



# NWO-Spinoza Prize

2024

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# 1 Introduction

In this brochure, information is provided about the nomination procedure for the “NWO Spinoza Prize”. This brochure falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

In this brochure you will find information about the aim of this prize (Chapter 2), the conditions for the nomination (Chapter 3) and how your nomination will be assessed (Chapter 4). This is the information you need to submit a nomination. Chapter 5 contains the contact details and Chapter 6 the annexe.

## 1.1 Background

The NWO Spinoza Prize is a funding scheme directed at individuals at the high-end of academic research in the Netherlands. NWO invites a select group of individuals to nominate candidates for an NWO Spinoza Prize.

## 1.2 Available budget

The available budget for the Spinoza Prize 2024 is three million euro. Within this budget it is expected that a maximum of two prizes will be awarded.

## 1.3 Submission deadline

The deadline for submitting nominations is November 1, 2023, before 14:00:00 hours CET. Nominations that are submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

## 2 Aim

The NWO Spinoza Prize provides a way of identifying and acknowledging world-class research by rewarding the individual researchers. The setting in which the candidates work is also important but the key factors are the competence and achievements of the candidates.

The Prize is a unique lifetime achievement award but above all an encouragement for further academic research. The granting of an NWO Spinoza Prize represents an appreciation of what the winners have accomplished so far as well as confidence in what they will achieve with their research group in the next couple of years.

## 3 Conditions for nominations

This chapter contains the conditions that are applicable to your nomination. Firstly it describes who can nominate candidates (section 3.1), who may be nominated (section 3.2) and what the candidates can be nominated for (section 3.3). Subsequently, you will find the conditions for preparing and submitting the nominations (section 3.4 and 3.5) and the specific funding conditions (section 3.6).

### 3.1 Who can nominate candidates

Candidates for the NWO Spinoza Prize can only be nominated by individuals who NWO has invited to submit nominations; researchers may not nominate themselves. NWO invites each of the following individuals to nominate candidates:

- the principles of the universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- the president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) (per domain and on behalf of *de Jonge Akademie*);
- the chair of the Netherlands Academy of Technology and Innovation;
- the chair of the Dutch Network of Women Professors;
- the chair of the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU)
- the chair of the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities (KHMW);
- the chair of the TO2 federation (the institutes for applied research);
- the president of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW).

These persons may nominate a total of three candidates for the Spinoza and the Stevin Prize with a maximum of two candidates per prize.

### 3.2 Who can be nominated

Candidates for the NWO Spinoza Prize:

- should have a permanent position at one of the research institutes listed in article 1.1 paragraph 1 of the NWO Grant Rules 2017;
- should be able to spend the Spinoza Prize fully before their retirement age. A candidate is not eligible for a Spinoza Prize when the candidate's official retirement based on the birth date starts within five years after 1 October 2024 (AOW-leeftijd).;
- may not have already received a Spinoza Prize or a Stevin Prize. If a candidate is nominated independently by different nominators for both Prizes, the candidate will only be considered for either a Spinoza Prize or a Stevin Prize.

The nomination should state and substantiate within which of the following academic clusters, the focus of the research by the candidate has been during the preceding five years: (1) humanities and social sciences or (2) natural sciences (beta) / life sciences (including Medical and Technical Sciences). If a candidate is doing multidisciplinary research both clusters may be listed including in which cluster the focus of the research lies. In that case the choice for clusters should also be substantiated.

World-class, creative and innovative research requires a diverse academic staff so that subjects can be approached from different perspectives. NWO is committed to improving diversity in Dutch academia so as to ensure all available talent is fully exploited. Therefore NWO wholeheartedly encourages nominating female researchers and researchers with a migration background.

### 3.3 What can candidates be nominated for

NWO reserves a budget of 3 million euros annually for the Spinoza Prize. Each NWO Spinoza Prize amounts to 1.5 million euros for academic research in the Netherlands. This amount may be spent (up to a certain point) at the discretion of the recipient, e.g. on staff, materials, investments, travel expenses and accommodation costs, visits by foreign researchers, etc. However, after the Spinoza Prize has been awarded, a concise

spending plan in accordance with the NWO Spinoza Prize Administration and Accountability Regulations must be submitted to the NWO Executive Board for approval. The prize should be spent within a 5-year period.

## 3.4 Preparing a nomination

To facilitate a comparative and smooth assessment of the nominated candidates, the nominations should be filled in in the digital nomination form and submitted by e-mail to [spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL](mailto:spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL). In case of multiple nominations for the same candidates, each nominator must provide an independent nomination.

- The nomination form will be distributed through a personal invitation to nominate candidates only.
- Complete the form, save it as a pdf file and send it by e-mail to [spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL](mailto:spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL).

