research on the application form. You can only use the NWO research field codes for this. These are available at https://www.nwo.nl/en/funding/funding+process+explained/research+fields.

This information must also be entered in ISAAC (in the ‘General’ tab at ‘Research fields’) before submitting the application. The research field code for ‘Educational Sciences’ (41.90.00) must in any case always be stated on the application form and in ISAAC. Below that, you should state the main research fields and sub-fields in order of importance.
3.5 Grant conditions

The NWO Grant Rules (2017) and the Approval of funding for scientific research (2008) apply to all applications.

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. The project team can use a suitable storage environment of their own choosing. NRO suggests the following two options. SURFsharekit, which is a repository service provided by SURF. Another good option, which is free of charge, is Wikiwijs. In addition to storing open educational resources, Wikiwijs offers a development environment where users can jointly develop, share, and evaluate resources.

Open access
All scientific publications resulting from research funded by grants awarded through this call for proposals must immediately (at the time of publication) be freely accessible worldwide (open access). There are several ways for researchers to publish through open access. A detailed explanation can be found at www.nwo.nl/en/policies/open+science.

Deadlines for the start and end dates of a project
The projects must begin in the academic year following the year of award (2020-2021). The completion phase of a project may not continue beyond two months in the academic year following the last year of the project. The start-up phase of a project can begin as soon as the award decision has been published; the planned start date cannot be before 1 May 2020.

After grant award
Obligation of effort
Whether the project will deliver the intended result cannot yet be established 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.

The effort expected of the Comenius Fellow consists of the following elements:
- The Fellow carries out the project plan proposed in the application to the best of their abilities;
- Fellows report to NRO and each other about project progress and completion (in the interim and no later than three months after the end date of the project). NRO reports to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the project results;
- A brief report on the project is published in the institution’s annual report;
- The financial statements 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;
• Active membership of the Comenius Network: a Comenius Fellow becomes a member of the Comenius Network, which is hosted by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences (KNAW).

*Changes in the project team*
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. NRO will advise the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, on a case-by-case basis, of the possible consequences of these changes for grant award.
4 Assessment procedure

The application and assessment procedure is implemented by NRO. NRO forms an Assessment Committee of experts for the substantive assessment of the applications. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science decides whether or not to award the grant based on the opinion of the NRO Assessment Committee.

The relevant conflict of interest code applies to all individuals and NRO staff involved in the assessment or decision-making process.

4.1 Procedure

The procedure consists of the following steps:
• Publication of the call for proposals;
• Submission of letters of intent;
• Submission of applications;
• Check by NRO of the admissibility of applications;
• Possibility of pre-selection by the Assessment Committee before further processing of applications;
• Assessment of the application by international referees;
• Opportunity for the applicant to respond to the referees’ report;
• Assessment by the Assessment Committee;
• Decision by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

4.1.1 Submitting a letter of intent and an application in ISAAC

For deadlines, guidelines and the procedure for submitting a letter of intent and an application, see 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

4.1.2 Admissibility check and processing the application

After submitting the proposal, the applicant will be notified of whether or not the application will be processed. The NRO secretariat determines this on the basis of a number of admissibility criteria. These are set out in 4.2.1.

If an application does not meet any of these criteria, the Minister will qualify it as ‘inadmissible’ and the application will not be processed.

4.1.3 Pre-selection in the event of a large number of applications

If the number of applications submitted exceeds four times the maximum number that can be awarded, a pre-selection may be part of the procedure.

The maximum number of awards has been set for each education sector (maximum of three for each sector). NRO reserves the right to apply pre-selection in only one of the two sectors.

Pre-selection is intended to prevent overburdening the assessment procedure and to be able to give applicants of unsuitable proposals clarity in the short term.

After determining admissibility, the NRO secretariat determines whether there will be a pre-selection of applications. Applicants will be notified of this immediately.
In the event of pre-selection, the proposals will be submitted to a number of members of the Assessment Committee. They will be asked to assess the proposals based on the assessment criteria set out in 4.2.2.

The Assessment Committee will then present the Minister with its opinion on whether or not to admit the applications for further assessment. If the Assessment Committee intends to advise the Minister not to admit a proposal for further assessment, the applicant will be notified of this, along with an explanation of the committee’s opinion. The applicant will be given the opportunity to respond to the Assessment Committee’s opinion within three working days. This response will be submitted for consideration to a number of members of the Assessment Committee, after which the committee may decide to modify its opinion to the Minister.

The Minister makes the final decision on admission of applications for further assessment.

