

# Rubicon: Frequently Asked Questions

(valid as from August 2023)



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#### **COVID-19 (in case of an outbreak during round 2023-1)**

The Rubicon grant is a mobility grant, enabling researchers to carry out research abroad for a maximum of two years. COVID-19 does not change this, but might have consequences for the preparation of your proposal.

28. My intended host institute is located in a country for which COVID-19 related travel restrictions (still) apply, or the country is considered to be a health risk. Can I apply for a stay at that institute?
29. My intended host institute indicates that, due to COVID-19 measures, they are unable to complete the acceptance form. What can I do?
30. My proposal has been awarded a grant, but due to COVID-19 measures I cannot start before the ultimate starting date. What do I have to do?
31. My proposal has been awarded a grant, but travel restrictions apply, or the health situation has changed, and I cannot travel to my intended host institute. Can I change the host institute?
32. I am eligible for an extension if I have been quarantained due to COVID-19 measures?

#### **Extension clause**

**1. Am I eligible for a Rubicon grant if I only hold a Master's degree?**

No, to be eligible for a Rubicon grant you must have received a PhD in the previous twelve months.

**2. Can I apply for a Rubicon grant if I have not yet received my PhD?**

If you have not yet received your PhD at the deadline of the Rubicon round but your dissertation has been approved by your supervisor then you may apply for a Rubicon grant. However, you must include a 'Manuscript Approval Form' with your application. You can download the form at least 2 months before the deadline from the Rubicon website. The date on which the doctoral thesis shall be defended has to be formally set before you can start your Rubicon research.

**3. I received my PhD more than twelve months ago. Can I still apply for a Rubicon grant?**

The time limit for applying for a Rubicon grant is twelve months following the formal award of the PhD. If you received your PhD more than 12 months ago then you can apply for an extension to the time limit on the grounds of maternity leave, care responsibilities, extended sick leave or training in a clinical specialism. You will find more information on the Extension clause at the end of this document.

**4. What is understood under Kingdom of the Netherlands?**

The Kingdom of the Netherlands comprises of the countries Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands and Sint Maarten, and the special municipalities of Bonaire, Saba and Statia (Sint Eustatius) and consists of a Caribbean part and a European part. The Caribbean part consists of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, Sint Eustatius (Statia) and Sint Maarten; the European part of the Netherlands. All countries outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands are considered as foreign/abroad.

**5. I am a Dutch citizen but obtained my PhD/Master's degree outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Can I still apply for a Rubicon grant?**

You may only submit an application if you have conducted scientific research in the Kingdom of the Netherlands for a provable period at least equivalent to three years fulltime in the five years directly preceding the submission deadline. This may concern paid or unpaid time (e.g. (PhD research without an actual employment) research time. Nationality does not play any role in the terms and conditions for Rubicon.

**6. I obtained my PhD/Master's degree outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Can I still apply for Rubicon research at a research institute outside the Netherlands?**

You may only submit an application if you have conducted scientific research (including research Master or PhD research without an actual employment) at an academic research institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands for a period at least equivalent to three years fulltime in the five years directly preceding the submission deadline. Nationality does not play any role in the terms and conditions for Rubicon.

**7. I want to conduct my research at the same country where I received my Master's degree. Is that possible?**

No, the aim of Rubicon is to promote mobility of researchers of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In case you have obtained more than one Master's degree, you cannot apply for a stay in the country (countries) where you obtained your degree/degrees. Rubicon also offers researchers from the Kingdom of the Netherlands the option of using the grant to conduct research in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, primarily designated for applications that focus on topics bound to the location, e.g. languages and cultures of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and local Law. However, preference will be given to researchers who apply for a grant to spend time outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

**8. I want to continue my research at the same institute where I received my PhD. Is that possible?**

No, the aim of Rubicon is to promote mobility among researchers of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. You can apply for a Rubicon grant at a host institute outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Rubicon also offers researchers from the Kingdom of the Netherlands the option of using the grant to conduct research in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, primarily designated for applications that focus on topics bound to the location, e.g. languages and cultures of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and local Law. However, preference will be given to researchers who apply for a grant to spend time outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

**9. I want to continue my research at the host institute where I'm working now as a postdoctoral researcher. Is that possible?**

This is possible only if you have been working at the Rubicon host institute as a postdoctoral researcher for less than six months on the day of the submission deadline.

