Aspasia is linked to the NWO Talent Programme Vidi and Vici rounds 2020
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1 Introduction and Aim

1.1 Background

The number of women in the upper academic echelons still lags behind the number of men: at the end of 2019, 23.1% of Dutch professors was female. Although a slow rise in the number of female scientists in senior roles has been observed in recent years, a balanced male/female ratio is not expected before the year 2042. The Aspasia programme aims to accelerate the advancement of female scientists to associate professor/senior lecturer (UHD) or full professor.

Aspasia is linked to the NWO Talent Programme (previously Talent Scheme). From the Talent Scheme round 2005 onwards, NWO decided to award premiums to universities which promote female applicants in the Vidi and Vici rounds who were assessed to be either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ to associate professor/senior lecturer (UHD) in the case of Vidi, or full professor in the case of Vici, within one year of the decision date of the Vidi/Vici round.

Who was Aspasia?

Aspasia was a Greek philosopher who lived between 470 and 410 BC. She was born in the Greek city of Miletus (in modern Turkey). Her father was an enlightened man who gave his daughter a good education. Still a young woman, she moved to Athens where, as a non-citizen, she was classed as a ‘hetaera’. Hetaerae were generally educated and independent women. According to various sources (including Plato and Plutarch), Aspasia gave lessons in rhetoric which were attended by Socrates.

1.2 Aim

The aim of Aspasia is to encourage an accelerated promotion of female academics to associate professor/senior lecturer or full professor.

1.3 Available budget

NWO has made €2,976,000 available for the Aspasia round 2020, linked to the Vidi and Vici rounds 2020, with award decisions in 2021. If this budget is not sufficient to award the premium to all candidates that meet the grant conditions, an additional measure will apply. This measure entails that the responses by the Executive Boards, which state whether the Board intends to promote the candidate, will qualify for the premium in order of submission. See paragraph 3 for more information on the procedure.

1.4 Validity of the program brochure

This program brochure is linked to the Vidi and Vici rounds of the NWO Talent Programme 2020 with award decisions in 2021.
2 Guidelines for candidates

2.1 Who can nominate

It is not possible to apply for Aspasia; Vidi and Vici candidates who may be eligible will be contacted by NWO (see paragraph 3 for more information about the procedure).

2.2 Who can be nominated

To qualify as an Aspasia candidate, a female applicant for a Vidi or Vici grant must either have been awarded such a grant, or have had her application assessed to be very good or excellent following the interview procedure but been unsuccessful in obtaining a grant. The premium is available only for the promotion of candidates who have not (yet) been appointed positions as associate professor/senior lecturer (Vidi applicants) or full professor (Vici applicants) at the date of the Vidi/Vici award decision letter. Candidates who already held positions as associate professor/senior lecturer (Vidi applicants) or full professor (Vici applicants) when submitting their Vidi/Vici application will not be contacted. Candidates who are promoted to associate professor (Vidi-applicants) or professor (Vici-applicants) in the period between submitting the Vidi/Vici application and the date of the award decision letter, are not eligible for the premium (see also paragraph 2.6 for the premium conditions).

Please see paragraph 3, Procedure, for more information.

2.3 What can candidates be nominated for

The premium available for the promotion of each Vidi/Vici grant recipient is € 40,000. The premium offered for the promotion of Vidi/Vici applicants that were assessed to be ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ but did not receive the grant is € 120,000. This means that the latter group does not receive a grant under the NWO Talent Programme, but is awarded a larger premium under Aspasia. The premium is allocated to the Executive Board of the university or institute where the Aspasia candidate is promoted.

The Executive Board can use the premium to cover the extra salary costs resulting from the promotion or can add it to the research budget of the Aspasia laureate to reward her for her success and to supplement the Vidi/Vici grant (if applicable). The addition to her budget will give the candidate the possibility to expand her research (for example, by appointing an extra post-doc or research assistant, by temporarily suspending her teaching activities and/or by undertaking a period of research at a university outside the Netherlands). In this way the Aspasia programme may encourage other female academics to apply for grants.

