Frequently asked questions about the SSH Open Competition XS programme

1. **What are the SSH research areas?**
   The Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) research disciplines are available on the NWO website: [https://www.nwo.nl/en/social-sciences-and-humanities-ssh](https://www.nwo.nl/en/social-sciences-and-humanities-ssh). The Domain Board has established 6 SSH roundtables to structure the discussions with the field: Behaviour and Education, Social Sciences, Law and Public Administration, Economics and Business Administration, Cultural Sciences and Linguistics, and Philosophy, Historical Sciences and Religious Studies.

2. **What is the main discipline of my research proposal?**
   Your application can only have one main discipline, and you must indicate this main discipline on the information form. If you are in doubt about the discipline of your research proposal because your application has a (partially) interdisciplinary character, please contact the programme’s contact person via sgw-ocxs@nwo.nl well before the submission deadline of the round. The contact person can advise you under which (main) discipline your application can best be submitted. You are responsible for the final choice of the (main) discipline and thus the panel in which the application is assessed.

3. **Why is there an SSH Open Competition XS programme?**
   In 2022, the Open Competition of the Social Sciences and Humanities Domain was given a makeover. The instrument now serves a broader group of researchers in different phases of their academic career.

   In the new set-up, the Open Competition SSH has three variants: XS, M and L. For the XS variant, a fast assessment procedure has been designed. A unique aspect of this variant is that the applicants are also the assessors. They are divided into panels and per panel into two groups and assess each other’s proposals via anonymous peer reviews.

   To assess whether this set-up matches the needs and wishes of the SSH research field, SSH XS ran as a pilot for a period of one year with four rounds. After evaluation, it was decided that the SSH-XS programme will be continued because of the positive feedback it received from researchers, grant advisors and the SSH roundtables. Moreover, feedback indicates that the programme is viewed as a valuable resource that is enriching science and the field of SSH.

4. **What is the aim of the SSH Open Competition XS programme?**
   The SSH-XS grants enable researchers to conduct fundamental research through promising ideas in small, innovative projects up to € 50,000 within the SSH disciplines.
The SSG-XS Call for proposals is specifically intended to encourage curiosity-driven and innovative research that involves the relatively rapid exploration of a promising idea. The characteristics of SSH-XS research are:

- the proposed research is groundbreaking;
- it is not certain in advance whether the intended objectives will be achieved;
- the result of each project contributes to the advancement of science;
- and the proposed research may aim for societal impact; however, the latter is not a requirement.

5. **How many years after the PhD graduation is someone allowed to submit?**
   This programme is open for researchers who obtained their PhD at least 5 and at most 10 years ago.

   If you received your PhD more than 10 years ago, you may want to look into the extension scheme. The extension scheme offers an extension from the applicant’s PhD graduation date on the basis of the caring role as a parent, care responsibilities, long-term illness and/or completed training as a clinical specialist. The maximum extension to the submission period allocated by NWO is 5 years.

6. **Which reference date applies for calculating the period after the PhD graduation?**
   The submission deadline for the round is the reference date for the period of 5 to 10 years after the researcher’s PhD graduation date. The graduation date on the PhD diploma (degree) is leading.

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<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Submission deadline</th>
<th>PhD graduation date must be between</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19 March 2024, before 14:00:00 CET</td>
<td>20 March 2014 and 19 March 2019</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>27 August 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST</td>
<td>28 August 2014 and 27 August 2019</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>15 October 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST</td>
<td>16 October 2014 and 15 October 2019</td>
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7. **What is the maximum duration of an XS project?**
   An XS project has a minimum duration of 6 months and a maximum duration of 12 months. The start date of the project is no later than 6 months after the date of formal approval and the end date is no later than 12 months after the starting date.

8. **Does the extension clause apply?**
   Yes. The extension clause does apply to the SSH Open Competition XS.

   This programme is open for researchers who obtained their PhD at least 5 and at most 10 years ago. If you received your PhD more than 10 years ago, you may want to look into the extension scheme. The extension scheme offers an extension from the applicant’s PhD graduation date on the basis of the caring role as a parent, care responsibilities, long-term illness and/or completed training as a clinical specialist. The maximum extension to the submission period allocated by NWO is 5 years.

   NWO must receive the extension request at least 5 working days before the deadline of the round for which the researcher is requesting an extension. Applications that are submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration.

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<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Submission deadline extension request</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12 March 2024, before 14:00:00 CET</td>
<td>19 March 2024, before 14:00:00 CET</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>20 August 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST</td>
<td>27 August 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8 October 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST</td>
<td>15 October 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST</td>
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   The online form for the request of an extension can be found here: [https://www.nwo.nl/en/extension-clause-open-competition-ssh](https://www.nwo.nl/en/extension-clause-open-competition-ssh).