**10. I would like to do part of my research at an institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and part of it abroad. Is that possible?**

No, combining host institutes is not permitted. Depending on the research subject, it is however possible to do some fieldwork outside the host institute.

**11. Do the forms need to be signed?**

Your ISAAC/MijnZonMw account is a personal account which you alone only can access. Therefore the application form does not need your signature. The other signatures on the annexes are however necessary. Especially the signatures of the institute that is prepared to host you (either as an employee or as a seconded visiting researcher) are of importance in order to avoid any problems with your possible employment or stay. You remain under all circumstances responsible to acquire all legal documents needed for your employment or stay. Your host institute can inform you which documents you will need.

**12. Can I apply for a Rubicon grant more than once?**

No, you can only apply for a Rubicon grant once in your life, irrespective of the research institute concerned.

**13. I am not sure which domain window fits my proposal best. What can I do?**

There are four domain windows to which you can submit your proposal (see chapter 3.3.1 of the Call for proposals). In case you are not sure to which domain window you should submit your proposal, please contact the Program coordinator (see chapter 6 of the Call for proposals) well before the deadline. It is no longer possible to switch windows after the deadline has passed.

**14. What must I do if I think that my research proposal raises ethical questions?**

Any research proposals that raise ethical questions must be carefully considered before the scientific research is carried out. Certain research require a statement of approval from a recognised medical ethics review committee or an animal experiments committee. For some research proposals a licence in accordance with the Population Screening Act (WBO) is required. More information on METCs is available at the Central Committee On Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO), on DEC's the Dutch Association for Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees provides information and for the WBO The Health Council of the Netherlands can provide information.

A Rubicon applicant is responsible for determining if the research proposal might raise ethical questions and for obtaining a statement of approval from the correct ethics review committee and/or obtaining a licence in accordance with the Population Screening Act, if necessary.

NWO/ZonMw subscribes to the *Openheid Dierproeven* (Freedom of Information on Animal Experiments) and the Biosecurity Code. Rubicon applicants must subscribe to and comply with the prevailing codes.

If after consulting the applicant, NWO/ZonMw is of the opinion that an ethical assessment is needed for an application then the applicant is obliged to take the necessary measures for such as assessment, even after the start of the research.

Applicants may contact the Rubicon programme coordinator with any questions or doubts they have ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

**15. Under what circumstances can I request an extension to the eligibility time limit for my Rubicon application on the grounds of care responsibilities or training in a clinical specialism?**

You can request an extension of the time limit for your application on the basis of sick/maternity/parental leave, or

training in a clinical specialism since the award of your PhD. You will only need to do this if the formal award of your PhD took place more than twelve months before the final date for the submission of Rubicon applications. You will find more information on the extension clause at the end of this document.

**16. Can I supplement Rubicon with financial resources from another party?**

The Rubicon grant is a basic grant which provides a contribution to the salary costs and the necessary costs to conduct the research funded. It is possible to supplement the Rubicon grant with other financial resources, as long as these cover costs that are not already provided for by Rubicon. If you intend to use additional financing, you must contact the Rubicon programme co-ordinator ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

**17. Can I combine the Rubicon grant with a second grant?**

No, when you acquire a second grant next to the Rubicon grant you have to choose which one you want to receive. A combination of two grants will not be accepted.

**18. Can I submit my application by e-mail?**

No, applications must be submitted via the online application system ISAAC (NWO) or MijnZonMw (ZonMw). Applications submitted by e-mail will not be accepted by NWO/ZonMw.