If the Executive Board decides that part of the Aspasia premium should benefit the Aspasia laureate herself, NWO will award that part of the premium directly to her (for Vidi or Vici grant recipients in addition to the earlier Vidi or Vici grant). The spending conditions of the NWO Talent Program are applicable to the premium.

2.4 When can candidates be nominated

Following the Vidi and Vici award decisions, NWO contacts candidates who may be eligible for an Aspasia premium. If the candidate agrees, NWO will nominate her to her Executive Board for the promotion under the Aspasia scheme. More details and a timetable for this procedure is provided in paragraph 3 of this brochure.
2.5 **Preparing an application**

It is not possible to apply for Aspasia. The Aspasia programme is linked to the Vidi and Vici rounds of the NWO Talent Programme. Candidates who may be eligible for an Aspasia premium will be contacted by NWO. See paragraph 3 of this brochure.

2.6 **Premium conditions**

Aspasia 2020 is linked to the Vidi and Vici 2020 rounds of the NWO Talent Programme and is intended exclusively to encourage the promotion of female Vidi applicants who were not yet associate professor (UHD)/senior lecturer on the date of the Vidi award decision letter and female Vici applicants who were not yet professors on the date of the Vici award decision letter.

**Vici round 2020**

- To qualify for an Aspasia premium, female Vici candidates must be promoted to professor with a permanent position or at least a five year contract within one year of the Vici award decision (i.e. no later than 1 March 2022). This is a strict deadline. Exceptions will only be made for candidates that are eligible for the exceptional provision described below and for Vici candidates that take up maternity leave within the one year time frame (extension will be provided for the number of weeks that the Vici candidate is entitled to maternity leave within the one year time frame). In exceptional cases, such as long-term illness, an extension with a maximum of six months may be provided after consultation with NWO. The appointment after promotion must be for at least the same number of hours as the appointment held by the candidate on the date of the Vici award decision letter. A promotion to a professorial position other than full professor, such as professor by special appointment, is not eligible for the Aspasia premium. The Executive Board must submit to NWO a contract showing that the candidate has been promoted (see also paragraph 3, Procedure).

- For female Vici candidates who did not have a permanent position and/or were not yet appointed at associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer level on the date of the Vici award decision letter, there is an exceptional provision (the two-step procedure): an Aspasia premium may be awarded if the candidate concerned is appointed at associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer level (permanent position or at least a five year contract, minimum 0.4 FTE) within 2.5 years of the Vici award decision (i.e. no later than 1 September 2023) and promoted to professor (permanent position or at least a five year contract, minimum 0.4 FTE) within three years of the Vici award decision (i.e. no later than 1 March 2024). In this case, the Aspasia premium will be awarded in tranches: a third (€ 13,000/€ 40,000, depending on the size of the premium) of the premium is awarded after promotion to associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer level and two thirds (€ 27,000/€ 80,000) of the premium is awarded after promotion to professor. The awarding of the first part of the premium does not depend on whether or not the promotion to professor is ultimately achieved within the set term and conditions.

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1 Tenure track contracts are considered temporary contracts. Vidi and Vici applicants with a tenure track contract at the day of the Vidi or Vici grant decision letter are eligible for the two-step procedure.
For Vici grant recipients and unsuccessful applicants affiliated to KNAW or NWO institutes or other institutes from which scientists could submit a Vici application, there are separate arrangements: if the researcher wishes to remain affiliated to the institute, she can qualify for an Aspasia premium by realising a part-time position as professor at a university. The appointment must be for at least 0.2 FTE and must not be on a temporary basis. A promotion to a professorial position other than full professor, such as professor by special appointment, is not eligible for the Aspasia premium. The premium is awarded to the university concerned. Depending on what is agreed between the university and the institute, the university’s Executive Board can decide to cede all or part of the premium to the institute. The remaining conditions regarding the use of the funds are the same as for all other Aspasia premiums (see paragraph 2.3).

