

# VU SUPPORTPROGRAMME 2018 and 2019

## NWO INNOVATIONAL RESEARCH INCENTIVES SCHEME – VERNIEUWINGSIMPULS

16 Maart 2018

### 1. Introduction

The Innovational Research Incentives Scheme (IRIS), or Vernieuwingsimpuls (VI) in Dutch, is run by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and provides three types of grants: Veni, Vidi and Vici. The aim of IRIS is to encourage innovation in academic research. The programme attracts outstanding researchers of all ages who have exceptional and original talent and a great fascination for conducting challenging and ground-breaking research. IRIS is open to researchers in three different phases of their academic career:

- 1) The Veni grant is open to researchers who have recently completed their doctorate.
- 2) The Vidi grant is open to researchers who have conducted research for a number of years after obtaining their doctorate.
- 3) The Vici grant is open to senior researchers who have been successful in developing their own innovative line of research.

IRIS grant	Subsidy	NWO deadline*	Eligibility criteria**
Veni	€250,000	Beginning of January	Max. 3 years after obtaining doctorate
Vidi	€800,000	Beginning of October	Max. 8 years after obtaining doctorate, open to professors
Vici	€1,500,000	End of March for initial application End of August for detailed application	Max. 15 years after obtaining doctorate, open to professors

\* The exact dates will be announced on the NWO website: [www.nwo.nl/vi](http://www.nwo.nl/vi) (for the English version click [here](#))

\*\* There are possibilities of an extension:

1. In the case of long-term leave due to illness, parenthood, pregnancy or leave taken to care for blood relatives.
  2. If training in a clinical specialism has been undertaken in the relevant period.
- Further information concerning such extensions is provided in the explanatory notes accompanying the NWO application form.

For the Veni and Vidi rounds, researchers may only submit a proposal on two occasions. For the Vici grant, researchers may only submit a proposal on three occasions.

IRIS offers researchers at VU University Amsterdam attractive career prospects and promotes innovative and high-quality academic research at the university. Obtaining an IRIS grant is not only a great achievement for the candidate researcher but is also a performance indicator of the quality of research at VU University Amsterdam. In light of this the Grants Desk offers a supportprogramme to improve the quality of applications and increasing the number of successful applications.

### 2. VU Supportprogramme

The VU supportprogramme is based on the NWO assessment procedure as described in the respective IRIS calls for proposals published on the NWO website.<sup>1</sup> The NWO committees assess the applications on the basis of the quality of the researcher (40%), the quality of the research proposal (40%) and the quality of the knowledge utilization paragraph (20%). The committees take the external assessment reports, the applicant's reply and the selection interview into account when arriving at its decision.

The VU supportprogramme consists of eight parts: 1) an information meeting, 2) a feasibility check and Go/No go advice, 3) a workshop on how to write a research application, 4) a meeting on knowledge utilisation, 5) advisory sessions, 6) help in writing a rebuttal, 7) a presentation workshop and 8) a mock interview. The VU supportprogramme is available free of charge to researchers currently working at VU University Amsterdam and to researchers who currently work elsewhere but wish to conduct research at VU University Amsterdam with an IRIS grant.

### 1) Workshop on how to write a research application

The first round of NWO selection is the most demanding, with an assessment committee comparing and prioritizing the applications. It is vital to make a strong impression at this stage by presenting a good research idea in a convincing, clear, appealing and well-structured proposal. It is important to focus on the objectives, importance and the originality of the research. The workshop on how to write a research application enables the candidates to learn how to write an attractive and convincing proposal with a good chance of success.

This workshop is open to candidates who intend to submit a Veni or Vidi application. For Veni candidates, the workshop consists of two morning sessions whereas the Vidi workshop is concentrated on one day. All workshops include a combination of theory and practical exercises. So far, no specific workshop for Vici candidates has been organised since these candidates have considerable experience in writing research applications. Candidates can register for the workshop on the website.

### 2) Advisory sessions

NWO assessment committees are often composed of a wide range of experts. Applications are assessed by committees from NWO domains which cover a range of scientific disciplines. There is a good chance that only one or two members selected for the committee will be from the same or a related discipline as the applicant and will understand the subject matter of the application in detail. Thus, it is important that the proposal is written in such a way that it is accessible and interesting to all committee members. The advisory sessions represent an internal test in this respect. The aim is to improve the applications well before their submission to the NWO in order to increase their chance of success.

