**Call for WIMEK PhD proposals on transdisciplinary projects2022, written by MSc students in the academic year 2021-2022**

**Call WIMEK PhD grants on transdisciplinary research 2022.**

The Wageningen Institute for Environment and Climate Research (WIMEK) opens a call for PhD projects contributing to our knowledge on environmental and sustainability sciences using transdisciplinary approaches. These proposals should be written by excellent MSc students themselves, in the Research Master cluster course or by other means, in the academic year 2011-2022. These PhD projects are funded by WIMEK’s strategic funds. A minimum of one PhD position can be funded, which should start in the course of 2022. Only WUR MSc students are eligible for these grants, under the conditions that they have written their proposal themselves as MSc students in the academic year 2021-2022.

The scholarships enable WIMEK to attract Wageningen MSc talents to its chair groups for innovative research that they themselves have designed. It should be made very clear how the proposed research fits with the goals and aims of WIMEK. Also, it should be made clear why the chair group or groups that are involved fit with the proposed research.

Note that the promotor should be a WIMEK fellow.

For all other supervisors and advisors tied to the proposal, it should be made clear how their involvement is needed for the successful completion of the project. In addition, in case these supervisors and advisors are not WIMEK fellows themselves, it should be made very clear why they have an expertise that is not already present in other WIMEK groups. In other words, we encourage collaboration within WIMEK if that fits with the innovative ideas of the MSc talent.

An Assessment Committee will evaluate the quality of the PhD research proposal, the strength of the motivation of the applicant as well as the potential of the applicant.

**What can be funded?**

The scholarship covers the PhD salary costs, including overhead costs according to the integral cost funding of Wageningen University and Research. The specific research cost, travel cost and other cost should be covered by the supervising chair groups on accepting the allocation of the PhD.

The call may not be used to finance matching funds in, for instance, INREF, EU or any other projects.

**Eligibility criteria**

* The PhD proposal should be written by the MSc student themselves in the academic year 2021-2022.
* The MSc student should receive their MSc certificate in 2022.
* Only new projects are eligible – requests for co-funding of ongoing or new projects are not eligible
* The project should fit within the [grand challenges of WIMEK](https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/PhD-Programme/Graduate-Schools/www.wur.nlwimek/About-WIMEK.htm).
* Only projects submitted by a WIMEK chair group will be financed. A PhD research project may be supervised by two WIMEK chair groups. In exceptional cases a research proposal could be supervised by a WIMEK group and a non-WIMEK group. In that case you should motivate why it is difficult to involve another WIMEK chair group in the research and why the proposed co-supervising non-WIMEK group could contribute significantly to the PhD research.

**Evaluation Criteria**

* Potential of the candidate: grades of the master degree, additional extracurricular scientific activities (e.g. publications, achievement of societal impact) and two recommendation letters
* The motivation letter; this includes the candidates on motivations and ambitions, as well as how the proposed project fits with the research themes of WIMEK
* Quality of the PhD project proposal: originality / innovative character; expected scientific perspectives and societal relevance for the environment and sustainable development; and the strength of the transdisciplinary approach. This includes the Feasibility of the project: the project should substantially contribute to our scientific knowledge, but should, at the same time, include endeavours which are achievable within a realistic time frame.
* The proposal will be reviewed by two independent peers

The abovementioned evaluation criteria are weighed; projects should score as high as possible on all criteria.

**Assessment committee**

The assessment committee consists of the following members:

>> in the process of being determined <<

A committee member, whose chair group is involved in the supervision of the proposed PhD candidate, is excluded from the assessment of that specific project.

**Submission**

The application is submitted by the (leading) WIMEK chair group. The MSc student can submit the proposal themselves on behalf of the chair group, but should have formal permission of the chair group holder. They should include the intended promotor’s email in the cc when submitting the proposal to WIMEK.

The title of the email should say: WIMEK open call for Transdisciplinary projects.

