Introduction and Purpose

The NWO Spinoza Prize is a funding scheme directed at individuals at the high-end of academic research in the Netherlands. 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. As of 2020 the prize will be awarded to a researcher or a combination of two or three researchers. NWO invites a select group of individuals to nominate candidates for an NWO Spinoza Prize.

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.

Who can nominate

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 (combinations of) candidates:

- the principals of the universities established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (a maximum of two candidates each)
- the president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) (a maximum of two candidates for each domain and the Young Academy)
- the chair of the Netherlands Academy of Technology and Innovation (a maximum of two candidates)
- the chair of the Dutch Network of Women Professors (a maximum of two candidates).

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 2022 (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.

In case of a combined nomination the conditions above apply to each candidate.

The nomination should state and substantiate within which of the following academic clusters, the focus of the research by the candidates has been during the preceding five years: humanities and social sciences, natural sciences (beta) or life sciences. If a candidate is doing multidisciplinary research then more than one cluster 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.
What can the candidates be nominated for

NWO reserves a budget of 10 million euro’s annually for the Spinoza Prize. Each NWO Spinoza Prize amounts to 2.5 million euros for academic research in the Netherlands. This amount may be spent (up to a certain point) at the discretion of the recipient. In the scientific and financial plan which needs to be approved by the Executive Board of NWO the recipient may include costs of staff, materials, investments, travel expenses and accommodation costs, visits by foreign researchers, etc. The prize should in principle be spent within a 5-year period.

When can the nominations be submitted

This call for proposals is valid until the closing date November 1, 2021 14:00:00 CE(S)T. Each nomination should be sent as a PDF-document to NWO by email, spinoza@nwo.nl.

Preparing a nomination

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

Specific conditions

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 four NWO Spinoza Prizes are awarded of which no more than two awards may be within any one of three academic clusters - humanities and social sciences, natural sciences (beta) and life sciences. When more than one clusters is listed in the nomination, the cluster where the primary focus of the research lies is defining for this condition. In addition, when three or four prizes are awarded, a substantial part of the research of at least one recipient should belong to the humanities & social sciences.

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).

Procedure

The first step in the assessment procedure is to check whether an application is admissible. In case a nomination does not follow the instructions and conditions as stated in this brochure, if the information is insufficient or 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.

An international selection committee selects, on behalf of NWO, the best candidates on the basis of the assessment criteria below taking into account the advice of experts and gives advice to the Executive Board of NWO. The Executive Board then decides who will receive a Spinoza Prize based on the advice from the selection committee.
NWO Spinoza Prize

The selection committee consists of leading academic researchers from outside the Netherlands and is chaired by a non-voting chair person. The NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests applies to all persons and NWO staff involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process. See also: https://www.nwo.nl/en/code-dealing-personal-interests.

NWO processes any personal data necessary for the selection of the candidates in accordance with the NWO Privacy Statement.

Criteria

The quality of the candidates is assessed in relation to broadly held standards of high quality scholarship and science within the relevant disciplines. The assessment and selection of the candidates takes place on the basis of past performance taking into account the following quality criteria:

1. **Internationally acknowledged scientific quality and impact** (weighted at 70%)
   This should be evident from the scientific and scholarly achievements of the candidates and their influence on the development of the relevant field of research within the listed (primary) academic cluster, for example by realizing paradigm shifts in fields of inquiry or significant changes in scholarly practice. Scientifically innovative breakthroughs and the breadth of the oeuvre of the candidates are of great importance in the assessment of the candidates. Additionally, it should be evident that the NWO Spinoza Prize is expected to enable the candidates to make substantial advances in their research.

2. **Leadership and the power to attract to early stage researchers** (weighted at 20%)
   This criterion concerns the mentorship and coaching of early stage researchers. The committee takes into account to what extent the candidates are successful in attracting and providing inspiring leadership for Master students, PhD students and postdocs from the Netherlands or from abroad. If a candidate has a substantial number of mentees who have succeeded in advancing their career in academic research, this indicates that the supervision has lasting effects of high quality.

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.

Additional criterion for a nomination of two or three candidates

When two or three candidates are nominated together, the added value of their collaboration should be demonstrably greater than the individual achievements of each candidate singularly, especially according to the first criterion *Internationally acknowledged scientific quality and impact*. The researchers should complement each other but do not necessarily need to be of the same calibre as long as there is evidence of a clear added value and synergy. Furthermore, there should be significant research results that can only be attributed jointly to all the candidates in a combined nomination.

In a combined nomination, it should be clear that the collaboration between the candidates has enabled substantial advances at the frontiers of academic research. These advances may stem, for example, from the cross-fertilization of diverse fields of research or expertise relevant for the research topic, from new productive lines of enquiry, or new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines. In other words, a combined nomination should describe how the collaboration has been essential for the breakthroughs established and in what way it has led to world-class research results. NWO would like to emphasize that the individual candidates within a combined nomination do not have to be generalists or to have expertise on all aspects of the research conducted.
NWO Spinoza Prize

When the candidates in a combined nomination are equal partners with each having their distinct role and a unique high-level of expertise resulting in a complementary and interdependent collaboration, such a nomination would ideally fit the policy NWO has implemented.

When a combined nomination does not fulfil the additional criterion as described above, that combination of candidates will not qualify for a Spinoza Prize. This is subject to the assessment of the complete selection committee.

Contact

For specific questions about NWO Spinoza Prize please contact:

- H.R. (Helga) Varwijk MA
- e-mail: spinoza@nwo.nl
- phone: +31 (0)70 344 05 29
- https://www.nwo.nl/en/spinoza-prize
Annex: Guidelines for writing nominations for the Spinoza Prize 2022

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 national and international 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@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.
- Complete the form, save it as a pdf file and send it by e-mail to spinoza@nwo.nl.

The maximum length of the nomination is 4 pages A4 for an individual nomination and 6 pages A4 for a combined nomination, excluding annexes and the general information on the nominator and the nominated candidate. The nominations may not include recommendation letters.

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 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. In a combined nomination a joint maximum of 20 most important research products is allowed.

B. A recent CV