Instructions on how to draw up a nomination for the NWO Spinoza Prize are included in the Annexe to this brochure.

## 3.5 Conditions for submission

NWO will assess your nomination against the conditions listed below. Your nomination will only be admitted to the assessment procedure if it meets these conditions. After submitting your nomination, NWO requests you to be available to implement any possible administrative corrections so that you can (still) meet the conditions for submission.

These conditions are:

- the candidate meets the conditions stated in Section 3.2;
- the nomination form is, after a possible request to make additions or changes, complete and filled out according to the instructions;
- the nomination is received before or on the set deadline;
- the nomination is written in English.

## 3.6 Conditions on granting

NWO expects strict confidentiality during the nomination procedures, also towards the nominated candidates. If NWO detects that confidentiality has not been guaranteed, NWO reserves the right to refuse the nomination.

Each year a maximum of two NWO-Spinoza Prizes are awarded of which one for each of the academic clusters - humanities / social sciences and natural sciences (beta) / life sciences. When both clusters are listed in the nomination, the cluster where the primary focus of the research lies is defining for this condition.

The NWO Grant Rules 2017, unless this brochure states otherwise, and the Approval of Funding for Scientific Research apply to all nominations. Additional terms and conditions that apply to awarded prizes can be found via the webpage of the Spinoza Prize: <https://www.nwo.nl/nwo-spinozapremie> (Regeling administratie en verantwoording NWO-Spinozapremie – only available in Dutch).



## 4 Assessment procedure

This chapter first of all describes the course of the assessment procedure (Section 4.1 and 4.2). It then states the criteria that the assessment committee will use to assess your nomination (Section 4.3).

The NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests applies to all persons and NWO employees involved in the assessment and/or decision-taking process ([www.nwo.nl/en/code-dealing-personal-interests](http://www.nwo.nl/en/code-dealing-personal-interests)).

NWO strives to achieve an inclusive culture in which there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age ([www.nwo.nl/en/diversity-and-inclusion](http://www.nwo.nl/en/diversity-and-inclusion)). NWO encourages referees and members of an assessment committee to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise these. NWO will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of a nomination.

### 4.1 The San Francisco Declaration (DORA)

NWO is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the way research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research institutions, scientific journals and other parties.

DORA aims to reduce the uncritical use of bibliometric indicators and obviate unconscious bias in the assessment of research and researchers. DORA's overarching philosophy is that research should be evaluated on its own merits rather than on the basis of surrogate measures, such as the journal in which the research is published. NWO therefore requests committee members and referees not to rely on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the h-index when assessing nominations.

For more information on how NWO is implementing the principles of DORA, see [DORA | NWO](#).

### 4.2 Procedure

The first step in the assessment procedure is to check whether a nomination is admissible. In case (i) a nomination does not follow the instructions and conditions as stated in this brochure (Chapter 3), (ii) the information is insufficient or (iii) if the choice for the academic cluster is insufficiently substantiated, NWO will request a revised nomination to be submitted within five weekdays. If the request is not met within the given time-limit or if the requested revision is still insufficient, NWO will not accept the nomination.

The assessment procedure consists of two phases. During the first phase, an international selection committee, appointed by NWO, selects a maximum of six candidates, with a maximum of 3 candidates per cluster by giving the candidates by means of the assessment criteria (described in paragraph 4.3) numerical scores for each criterion including where feasible a written substantiation. A scoring table is used for this purpose (on a scale of 1 to 9, where '1' is outstanding and '9' is average). During the second phase, experts are approached to provide input on the achievements of these candidates. Subsequently, the committee will make its own assessment based on the available material. The input from the experts can be significantly influential in the final assessment, but is not necessarily adopted verbatim by the selection committee. Furthermore, the committee, unlike the experts, assesses the quality of all the nominated candidates. Therefore, the committee may arrive at a different assessment than the experts.

Subsequently, the selection committee draws up a written advice for the Executive Board of NWO on who should receive the Spinoza Prize. The committee bases her advice on the nominations, the input from the experts and the assessments within the committee according to the quality criteria as described in paragraph 4.3. The Executive Board then decides who will receive a Spinoza Prize based on the advice from the selection committee.

The selection committee consists of leading academic researchers from outside the Netherlands, several societal members from the Netherlands and is chaired by a non-voting chair person.

It is possible to indicate (maximum of) three experts who will not be approached for input during the second phase of the procedure. Nominators can list these names in the accompanying e-mail when submitting the nomination.

In June 2024 NWO will announce the names of the laureates who will receive the Spinoza Prize 2024.