The VU advisory committee will consist of a group of outstanding researchers who have experience in attracting external subsidies and/or who have served on an NWO committee. There are 3 advisory boards: 1) **Social Sciences** with representatives from the arts and the social sciences for applications from the humanities and social and behavioural sciences; 2) **Sciences** with representatives from the sciences for applications from the earth sciences, chemical sciences, natural sciences, physical sciences, physics and the applied sciences; and 3) **Life Sciences** with representatives of the life sciences

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.nwo.nl/vi](http://www.nwo.nl/vi) (for the English version click [here](#)).

for applications from the life sciences, agricultural and food sciences, biochemistry and the medical sciences.

The purpose of the VU advisory committee is to let the candidates experience the method by which an NWO assessment committee will look at their application. This is only possible if the VU committee receives a complete and “almost” final version of the application. The members of the advisory committee have first-hand experience of NWO selection procedures and the committee as a whole reflects the NWO committee which the candidate will face. However, unlike the NWO committee, which reads and discusses the application behind closed doors, the VU advisory committee does so in the presence of the candidate. The advisory committee will during approximately 30 minutes discuss the application and give advice on possible ways to improve and strengthen its quality.

The dates and times of the advisory sessions will be published on the VU research website. Registration is compulsory and will be done by sending an e-mail to [supportprogrammes@vu.nl](mailto:supportprogrammes@vu.nl) or [supportprogrammes@vumc.nl](mailto:supportprogrammes@vumc.nl). Candidates are required to submit their application before the VU deadline. These deadlines can also be found on the website. Individual faculties reserve the right to implement separate internal procedures preceding the VU internal deadline to ensure that only applications of a certain quality are submitted.

### 3) Presentation workshop

Candidates who receive an invitation from NWO to attend an interview have succeeded in convincing the NWO committee on paper that their application is potentially worthy of funding. However, the committee can only grant funding to a limited number of applications. At this stage, over half of the remaining candidates will be rejected on the basis of their oral presentation. In order to increase our candidates' chances of success, VU University Amsterdam offers a workshop on presentation. In this workshop, candidates learn to present themselves with self-confidence and charisma, by means of a clear and well-structured presentation. The workshop includes various practical communication and presentation exercises, which will be analysed during the workshop. At the end of the workshop each candidate will practise his or her presentation and receive extensive feedback. After completing the workshop, the candidates will be able to give a presentation that will leave a lasting impression on the NWO jury. The dates for the workshop will be announced on the website of the supportprogramme. Candidates who have been invited for an interview by the NWO can register for the presentation workshop.

### 4) Mock interview

The interview plays an important part in the NWO committee's final assessment. The candidate has to convince committee members from a wide range of disciplines of the necessity of funding for his or her research proposal. During a mock interview, candidates will be given the opportunity to practice their presentation, including a Q&A session, in front of a VU committee. The mock interview is a type of dress rehearsal in which the NWO interview is simulated. The composition of the mock interview committee will mimic the composition of the NWO committee as closely as possible. Candidates who are invited for an NWO interview and are interested in a mock interview can send an email to the university's IRIS coordinators, Marco Last and Bart Jordi, at [supportprogrammes@vu.nl](mailto:supportprogrammes@vu.nl) or [supportprogrammes@vumc.nl](mailto:supportprogrammes@vumc.nl). The mock interviews are planned individually on the basis of the candidate's preferred dates. To ensure that the members of the mock interview committee are given

enough time the candidate is asked to submit his or her preferred dates at least 3 weeks before the NWO interview date.

The timeline for the VU supportprogramme and the NWO timelines can be found on the [VU website](#) and NWO website.<sup>2</sup>

IRIS candidates are encouraged to contact the Grants Desk VU/VUmc ([supportprogrammes@vu.nl](mailto:supportprogrammes@vu.nl) or [supportprogrammes@vumc.nl](mailto:supportprogrammes@vumc.nl)) which can provide additional support to IRIS candidates. The Grants Desk can also provide general tips and assist candidates at later stage of the selection process e.g. when drafting a response to an external referee's comments.

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<sup>2</sup> NWO Vernieuwingsimpuls website: [www.nwo.nl/vi](http://www.nwo.nl/vi)