**19. Who can I ask to write my recommendations for me?**

You may yourself choose who you ask to write the two recommendation (so also researchers other than your PhD-supervisor, co-supervisor or a close colleague). Point of attention in making your choice can be that 'over-the-top' positive letters or short non-informative letters may work to your disadvantage. Please use the recommendation forms you will find on our website.

**20. The persons that are willing to write my recommendations do not want me to be able to read them. Can the forms be submitted in a different way than through my ISAAC/ProjectNet-account?**

If the persons writing your recommendations object to the fact that you read them, they can also send their forms by e-mail to [rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl). However, NWO/ZonMw prefers the forms to be integrated in your application and submitted through your ISAAC/MijnZonMw-account.

**21. The institute where I currently work is not registered in ISAAC/MijnZonMw. How can I submit my application?**

In ISAAC/MijnZonMw, you can only register via a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. If your current institute is not registered, you can get into the system and submit your proposal by naming the institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands where you gained your PhD. In your actual application, however, you must provide the correct details.

**22. How should I write a public summary of my research proposal?**

You are asked to draft a public summary of your research proposal (**in both Dutch and English**). Directions for this are given below.

- **Why is a public summary needed?**

If your application is successful and you are eventually awarded a grant, the public summary will be used in NOW/ZonMw publicity surrounding the announcement of the grant award decisions.

- **What should the public summary contain?**

<popular title (a 'hook' to catch people's attention, around five words)>

<academic title> <initials> <surname> , <institute where you received your PhD> <country, university, department where you intend to conduct your Rubicon research> <number of months>

Summarise your proposed research in 50 words. Use everyday language and be specific. Do not say 'the mechanism underlying apoptosis will be examined' but 'the researcher will use microscopes to look for the reasons for spontaneous cell death.' Do not talk about 'I' and 'me' but about the researcher, the biologist, the literary specialist, et cetera. Write the piece in such a way that you are inclined to insert terms such as 'generally speaking', 'in short', 'roughly', 'not scientifically formulated' but do NOT use these terms!

- **Two examples**

**Tinkering with the heart pump**

**Dr J. van der Velden**, VU University Medical Center - Physiology

The heart pumps thanks to an ingenious system of proteins. The researcher will analyse this system by altering the proteins one by one. The researcher will also study these proteins in patients with heart failure.

**Self-correction in speaking**

**Dr N.O. Schiller**, Heidelberg (Germany), Maastricht University - Neurocognition

Speech is a largely an automatic human activity. We usually speak without problems but sometimes we make a mistake. When that happens, we stop and correct ourselves. This research project aims to find out which neurocognitive process enables us to do this.

- **More examples?**

Further examples of public summaries can be found on the [Rubicon](#) program website.

**23. Which terms of employment can I expect?**

If you have been awarded a Rubicon grant for a period at a host institute outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands then you can opt to be employed at the host institute. Your situation is comparable to other postdocs at the host institute. NWO/ZonMw's preference is that during your period abroad, you remain in the employment of/enter into employment at a knowledge institute in the Kingdom of the Netherlands that will manage the project and second the researcher to the foreign guest institute. In both cases you will need to recalculate the basic amount, using the country correction coefficient applicable for your destination.

If you receive a Rubicon grant for a stay at a Dutch host institute, the host institute will employ you under the usual conditions for postdoc researchers at that institute; in case you are appointed by the host institute, the local applicable conditions for postdoc researchers apply.

**24. How does NWO/ZonMw determine the size of a grant?**

The awards are based on the calculations using the correction coefficient applied by the Marie Curie fellowships (see chapter 7.1 of the Call for proposals for the country correction coefficients table). These coefficients are based on the average cost of living in the country of destination. The amount for a stay in the Kingdom of the Netherlands is determined at 70,000 euros for 12 months.