## 4.3 Criteria

The quality of the candidates is assessed in relation to broadly held standards of high quality scholarship and science within the relevant disciplines for each candidate. The assessment and selection of the candidates takes place on the basis of past performance taking into account the quality criteria below. Please note: for the Spinoza Prize, the first criterion of *Internationally acknowledged academic/scientific quality and impact* carries the most weight. Given the essential importance for conducting high-quality scientific research, both the qualities of leadership and guiding early stage researchers, as well as societal relevance and creating impact, are also taken into account.

1. **(Inter)nationally acknowledged academic/scientific quality and impact** (weighted at 70%)  
This should be evident from the candidate's scientific achievements and the influence they have had on the development of the relevant field within the (primary) cluster stated in the nomination, for example through shifts in perspective, behavioral changes, or the integration of different disciplines to establish a new subject/result. Scientifically innovative breakthroughs and the breadth of the candidate's research throughout their career are of great importance in this regard. The quality can also be reflected in (inter)national collaborations and networks as well as recognitions. It should also be clear that the NWO Spinoza Prize is expected to significantly advance the candidate's research.
2. **Leadership and the power to attract early stage researchers** (weighted at 20%)  
This criterion includes the quality of mentorship and coaching of early stage researchers. The ability of the candidates to attract and inspire high-quality researchers and other staff members from both national and international backgrounds, within the academic sector or from other sectors, is an indication of quality. If doctoral and postdoctoral researchers mentored by the candidates, have become respected researchers themselves, that implicitly endorses the candidate's quality. Other aspects that can contribute to this criterion include the candidate's decisive role and leadership, for example in educational activities, promoting the creation of impact, and initiating collaborations and networks.
3. **Knowledge exchange and impact (including outreach activities)** (weighted at 10%)  
This should be clearly demonstrated by the relevance of the research results within and outside the academic sector. This criterion is not concerned with the use of knowledge by fellow researchers within a candidate's own academic discipline. For examples and more information please see: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/policies/knowledge+utilisation>.



## 5 Contact and other information

### 5.1 Contact

For specific questions about NWO Spinoza Prize please contact:

- Drs. H.R. (Helga) Varwijk MA / Dr. V.P. (Vincent) van Hensbergen
- e-mail: [spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL](mailto:spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL)
- phone: +31 (0)70 344 05 29 / +31 (0)30 600 12 51
- <https://www.nwo.nl/en/spinoza-prize>

### 5.2 Other information

NWO processes data received in the context of this nomination round in accordance with the NWO Privacy Statement, [Privacy Statement | NWO](#).

## 6 Annexe: Guidelines for writing nominations for the Spinoza Prize 2024

The nominations should be written in English. Each nomination must clearly state the achievements that qualify the candidates to be regarded as highly qualified researchers in the (inter)national arena, the further advances that their research is expected to achieve, and the probable knock-on effect of the award on the candidate's research group.

To facilitate a comparative and smooth assessment of the nominated candidates, the nominations should be filled in in the digital nomination form and submitted by e-mail to [spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL](mailto:spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL). In case of multiple nominations for the same candidate, each nominator must provide an independent nomination.

- The nomination form will be distributed through a personal invitation to nominate candidates.
- Complete the form, save it as a pdf file and send it by e-mail to [spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL](mailto:spinoza-stevin@NWO.NL).

The maximum length of the nomination is 4 pages A4, excluding annexes and the general information on the nominator and the nominated candidate. The nominations may not include recommendation letters. If necessary NWO will request to remove these documents from the nomination.

While writing the nominations it should be taken into account that the selection committee has a broad range of expertise and a part of the committee will have only a 'lay' understanding of the relevant research topic. In the first phase of the assessment, the nominations are the primary source of information for the committee. Well-written nominations are therefore essential for a sustainable assessment.

As a result of NWO signing the DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) any references to Journal Impact Factors or H-index are not allowed in the nominations. The nominations will receive a qualitative assessment, any quantitative indicators merely function to sustain the narrative text in the nomination. For more information on the NWO-policy with regard to DORA, please see: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/dora>.

Each nomination should include the following annexes as set out in the nomination form:

- A. An overview of the 10 most important research products in relation to the field of research (see the nomination form for examples). The qualitative academic and societal impact of each product should be briefly described as well as the individual contribution of the candidates to these products. When assessing the scientific track record of candidates, NWO makes use of a broad definition of scientific output, i.e. not only publications but also other research products such as datasets, patents, software and codes, etc.
- B. A recent curriculum vitae (see the questions in the nomination form) in which it is explicitly stated whether there have been periods of relatively low working activity during the candidate's career and consequently low academic output due, for example, to caring responsibilities or other reasons (with a maximum of 4 pages).

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