If an application is not admitted for further assessment, the applicant will be notified of this in writing, along with a brief explanation of the opinion.

If the application is admitted for further assessment, the applicant will receive confirmation of this by email.

4.1.4 Assessment of the application by referees

The applications admitted for processing are submitted to a number of independent referees (from the Netherlands and abroad). The referees are asked to give substantive and substantiated comments on the research proposal. They will do this on the basis of the assessment criteria and a standardised form.

The referees are selected based on their expertise and may not be involved in the applications. When submitting a letter of intent or an application, applicants may suggest potential referees with whom they have no direct working relationship. Suggesting referees is no guarantee that these referees will be approached to assess the application. The members of the Assessment Committee may also be asked to make suggestions.

The NRO bureau determines who will be approached as a referee. If it appears that a referee’s comments are overly focused on the person of the applicant or researcher, or otherwise unprofessional, the bureau reserves the right to have these comments modified before submitting them to the applicant, or not to submit them.

4.1.5 Response

The applicant will receive anonymised referee’s comments on the application and be given the opportunity to submit a response of no more than 1500 words within five working days.

If the main purport of the referees’ comments is negative, the applicant will be urgently advised to withdraw the application. The probability of a positive assessment in the case of predominantly negative comments by referees is generally very small. If the applicant decides to withdraw the application, they must notify the NRO bureau in writing as soon as possible, via comenius@nro.nl.

4.1.6 Assessment of the application file by preliminary assessors
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The Assessment Committee in the Comenius Leadership Fellows round assesses applications from research universities as well as universities of applied sciences.

The Assessment Committee consists of at least:
- education researchers;
- directors or former directors in Dutch or Flemish higher education;
- students with experience in representative bodies/teaching evaluations at institution level.

Applications will be assessed by the full ‘science-wide’ committee. In forming the Assessment Committee, the aim is to achieve as wide a background as possible in research fields and education sectors.

After receiving the referees’ comments and the applicant’s response, the application file (which consists of the original application, the referees’ comments and the applicant’s response) is submitted for comment to at least two members of the Assessment Committee (the preliminary assessors).

On the basis of the assessment criteria, the preliminary assessors provide substantive and substantiated written comments on the referees’ report and the applicant’s response. The members of the Assessment Committee must take into consideration the comments already raised by the referees and which the applicant has had the opportunity to respond to. The preliminary assessors may not be involved in the applications on which they provide an assessment.

The application, the referees’ comments, the applicant’s response and the preliminary assessment serve as input for the assessment meeting.

4.1.7 Assessment meeting and final opinion

During the assessment meeting, members of the Assessment Committee meet and discuss all proposals, after which they assign a score to each proposal.

All applications are given a qualification based on the weighted average 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

For further information about the qualifications, see: [www.nwo.nl/qualifications](http://www.nwo.nl/qualifications).

The proposals are prioritised on the basis of the weighted average score. On the basis of this prioritisation, the Assessment Committee prepares and submits an opinion to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science with the recommendation to invite at most six applicants (of the highest-scoring proposals) per education sector for an interview with a delegation of the Assessment Committee, and not to honour the other proposals.

The Minister makes the final decision on selection for the interview round. After the decision, the applicants will be notified as soon as possible of the outcome (invitation or rejection), along with a brief explanation of the opinion of the Assessment Committee.
4.1.8 Final opinion after the interview

During the interview, the applicant will have the opportunity to comment on the questions or the opinion of the committee, as explained in the written invitation. The applicant and the Assessment Committee then discuss the project proposal.

At the end of the interview, the Assessment Committee again assigns a score to the proposal. The interview may result in a re-assessment of the proposal’s qualification and its score.

All applications are again assigned a qualification based on the weighted average score, for which the above scale is again used. Only applications that receive at least the qualification ‘good’ for all criteria will be eligible for funding.

The Assessment Committee prioritises the proposals and advises the Minister of Education, Culture and Science on the applications to be honoured.

4.1.9 Decision by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science makes the final decision. 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 brief explanation of the opinion of the Assessment Committee.

4.1.10 Objection and appeal

An interested party¹¹ may object in writing to a decision relating to the 2020 round of the Comenius programme – Leadership Fellows within six weeks of the date on which the decision was communicated to the interested party. The interested party should lodge their objection to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. More information on lodging an objection can be found at www.bezwaarschriftenocw.nl.

