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M20 PhD Scholarship Program
Call for Proposals 2024

When to apply?
This announcement includes information on the 2024 call for proposals for the M20 PhD program, the application procedure, and the topics selected by the Schools and the UEF. The online applications portal is made available on Monday 5 February 2024. The deadline for applications is Friday 15 March 2024 at 12pm.

Background
The M20 Program was launched in 2022 to fund PhD scholarships at the University of Groningen´s four Schools for interdisciplinary research.

The program advances the university's interdisciplinary research program by funding ten new PhD positions each year over the coming decades. Funding for this program was provided exclusively by a private donor and is managed by the Ubbo Emmius Foundation. The 2024 round offers a total of ten PhD scholarships to the four Schools:

— Wubbo Ockels School for Energy and Climate
— Jantina Tammes School for Digital Society, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence
— Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health
— Rudolph Agricola School for Sustainable Development

More information on the M20 program and the Schools' thematic areas can be found on this page.

Who can apply?
Each application needs to address one of the Schools' challenges as outlined in the list of topics included in this announcement. Due to the terms and conditions of the donation that funds the M20 Program, projects on the study of religion are excluded.

Each application requires a minimum of two supervisors who are UG staff members from different faculties. At least one of the supervisors should possess ius promovendus. In addition, a ReMa-student can be a co-applicant for an approved PhD proposal from the respective program. In these situations, the ReMa-student must also be the candidate for the corresponding PhD position.

M20 PhD Scholarships
One M20 PhD scholarship consists of a lump sum of €290.000 to cover the full cost of one PhD position, including personnel and material expenses and a bench fee. The total budget for the 2024 round is €2.900.000 for ten PhD Scholarship positions.

Application Procedure

Phase 1: Submission
Applications need to be submitted via http://www.application-portal.uef.nl which will be available from Monday 5 February 2024 until Friday 15 March 2024.

Phase 2: Eligibility Check
All proposals submitted before or on 15 March will be screened for eligibility on two criteria:
— The application must have two supervisors from two different faculties
— The proposal must address one of the topics selected by the Schools

Applicants will receive the outcome of the eligibility check via email no later than Friday 29 March. The outcome will be sent to the email address of the first contact person provided in the application.

Phase 3: Review Process and Nominations
The applications are reviewed by the M20 selection committee, chaired by professor Petra Rudolf, and including representatives from all four Schools. Each proposal is assessed by members of the selection committee based on the following criteria:
— Quality of the research proposal
— Originality of the research question
— Feasibility of the proposed project
— Relevance to the Schools´ topics, objectives and long-term impact

The selection committee will create a longlist of 20 proposals for the 10 positions within the M20 program. All applicants will receive an update about their proposal via email no later than Monday 13 May.

Phase 4: Final Selection
The UEF grantmaking committee and the UEF Board will make a final decision and award 10 proposals with a PhD scholarship. The 20 applicants on the longlist will receive an email with the final outcome no later than Monday 10 June.

Contact
This call for proposals is subject to the terms and conditions of the Ubbo Emmius Foundation available on uef.nl/grants
— Regulation for Grant Allocation
— General conditions for Grants

A document with answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the M20 PhD Program will be made available on 5 February 2024 on uef.nl/grants. If you have questions after reading the FAQ document, please contact us via grants@uef.nl

Annex: Selected topics for 2024

Overview

Jantina Tammes School for Digital Society, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence
I: Digital Literacy & Inclusion
II: Digital Infrastructure & Sustainability
III: Digital Safety & Security

Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health
I: Planetary Health
II: Shifting Care Responsibilities

Wubbo Ockels School for Energy and Climate
I: Hydrogen Economy
II: Citizen-empowerment in the Energy Transition
III: Climate Adaptation

Rudolf Agricola School for Sustainable Development
I: The State, Multi-Level Governance, and Sustainable Development
II: Development and Crises

Full List of Topics

Tammes I: Digital Literacy & Inclusion
Digitalization has an increasing influence on our contemporary society, and we tend to take digital literacy for granted. However, a considerable Dutch population still lack the ability to execute basic digital tasks such as using a computer or engaging with messaging services. While existing efforts to enhance digital literacy often target older adults or those with lower literacy levels, there are other demographics who may lack the capacity to critically, mindfully, and actively navigate digital media. Due to this possibility, there is a need for research to understand who may these individuals be, what the obstacles are hindering their involvement in the digital society, how individuals develop digital literacy, and what the conditions are that foster digital inclusion. The goal of this topic is to broaden our understanding of digital literacy and implement strategies that bridge the digital divide.