**25. Will my Rubicon grant be taxable income?**

Your Rubicon grant is intended to fund a period abroad, in order to give you the opportunity to gain research experience outside the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The researchers enter employment at the foreign host institute on the basis of employment conditions comparable to other postdocs who are employed there. If, for the purpose of tax levies, the researcher remains a resident of the European part of the Kingdom, the income from the foreign research institute shall have to be included in the global income and in all likelihood avoidance of double taxation can be claimed. NWO/ZonMw advises applicants to contact the Inland Revenue Service (European part and/or Caribbean part) and/or the inland revenue of the host country with any questions they may have. In case the researcher will no longer be a resident of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, taxes will be levied in the host country; in that case the inland revenue service of the host country should be contacted for more information.

**26. Do I have to account for my expenditures after the project?**

A statement from the host institute that the laureate was appointed to conduct the Rubicon research for the period stated and a short scientific report is sufficient. The statement must also be signed by the laureate. For research conducted in the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the grant is covered by the regular audit specified in the university education audit guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

With regard to your tax return, it would be wise to keep a careful record of your expenses in case the tax authorities decide to inspect your tax return. If you receive a tax demand requiring you to pay tax over your Rubicon grant, we advise you to contact the Rubicon program coordinator ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

**27. Rubicon guarantees 16 weeks (for biological mothers) or 5 weeks (for fathers and non-biological mothers) paid maternity leave, how can I appeal?**

You can submit a request in writing to NWO/ZonMw ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)).

To be able to assess your request NWO/ZonMw needs the following information:

The dates of your maternity leave and the type of employment you have with the host institute (if part-time what %).

Also the host institute has to confirm in a signed letter that they have no arrangement or a derogation and the institute has to confirm that you can continue your research when you return after the leave.

If there is a derogation, the scheme should be included in the confirmation.

**28. My intended host institute is located in a country for which COVID-19 related travel restrictions (still) apply, or the country is considered to be a health risk. Can I apply for a stay at that institute?**

Yes, that is certainly possible, it is your decision. It is however impossible to predict when travel restrictions will be lifted and we advise you to inform yourself thoroughly on the latest developments in the country of your intended destination. You may want to consider to opt for secondment to the host institute (see chapter 3.2.1 of the Call for Proposals). In case you receive a grant, you would have the opportunity to potentially start your research in the Netherlands. In case secondment is no option, we advise you to consider finding another suitable host institute in a country for which no travel restrictions are in place and for which there is no health risk.

**29. My intended host institute indicates that, due to COVID-19 measures, they are unable to complete the acceptance form. What can I do?**

We advise applicants to collect the necessary documents well before the deadline on March 28th, 2023. In case you cannot submit these documents on this deadline, please contact the Rubicon program coordinator as soon as possible and prior to the date of the deadline. See chapter 6 of the Call for Proposals for the contact details.

**30. My proposal has been awarded a grant, but due to COVID-19 measures I cannot start before the ultimate starting date. What do I have to do?**

In that case, contact the secretary in charge of your project. She/he will discuss potential possibilities for a delay with you.

**31. My proposal has been awarded a grant, but travel restrictions apply, or the health situation has changed, and I cannot travel to my intended host institute. Can I change the host institute?**

After submitting your proposal the host institute cannot be changed, nor can it be changed after your proposal has been awarded a grant. The reason being that the host institute is part of the assessment of your proposal. In case this situation arises after your proposal has been awarded a grant, please contact the secretary in charge of your project to discuss possible solutions.

**32. I am eligible for an extension if I have been quarantined due to COVID-19 measures?**

No, quarantine is no ground for extension. Eligible grounds for extension are described at the end of this document

### Rubicon Extension Clause

A claim to the extension clause will be considered in case the applicant has been on maternity leave, parental care leave, care leave, extended sick leave or has been attending a course leading to qualification as a Clinical Specialist. Please contact the program coordinator only if the period that has elapsed since the award of your doctorate exceeds one year. In all cases, the maximum extension is one year. Extension under The Rubicon Extension Clause can only be applied for to extend the period in which you can submit a proposal and does not apply to the other conditions mentioned in chapter 3 of the call for proposals.