Submission should include the following documents:

* A scientific summary and a list of 5 reviewers (submitted one week before the full proposal deadline; see Timetable below). This summary will not be used to judge the proposal; but to find appropriate reviewers for the proposal. The abstract in the proposal itself will be considered as part of the quality of the proposal
* PhD research proposal in the specified format (i.e. the format used during the Research Master Cluster); see “[Application-Form-NWO](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwijq5jxtYH3AhUqMuwKHf9PCkwQFnoECAcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nwo.nl%2Fsites%2Fnwo%2Ffiles%2Fmedia-files%2FApplication-Form-OC-ENW-M-1_2021_def.docx&usg=AOvVaw1tu_8ZiJgRct7n_x-pgOzQ)”.
* Letter of motivation written by the candidate; in this letter, the applicant makes clear its own motivation and ambitions (as discussed within the WIMEK graduate program); and explains in one or two paragraphs how the proposed research fits with the research themes of WIMEK. The motivation letter should include an additional paragraph about the need for the transdisciplinary approach chosen for the project.
* CV
* MSc grade transcripts
* Two recommendation letters for the PhD candidate; one written by the individual that mainly assisted in the writing of the proposal (if written during an RMC, this would be the writing coach), the other by the promotor listed in the proposal. The promotor should state in their letter that the proposal was written by the MSc student themselves in the academic year 2021-2022. If both are the same person, a second recommendation letter can be added on the candidates own choice. The recommendation letters should discuss i) the progress the MSc talent has made during the RMC and his/her thesis work, and ii) an explanation of the suitability of the talent as a PhD candidate
* List of at least five possible independent reviewers. To guarantee independence of these reviewers, the NWO criteria (<https://www.nwo.nl/en/documents/nwo/legal/nwo-code-of-conduct-on-conflicts-of-interest>) are followed; this means - among other things - that the reviewer must not have a personal relationship with those involved in the application, not have or will have a professional relationship, nor an economic interest.
* A guaranteed budget for non-salary costs of the project, such as the specific research cost and travel cost have to be covered by the supervising chair group upon accepting the allocation of the PhD. This budget should be included in the proposal.

**Assessment procedure**

* The WIMEK office first checks whether the PhD research proposal complies with the eligibility criteria; proposals that do not comply with the eligibility criteria will not be accepted;
* Two to three independent anonymous reviewers will be asked to review the PhD research proposals;
* Submitters will receive the review reports and have the opportunity to write a rebuttal to the comments of the reviewers
* The assessment committee will score proposals based on the evaluation criteria after receiving the reviewer comments, taking the rebuttals into account
* Based on this assessment, the chair of the assessment committee and the coordinator of the graduate program will select the best 2-4 candidates to present their proposal.
* The PhD candidates will present their PhD proposal to the assessment committee (5 minutes pitch presentation; 15 minutes discussion). The presentation is meant to assess both the quality and motivation of the candidate, whether the candidate “owns” the proposal and the quality of the proposal. If the Corona situation does not allow an in person presentation in front of the assessment committee, this interview may be conducted via MS Teams, or another webinar enabling software.
* Based on the presentations, the assessment committee will re-assess their evaluations, and make a new ranking of the projects and the candidate.
* At the same time, the assessment jury will also rank proposals from the WIMEK honours program. Should they assess the highest ranked proposals in that call as not of enough quality, the decision can be made to transfer the grant to the WIMEK open call for Transdisciplinary projects.
* The final rankings are offered as an advice to the Director of WIMEK;
* The final decision on the allocation of the scholarships is taken by the WIMEK Director.

**Timetable WIMEK Open Round 2022**

6th of May 2022;**17:00h** Submit scientific summary and list of at least 5 possible reviewers

13th May 2022; **17:00h** Deadline submission applications (including the full PhD proposal the CV, MSc transcripts, the motivation of the candidate and two letters of recommendation for the PhD candidate)

10 June 2022 Deadline review reports

13 June 2022 Participants receive their review reports

**20 June 2022; 11:59 am** Deadline rebuttal candidates; please makes sure you send it before noon!

24 June 2022 Invitation for oral presentations send

30 June July 2022 Oral presentations / ranking candidates by the assessment committee

8 July 2022 Deadline for the decision on allocation by WIMEK Director; and final decision communicated to the participants

**Applications**

You can send the abstracts and the full application (including all required documents) by e-mail to the WIMEK office (wimek@wur.nl) no later than 13 May 2022, before 17:00h.