Vidi round 2020

To qualify for an Aspasia premium, a female Vidi candidate must be promoted to associate professor (UHD)/senior lecturer with a permanent position or at least a contract with a duration of five years. The promotion must be realised within one year of the Vidi award decision (so promotion must be realised no later than 1 June 2022). This is a strict deadline. Exceptions will only be made for Vidi candidates that are eligible for the exceptional provision described below and for Vidi candidates that take up maternity leave within the one year time frame (extension will be provided for the number of weeks that the Vidi candidate is entitled to maternity leave within the one year time frame). In exceptional cases, such as long-term illness, an extension with a maximum of six months may be provided after consultation with NWO. The appointment after promotion must be for at least the same number of hours as the appointment held by the Vidi candidate on the date of the Vidi award decision letter. The Executive Board must submit to NWO a contract showing that the candidate has been promoted (see also paragraph 3, Procedure).

For female Vidi candidates who did not have a permanent position and/or were not yet appointed at assistant professor (UD)/university lecturer level on the date of the Vidi award decision letter, there is an exceptional provision (the two-step procedure)^4: an Aspasia premium may be awarded if the Vidi candidate concerned is appointed at assistant professor (UD)/university lecturer level (permanent position or at least a five year contract, minimum 0.4 FTE) within 2.5 years of the Vidi award decision (i.e. no later than 1 December 2023) and promoted to associate professor (UHD/senior lecturer (permanent position or at least a five year contract, minimum 0.4 FTE) within three years of the Vidi award decision (i.e. no later than 1 June 2024). In this case, the Aspasia premium will be awarded in tranches: a third (€ 13.000/€ 40.000, depending on the size of the premium) of the premium is awarded after promotion to assistant professor (UD)/university lecturer level and two thirds (€ 27.000/€ 80.000) of the premium is awarded after promotion to associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer. The awarding of the first part of the premium does not depend on whether or not the promotion to associate professor is ultimately achieved within the set term and conditions.

Female Vidi candidates affiliated to KNAW or NWO institutes or other institutes from which scientists could submit a Vidi application can also qualify for the Aspasia-premium. They need to be promoted to a position equivalent to the position of associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer in terms of salary and level of seniority. This will be assessed after consultation between NWO and the institute. The institute will need to contact NWO to discuss these matters after receiving the nomination (so before the actual promotion takes place) from NWO. Candidates that already fulfil a position equivalent to the position of associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer are not eligible for the premium. With regards to what may be covered by the premium, the regular conditions apply (see paragraph 2.3 of this brochure).
3 Procedure

3.1 Contacting the Vidi and Vici candidates

Following the Vidi and Vici award decisions, NOW will contact the candidates who may be eligible for the Aspasia premium (see also paragraph 2.1 and 2.2). Candidates are requested to submit their contract as valid on the date of the Vidi or Vici award decision letter to verify whether the conditions of the premium are met. If no reaction from the candidate is received within three months after the letter by NWO has been sent, the file will be closed and the offer of the premium will be withdrawn.

3.2 Nominations to the Executive Board

If the Vidi or Vici candidate meets the conditions and wishes to take advantage of the Aspasia scheme to obtain promotion, NWO will contact the relevant Executive Board to nominate her. The Board is asked to respond before the deadline (see timetable below) with a letter to aspasia@nwo.nl and state whether or not it is intending to promote the candidate. If the total of the required budget exceeds the available budget of €2,976,000, the responses by the Executive Boards will qualify for the premium in the order in which they were submitted (if this measure is necessary, the budget will be divided in proportion to the number of Vidi and Vici applicants nominated to the Executive Board). Once the existing budget is exhausted, further responses will not be considered. In the case of responses that meet the requirements and fall within the available budget, the premium will be conditionally awarded and the relevant Board will be notified of this. The premium of €40,000 or €120,000 will be awarded once the promotion has been realized under the conditions stated in paragraph 2.6. If the Board’s response does not qualify for the premium due to the exhaustion of the budget, the Board will be notified of this by NWO. If no reaction from the Executive Board to the letter of nomination by NWO is received within three months, the file will be closed and the offer of the premium will be withdrawn.

