

## Call Wageningen School of Social Science Open Round 2019 – Strategic funds WASS & Graduate Programme WUR

**Wageningen School of Social Sciences opens a call for PhD projects to be funded by its strategic funds. A total of four PhD positions can be funded, which should start in the beginning of 2020.**

**The scholarships enable WASS to enhance the collaboration between WASS chair groups and to attract new talents. The selection is based on both the quality of the proposal and the quality of the applicant.**

***Note, the procedure has changed in comparison to previous calls, so please read the call text carefully.***

This year the scholarships come from two funds, the WASS strategic funds and the WUR Graduate Programme Scholarships. The positions are therefore also earmarked for the WASS Graduate Programme Students (WASS GP-students). At least one of the four positions will go to a WASS GP-student, the other three positions are also open for non-WASS GP students (open round candidates).

The call will have three stages:

- a pre-proposal stage for the open round candidates collaborating with the chair groups, with selection procedure to enter the full proposal stage.
- a full proposal stage for the selected candidates from the pre-proposal stage and the WASS GP-students (who will be automatically invited to the full proposal stage).
- An interview stage for selected candidates from the full proposal stage. The Open Round Committee will invite 8 candidates to the interview, based on the full proposal, reviews and rebuttals.

### What can be funded?

The scholarships cover the PhD salary costs, including overhead costs according to the integral cost funding of WU. The specific research cost, travel cost and other cost should be covered by the supervising chair groups upon accepting the PhD grant.

The call will not be used to finance ad hoc medium to large-scale requests by WASS chair groups for matching funds in, for instance, INREF, EU or any other projects.

### Eligibility criteria

- Only **new projects** are eligible – requests for co-funding of ongoing or new projects are not eligible. Projects submitted to the open round, but funded by other sources during the open round procedure will be rejected automatically.
- The PhD candidate is in the lead as the main author of the proposal.
- Only projects supported by **two WASS chair groups**, one lead group and one co-lead group, will be financed.
- **A chair group involved with one or more GP-students** (submitting their proposal during the full proposal stage) **cannot be a lead group during the pre-proposal stage**;
- the WASS GP-students need to submit their interest in this call and the support letters from the chair groups involved at the deadline of the pre-proposal stage.
- The research should be innovative and of strategic interest to the WASS research domains.
- The PhD candidate should adhere to the entry requirements of the WUR PhD programme<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For the minimum requirements see the relevant informative section in the Application Form

## Evaluation Criteria

- Quality of the candidate: motivation, grades of the master degree, additional extracurricular scientific activities (e.g. honours or graduate programmes, publications) and two reference letters
- Quality of the project: projects should be state-of-the-art, cutting edge and at the foreground of the scientific research area. All proposals will be reviewed by at least two independent peers
- Feasibility of the project: the project should substantially further knowledge, but should, at the same time, include endeavours which are achievable within a realistic time frame
- Quality and added value of the collaboration between the chair groups: the collaboration clearly offers inter-disciplinary added value and/or the groups offer complementary expertise to the project. We favour new collaborations (bridging sections) during the assessment.

The abovementioned evaluation criteria will not be weighted; applicants should score as high as possible on all criteria.

## Evaluation procedure

- WASS Office checks the applications for completeness and checks whether the proposal complies with the eligibility criteria; applications that are not complete or that do not comply with the eligibility criteria will be rejected;
- Pre-proposal stage: a small Open Round Assessment Committee (to be determined) will select 8 pre-proposals for further elaboration, based on the evaluation criteria. In this round, the quality of the candidate and the quality of the idea (state-of-the-art, cutting-edge) determine the ranking of pre-proposals.
- Full proposal stage (on invitation):
  - Open Round Assessment Committee: during the full proposal stage the committee will consist of six members, of chair groups not involved in the selected proposals.
  - Reviews: two independent anonymous reviewers will be asked to review eligible proposals;
  - Rebuttal: the submitter will have the opportunity to write a rebuttal to the comments of the reviewers
- Interview stage: Based on the motivation and cv of the candidates, the review reports, the rebuttals of the submitter and their own reading of the proposals, the Open Round Assessment Committee will hold interviews with 8 candidates.
- Selection: The Committee makes a ranking of the final applications, based on the interviews (quality of presentation and response to questions). This final ranking is offered as an advice to the Director of WASS. The final decision on the allocation of the scholarships is taken by the Director of WASS.

## Submission procedure

WASS GP-students submit their interest to the call and the support letters from the involved chair groups before the deadline of the pre-proposal stage to WASS and will enter during the full proposal stage. The open round candidates will submit their pre-proposals according to the guidelines below.

## Pre-proposals

1. Select and contact WASS chair group(s):
2. Discuss project (pre-)proposal (using the specified template, see the Application Form) with chosen chair group(s) /supervisors
3. Chair group(s) write support letter for the candidate
4. The candidate submits to the WASS-office:
  - The pre-proposal using the template for pre-proposals
  - A Motivation letter

- A CV
- A Copy of diplomas and transcripts of academic records
- Language test results (if applicable)
- Two letters of recommendation

### Full proposals (on invitation)

- The candidate submits the project proposal to the WASS Office
- Graduate Programme students also need to hand in the information requested at the pre-proposal stage (except the pre-proposal).
- The proposal has to be written in the specified Open Round project proposal template, provided at invitation to the full proposal stage.
- In cooperation with the involved chair group(s), submitter provides the names of at least four independent reviewers, who have indicated their willingness to provide a review in November / December 2019.
- The submission includes a budget for non-salary costs of the project. The specific research cost and/or travel cost have to be covered by the supervising chair group upon accepting the allocation of the PhD.
- More information about the rebuttal will be provided together with the review reports, but will not extend 4 pages (A4).

### Interviews (on invitation)

- Based on the proposal, reviews and rebuttal the full open round committee will select 8 candidates for an interview.
- The interviews will take 45 minutes. During the interview the candidates can briefly pitch their ideas and proposals ( 5 minutes max.) followed by questions from the committee, based on their read of the motivations, CV's, grades, proposals, reviews and rebuttals of the candidates.

### Timetable Open Round 2019

Monday 15 July 2019	Call Open Round
Tuesday 1 October 2019, 9.00 AM (Amsterdam time)	Deadline submission pre-proposal applications & deadline interest in call for WASS GP-students
Friday 11 October 2019	Invitations for submitting a full proposal
Monday 18 November 2019, 9.00 AM (Amsterdam time)	Deadline submission full proposals
19 November-19 December 2019	First Round: External review applications
Monday 6 January 2020	Collect and distribute review reports to the candidates
Monday 20 January 2020, 9.00 AM (Amsterdam time)	Deadline submission Rebuttal by candidates
20 January – end of January 2020	Selection of candidates to invite to the interviews
Beginning of February 2020	Interviews with 8 candidates (skype is possible)
	Committee decides on ranking
March 2020	Selection: Decision by Director WASS

### Applications

You can send your application (proposal, motivation letter and all required documents) by e-mail to the WASS office ([wass@wur.nl](mailto:wass@wur.nl)). The deadline is **Tuesday 1 October 2019, 9.00 AM (Amsterdam time)**.