¹¹ 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.
**4.1.11 Time schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Publication of the call for proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 September 2019, 14:00 CEST</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting the letter of intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 October 2019, 14:00 CEST</td>
<td>Deadline for submitting the application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October/November 2019</td>
<td>Assessment by referees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2019</td>
<td>Applicant’s response (five working days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December – January 2020</td>
<td>Assessment by committee, preliminary assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2020</td>
<td>Assessment meeting; selection of candidates to interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2020</td>
<td>Decision by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No later than 1 May 2020</td>
<td>Applicants notified of whether their application has been awarded or rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2020</td>
<td>Festive kick-off meeting with all 2020 Comenius Fellows (Teaching, Senior &amp; Leadership)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.1.12 Amendments to the procedure**

NRO or the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 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.

**4.2 Criteria**

**4.2.1 Formal admissibility criteria**

For an application to be eligible for admission to the assessment procedure, it must be reviewed against a number of formal conditions, as described below. Only applications that meet these conditions will be admitted to the assessment procedure.

- The applicant has submitted a letter of intent on time.
- The application has been submitted by a person who meets the requirements set out in 3.1 of this call for proposals, including the restrictions in this paragraph on submitting applications within the Comenius Leadership Fellows round and within the entire Comenius programme.
- The application has been submitted through the applicant’s ISAAC account.
- The application has been submitted on time.
- The application has been written in English.
- The application falls within the scope of the aim of this call (see Chapter 2).
- The applicant has not submitted a preliminary application/full proposal in one of the other ‘tiers’ of the Comenius programme.
- The application form has been completed accurately and in full, in accordance with the instructions.
- The application must be accompanied by a signed statement by the Executive Board of the institution from which the application is being submitted. This statement must indicate that if the grant is awarded, the applicant will be given sufficient scope to implement the proposed project.
- Apart from the budget, no appendices may be attached to the full application.

The application form, the statement of the Executive Board and the letter of intent should be submitted through the applicant’s ISAAC account.
4.2.2 Assessment criteria

1. Innovative nature of the project (25%)
   a. To what extent does the project concern the implementation of a new or improved solution (products, services, processes) that meets a need in higher education?
   b. To what extent and in what aspects does the proposed solution differ from other initiatives with the same objective?

2. Expected results of the project (25%)
   a. Is it convincingly explained where an improvement is desirable in the educational component and why?
   b. Does the applicant demonstrate that the proposed innovation can lead to an improvement (for instance by referring to relevant literature or examples from practice)?
   c. Have the intended results of the project been clearly described and defined in demonstrable terms? Are the benefits for the student clearly described?
   d. Is the scale and context of the project and the intended result consistent with a Leadership Fellow project as described in 2.1?
   e. Has it been made clear how the project aligns with the institution’s strategic (education) plan?
   f. Has the applicant convincingly substantiated why and how the project could be of value for other education professionals?

3. Quality of the project plan (25%)
   a. Does the project plan contain specific activities and does it make clear how these will contribute to achieving the intended results?
   b. Have the methods used been clearly defined and are they adequate, and is the planning clear and achievable?
   c. Does the project plan describe how the activities are distributed among the project team members and is this appropriate?
   d. Has it been convincingly defined which roles and expertise are necessary for the project and how these are provided for in the team?
   e. Does the project plan describe how the activities and results of the project are evaluated? Which criteria and procedures have been drawn up for the evaluation and are they suitable?
   f. Is the dissemination plan (plans for disseminating the results) suitable and sufficiently ambitious?

4. Teaching experience and vision of the applicant (25%)
   a. Does the applicant match the Leadership Fellow profile (as described in 2.2 and 3.1), given their teaching experience and current role at the educational institution? Are the teaching experience and role suitable for the project as described in the application?
   b. Does the applicant’s professional statement demonstrate a vision on education and educational leadership, how they apply this in teaching practice and how the proposed project is in line with this? Does the applicant go into detail on how the Comenius Fellowship and membership of the Comenius Network can contribute to the applicant’s teaching career?

4.2.3 Policy considerations

When honouring the proposals, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science can also take budgetary considerations into account in addition to the quality criteria.
5 Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

5.1.1 Specific questions

For specific questions about the Comenius programme and this call for proposals, please contact:

Luisa Solms MSc
T: +31 (0)70 – 3440928
E: comenius@nro.nl

5.1.2 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 hours CEST on +31 (0)20 346 7179. You can also send your queries by email at isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive a response within two working days.

5.1.3 Contact details of the institutions

You can find a list of contact details of persons at an institution of higher education who can provide applicants with advice and support at www.nro.nl/comenius-programme. NRO keeps this list up to date as much as possible. NRO advises applicants to contact an adviser before submitting a letter of intent.