

Focus area 'Neuroscience and Cognition Utrecht (NCU): - Seed Money, Call for Proposals

The UU board established NC Utrecht again as one of its Focal Research Areas, and made financial resources available to stimulate research in the period 2014-2017.

NCU brings all research activities in neuroscience and cognition at Utrecht University and University Medical Centre Utrecht together by fostering cross-disciplinary research into behavioral, cognitive and neurobiological processes underlying human collaboration, adaptation, ageing and neurological and psychiatric pathologies. NCU studies the neural circuitry in social cognition, communication and language use, and decision-making to better understand the conditions that promote human cooperation, trust and social responsibility. NCU examines the neural basis of memory formation, emotion, attention and the control of behavior to understand the human ability (in healthy adults, ageing citizens and individuals suffering from neurological or neuropsychiatric disorders) to adapt to, and cope with changes in the social context as well as in cognitive and affective competences. NCU addresses basic research in perception and communication which has ramifications in clinical neurology (such as aphasia after stroke or rehabilitation therapies of cerebrovascular diseases) and psychiatry (such as perception in autism or schizophrenia). NCU thus aims to provide innovative fundamental science, which may impact efforts to build an economically and ecologically sustainable society, to support ageing people in remaining active contributors to society, and to prevent and remedy mental health problems that thwart individuals' personal ambitions and cooperative participation in society.

Aim, procedure and instruments

By using local strategic investments NC Utrecht will provide seed money grants to stimulate research approaches that benefit from cross-fertilization between disciplines and that have potential to increase earning capacity within national and international funding agency structures. The NCU seed money grant proposals must meet **the following conditions:**

The proposal should ...

- be innovative and of a high academic quality;
- be interdisciplinary and involve interfaculty collaboration (Social and Behavioural Sciences, Humanities, Medicine/UMCU, Sciences, and/or Veterinary Medicine);
- be positioned at the heart of the Focus area NCU (see www.ncutrecht.nl)
- have the capability of acquiring external funding (the 'fly-wheel effect').

The current NCU call can be used to ask for seed money for 3 types of instruments (described below). Accordingly, it is important that a seed money proposal fits into one of the three instruments, and adheres to the specific goal and criteria of the respective instruments. The Focus Programme Team (FPT) strives to approve a maximum number of seed money proposals within each call. If the FPT receives more proposals than it can approve, it will have to prioritise. In such cases, the FPT may take advice from experts within NCU or from external experts. When assessing the proposals the FPT strives to reach a good balance between the various instruments and faculties.

Receiving NCU seed money depends on **"in kind" matching**. This "in kind" matching pertains to salary or other costs (e.g., renting of class rooms, local secretary support, ...), that come from other resources and are not covered by NCU. Please, see application and budget information below for more information.

The NCU programme team expects to release seed money calls 3 times a year.

Deadline for this third call of proposals: May 6, 2015.

Fourth call for proposals: Sept 2015

Decision-making third call: as soon as possible after May 6, 2015.

Application should be submitted to: Tineke Edink, A.Edink@uu.nl

Instrument 1. workshops, symposia and meetings

This instrument applies to permanent members of staff, including professors, who wish to organize workshops, symposia or meetings to promote collaboration between labs and researchers directed at composing and submitting grant proposals (e.g., establishing collaboration with industry partners top-sector grants; consortium building Horizon 2020). The proposed workshop, symposium or meeting should be capable of delivering quality research and have an interest in one of the main themes of NCU. Instrument 1 especially focuses on interdisciplinary research in the field of NCU to advance new lines of research and to bring new knowledge together that has so far been used in isolation.

Application and budget: A proposal consists of a maximum of three pages and should provide a (1) concise impression of the subject, (2) the researchers involved in the meeting (incl. a short overview of the program of the meeting), (3) the concrete aim (e.g., What type of research proposal or collaboration will follow from this?), (4) the anticipated interdisciplinarity, (5) the academic relevance and possibly the applied relevance. Declarable costs that can be requested include travel and housing expenses and costs for the organisation of workshops, symposia and meetings. Please note that applicants' working (e.g., teaching) hours for organizing and participating in meetings can be requested as in kind matching (in the respective salary scale). The proposal should be accompanied with (6) a clear budget in euros showing the requested funding for in kind matching and NCU money. The amount of the seed money grant for instrument 1 can be maximally 10 K Euros, and should include at least 30% in kind matching.

Instrument 2. short visits

This instrument applies to all members that are working within the NCU focus area. The aim is to facilitate short visits (max. 3 months) to research groups abroad or for inviting researchers to Utrecht in order to (re)inforce international collaboration, learn new methods that are not available in Utrecht, and to target future funding at the interface of neuroscience and cognition. Again, the proposal should make clear how the visit enhances the potential to acquire external funding.

Application and budget: A proposal consists of a maximum of three pages and should provide a (1) concise impression of the subject, (2) the researcher/host that will be visited (or the person that we be invited to visit Utrecht), (3) the concrete aim (e.g., What type of research proposal or collaboration will follow from this?), (4) the anticipated interdisciplinarity, (5) the academic relevance and possibly the applied relevance. Declarable costs that can be requested include travel and housing expenses. Please note that the salary for the period that a NCU applicant goes abroad can be requested as in kind matching (replacement in the respective salary scale). The salary for invited researchers to Utrecht is expected to be paid by the home university and can therefore not be requested. The proposal should be accompanied with (6) a clear budget in euros showing the requested funding for in kind matching and NCU money. The amount of the seed money grant for instrument 2 can be maximally 10 K Euros, and should include at least 30% in kind matching.

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Instrument 3. Temporary contracts for recent PhD graduates or post-docs

This instrument applies to recent PhD graduates and faculty members who wish to apply for excellence grants (e.g., Innovative grants NWO, ERC grants). With this action members of staff can be relieved of their teaching and administrative tasks for a period of max. three months to prepare a grant proposal. The result of this action should be that the applicant prepares a grant application that can be submitted to NWO or ERC (or comparable funding agencies).

Application and budget: The applicant's teaching/administration hours can be requested to the extent of a replacement in the respective salary scale, and half of it should be requested as in kind matching and the other half as NCU money. NCU instrument 3 applications should include (1) a summary of the proposed research project (1 page), (2) a track record (including a brief statement of how the grant proposal will contribute to future research plans; 1 page), (3) a CV, (4) the funding agency to which the actual application will be submitted, (5) a clear budget in euros showing the requested funding for in kind matching and NCU money, and (6) a brief letter of the department chair stating that the application is supported and can be accommodated in the teaching program/administration task.