**Before** submitting your application, you must contact the Rubicon programme co-ordinator to request an extension ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)). If you have been granted an extension, you must indicate this on your application form.

In case you will be employed by the host institute for more than six months at the time of submitting your application, you can also request an extension on the basis of the conditions mentioned above. The extension will be calculated in the same way as other requests (see below).

The formulae for calculation will be strictly applied in all cases and the outcome is not open for discussion.

### Maternity leave and care responsibilities children

Parents can apply for an extension on the grounds of maternity leave and childcare by sending in a parent-declaration form, in which the declares that the child or children are part of his or her household. The form can be obtained through the program coordinator ([rubicon@nwo.nl](mailto:rubicon@nwo.nl)). Please include the documents needed (see below).

- *Maternity leave*
  - Biological mothers who have given birth to one or more children are granted a standard extension of sixteen weeks per child, i.e. the same as the legal period for maternity leave in the Netherlands.
  - Other parents (fathers and non-biological mothers) are granted a standard extension of five weeks per child that is part of the applicant's household
- *Parental care leave*

In addition to maternity leave, applicants (biological mothers and other parents), can apply for an extension on the grounds of granted parental care leave. Such an extension will be granted only if you can provide evidence that proves that you have taken care leave in the year after obtaining your PhD. The formal reduction in working hours should always be supported by documents from the Personnel Department of your employer. The care must have been provided to a child, not older than 12 years, belonging to the same household. The extension is calculated on the formulae in the table below and applies only to the period after you have obtained your PhD. Where childcare has been provided to more than one child simultaneously, only that pertaining to the youngest child will qualify for this concession.

#### Calculation

##### Children 0 - 4 years of age

| Fulltime care                          | Parttime care                            |
|--|--|
| (..) year x 1.0 fte x 1 year extension | (..) year x 1.(x) fte x 1 year extension |

##### Children 5 - 12 years of age

| Fulltime care                            | Parttime care                              |
|--|--|
| (..) year x 1.0 fte x 0.5 year extension | (..) year x 1.(x) fte x 0.5 year extension |

Example: 2 years' part-time (0.5 fte) care, starting on date of doctoral award, in respect of one or more children aged one to three years: 2 years x 0.5 fte care x 1 fte extension = 1 year extension of maximum period between doctoral award and submission of Rubicon application.



### Care leave

An extension on the grounds of care responsibilities (other than for your own children) will be granted only if you can provide documentation that proves that you have taken care leave. In case of care leave taken in order to care for blood relatives or relatives by marriage in the first degree, compensation will be given for any formal reduction in working hours. The formal reduction in working hours should always be supported by documents from the Personnel Department of your employer.

### Sick leave

In the case of extended sick leave the formal reduction in working hours will be compensated (see for the calculation the table below). The formal reduction in working hours should always be supported by official documentation from the Personnel Department of your employer.

#### Calculation

Children 0 - 4 years of age

| Fulltime sick leave                      | Parttime sick leave                        |
|--|--|
| (..) months x 1.0 fte x 1 year extension | (..) months x 1.(x) fte x 1 year extension |

### Training leading to qualification as Clinical Specialist

You can also apply for an extension of the time limit if you have undertaken training in a clinical specialism during the relevant period. For the complete list of [clinical specialisms](#) eligible for the extension scheme we kindly refer you to our website. The following rules apply to the determination of the extension: The total (aggregated) time spent in training since the award of a doctorate may be added to the one-year period normally allowed, subject to a maximum of one year. The period during which an application may be submitted is therefore no more than two years. An application for an extension of the submission period on the basis of training in a clinical specialism should always be supported by documents from the Personnel department of the employer that issued the formal reduction in working hours (start date, end date and FTE during this period), along with a final examination of the training or proof of your BIG or KNMG registration.

#### Calculation

|  | Parttime training/research                 |
|--|--|
| (..) months x 1.0 fte x 1 year extension | (..) months x 1.(x) fte x 1 year extension |