9. **How often may a researcher submit an application?**
   A researcher may submit a maximum of one application in the SSH-XS, round year 2024.
10. Which requirements must the applicant’s appointment satisfy?
Researchers who obtained their PhD between 5 and 10 years ago may submit an application if they have a paid appointment for at least the duration of the application process and the duration of the proposed project at one of the following organisations:
- universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- university medical centres;
- institutes affiliated to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) or NWO;
- Netherlands Cancer Institute;
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen;
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center;
- Advanced Research Centre for NanoLithography (ARCNL);
- Princess Máxima Center.

Persons with a zero-hour employment agreement may not submit a proposal.

11. Can researchers who hold two PhDs submit an application?
Yes. For researchers who have completed a PhD trajectory twice, the date of the doctorate of the SSH discipline identified centrally in the application is leading. This may be the researcher’s first or second PhD.

12. Can a research proposal involving co-applicants be submitted?
No. An SSH Open Competition XS application has one applicant and no co-applicants.

13. How do you write an anonymous research proposal?
In an anonymous research proposal:
- applicants should include neither their own name nor those of any individuals in their research group;
- applicants should not include details of any affiliations with institutes or knowledge institutions;
- applicants should not include references to any publications that they have authored or co-authored;
- applicants should not include the names of any partners (or potential partners).

14. What is an appropriate research proposal for the XS programme?
The SSG-XS grant is specifically intended to encourage curiosity-driven and innovative research that involves the relatively rapid exploration of a promising idea. The characteristics of SSH-XS research are:
- the proposed research is groundbreaking;
- it is not certain in advance whether the intended objectives will be achieved;
- the result of each project contributes to the advancement of science;
- and the proposed research may aim for societal impact; however, the latter is not a requirement.

Proposed projects may (but are not required to):
- form the basis for a new line of research;
- be method development research;
- form the basis for a collaboration or network.

15. What are the assessment criteria for an application in this programme?
The application has two assessment aspects:

Innovative aspect
Is the proposed research innovative and groundbreaking? Could the research proposal potentially have a scientific impact? Will the proposed research take the applicant down a new path?

Feasibility of the research plan
The objective and work plan must be clearly described. Does the methodology seem suitable to achieve the stated project goal? Is the planning of the research plan appropriate and are the activities included in the planning sufficiently clear?
16. Can different grants within NWO programmes be applied for simultaneously?
That depends on which instruments are involved. An applicant may not simultaneously participate in the
application process for different grants within SSH Open Competition programmes in the same calendar
year (2024). This applies when an applicant uses the extension scheme. Applicants may also not have an XS
project for which the end date has not yet passed at the time of submission.

If you have a specific question, please contact the contact person of the programme directly via sgw-
ocxs@nwo.nl. For the other instruments(s) you should also enquire about the guidelines.

Please note that NWO does not, under any circumstances, engage in double funding. The research
proposals must therefore not overlap and should stand alone. In addition, you should take into account the
schedules of the various programmes to which you commit yourself when you submit.

17. What is the available budget per proposal?
For an XS application, a maximum of €50,000 can be applied for.

Only funding that is vital to realise the project should be applied for. A detailed explanation of the budget
modules can be found in the annexe of the Call for proposals (Section 7.1).

18. Can the maximum grant budget be exceeded?
Yes. It is possible to exceed the maximum grant amount. However, the maximum contribution of € 50,000
from NWO is fixed. In the case of a higher project budget, co-funding is required from the own institution
and/or a third party. Co-funding is optional for the SSH Open Competition XS programme. If the institution
or a third party makes an in-kind or cash contribution to the project, then the applicant should always
include a co-funding statement from this party when the application is submitted.

19. Which salary tables apply?
For a postdoc appointment, non-scientific staff (NSS) at universities and research leave for the applicant,
the current UNL and NFU salary tables apply. For more information about these salary tables, see:

20. Can an application be dealt with differently due to personal circumstances?
Please contact the contact person of the programme directly via sgw-oocs@nwo.nl.

21. Must an application always be submitted via the ISAAC system?
Yes, applications must be submitted via ISAAC. Applications received outside of ISAAC cannot be
processed. ISAAC can be reached via www.isaac.nwo.nl/en.

22. Is technical support available for the ISAAC system?
For technical questions about the use of ISAAC, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk. Please read the manual
first before consulting the helpdesk. The ISAAC helpdesk can be contacted from Monday to Friday between
10:00 and 17:00 hours on +31 (0)70 34 40 600. However, you can also submit your question by email to
isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will then receive an answer within two working days.