3.3 Awarding premiums

NWO awards the premium once it has received a contract showing that the Aspasia candidate has been promoted and a cover letter from the Executive Board (or, in the case that the premium will be directly awarded to the Aspasia grant recipient, from the Aspasia grant recipient) explaining how it intends to use the budget. The expenditure plan includes at least a budget plus brief written explanation.

The documents from the Executive Board that provide evidence that the promotion has been realised must be sent in to NWO within six months after the promotion deadline. If these documents have not been sent in within this time frame, the conditions for the premium have not been met and the conditionally awarded premium will be withdrawn.

Timetable Vici-applicants round 2020:

The timetable for the round with Vici award decisions in 2021 is as follows:

- End of 1 February 2021 - Announcement of the results of Vici round 2020;
- Mid-March 2021 - NWO sends letters to female Vici candidates who may be eligible for the Aspasia premium

2 This response is not binding and does not obligate the university to promote the candidate.

3 The required budget is the budget that is needed to award the premium to all eligible candidates who meet the conditions.
− End of May 2021 - Response deadline for Vici candidates contacted by NWO.
− Beginning of June 2021 - NWO asks Executive Boards to promote the female Vici candidates who wish to be nominated.
− Beginning of September 2021 - Response deadline for Executive Boards.

**In the case the Board accepts the nomination for promotion**
− 1 March 2022 (at latest) – Promotion of Aspasia candidates to full professor
  • 1 September 2022 (at latest) - Executive Boards report promotion of Aspasia candidates to NWO with expenditure plan
− 1 September 2023 (at latest) – Promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to associate professor(UHD)/senior lecturer
  • 1 March 2024 (at latest) - Executive Boards report promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to associate professor (UHD)/senior lecturer to NWO with expenditure plan
− 1 March 2023 (at latest) – Promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to full professor
  • 1 September 2024 (at latest) - Executive Boards report promotion of Vici candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to full professor to NWO with expenditure plan

**Timetable Vidi-applicants round 2020:**
The timetable for the round with Vidi award decisions in 2021 is as follows:
− End of May 2021 - Announcement of the results of Vidi round 2020
− Mid-June 20210 - NWO sends letters to Vidi candidates who may be eligible for the Aspasia premium
− End of September 2021 - Response deadline for Vidi candidates contacted by NWO
− Beginning of October 2021 - NWO asks Executive Boards to promote female Vidi candidates who wish to be nominated.
− End of December 2021 - Response deadline for Executive.

**In the case the Board accepts the nomination for promotion**
− 1 June 2022 (at latest) – Promotion of Aspasia candidates to associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer
  • 1 December 2022 (at latest) - Executive Boards report promotion of Aspasia candidates to NWO with expenditure plan
− 1 December 2023 (at latest) – Promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to assistant professor (UD)/university lecturer
  • 1 June 2024 (at latest) - Executive Boards report promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to assistant professor (UD)/university lecturer to NWO with expenditure plan
− 1 June 2024 (at latest) – Promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer
  • 1 December 2024 - Executive Boards report promotion of Aspasia candidates eligible for the two-step procedure to associate professor (UHD)/senior university lecturer to NWO with expenditure plan

**Reporting arrangements**

**In the case of a premium awarded to a Vidi or Vici grant recipient**
If the Executive Board decides that part of the Aspasia premium should benefit the grant recipient herself (see 2.3), the Aspasia grant recipient should then account at the end of the Vidi or Vici project for the use of the money via the usual financial reporting arrangements for the NWO Talent Programme.
In the case of a premium awarded to an unsuccessful Vidi or Vici applicant, if the Executive Board decides that part of the Aspasia premium should benefit the candidate herself (see 2.3), after the five years spending period the Aspasia grant recipient must submit final accounts, showing that the resources have been used in accordance with the budget.

### 3.4 Criteria

There are no assessment criteria for Aspasia. Please see section 2.6 for more information on the premium conditions and paragraph 3.1 to 3.3 for more information on the procedure.
4 Contact details and other information

4.1 Contact

For specific questions about Aspasia and/or this Program brochure please contact:

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Disclaimer

The Dutch text of this call for proposals is the authentic text and it prevails over any translations of them.