Tammes II: Digital Infrastructure & Sustainability
The goal of this topic is to examine the key priorities across digital infrastructures that need to be addressed to realize a sustainable digital society. The corresponding research can e.g. identify the challenges and barriers that researchers from different disciplines have to solve together with governments and industry leaders. Along this line, possible areas of interest include new computational or technological solutions, new procedures for policy making and implementation, and social perception and involvement on new digital infrastructure

development. Another potentially promising research direction is to model, analyze or improve the environmental impact of advanced digital and AI technologies. Along this line the twin (digital and sustainable) transition is an overarching keyword. We welcome new ideas on energy saving digital technologies, environmental and social impact assessment, and recycling and reuse of data and digital setups.

Tammes III: Digital Safety & Security
The context of this topic is the growing technological, regulation and social concern on the access and use of digital information, in particular amid the recent explosive discussion on AI. The corresponding research needs to identify the potential issues, understand the hidden mechanisms or if possible, improve security measures when digital devices and data are used. We also highlight those safety issues when social activities are involved, e.g. misinformation, disinformation, cyberbullying, hate speech and threats of violence. We encourage a transdisciplinary view that combines the technological core of the safety and security practice, and also the legal, ethical and social development that become an inseparable part of the development. We hope the outcome of the project will be useful for societal partners, including companies, policymakers, and civil societies.

Aletta I: Planetary Health
Planetary health is an emerging research field and a social movement which promotes the collaboration between humans and the planet they inhabit. It focuses on the human activities which damage the health of the planet, e.g. via air pollution or use of pesticide and fertilisers; and the planet's reaction to it, which in turns challenges human health, i.e. through climate change. Planetary health is also concerned with the inequitable distribution of the resources and the consequences of climate change globally, making the most responsible for climate change, the least affected. Proposals may address the topic of planetary health from different disciplinary perspectives, or on the interface of various disciplines.

Aletta II: Shifting Care Responsibilities
With the arrival of the new Dutch Integral Care Agreement, a stronger focus on regional healthcare delivery becomes reality. At the same time, demand for care is expected to grow in the coming years, and the availability of medical professionals is unlikely to keep up. Moreover, it seems likely that citizens will become increasingly responsible for their own health, which links with increased importance of prevention. In this dynamic environment, local cure and care providers and related stakeholders need to find new ways to manage regional care, cure and prevention. In addition, there is a need to collaborate and co-create with citizens in order to ensure future service availability. The complexity of this question underlines the need of a multi- disciplinary perspective, as mono-perspective solutions are unlikely to cover all important aspects. In this theme, novel solutions in the domains of e health, care coordination, shifting responsibilities, value driven care, and data-usage, are envisioned to play a role in finding a balance between prevention and care and cure delivery.

Ockels I: Hydrogen Economy
Green hydrogen is a promising means to cope with the challenges posed by the transition to renewable energy sources. The use of green hydrogen calls for a redefinition of the

standards on energy security and reliability of supply, redesigning of the energy value chain, addressing emerging societal issues, development of new economic and business models as well as re-arrangements on the existing grid infrastructure. This research field offer a fruitful ground for interdisciplinary research involving, but not limited to, engineering, law, economics, psychology, sociology, business and economics and spatial sciences. Ph.D. projects should be focusing on a combination of technical challenges, legal/governance challenges, business/economic challenges, societal acceptability challenges and spatial configuration of hydrogen facilities (at least two challenges).

Ockels II: Citizen-empowerment in the Energy Transition
Citizen empowerment is put at the heart of the energy transition by the European Union. Three important choices that citizens have in this empowerment are support for energy production at the local level, i.e. wind and solar fields; heating their houses, i.e. electricity, green gas or district heating; and mobility, i.e. driving in electric or fuel cell cars. All three choices will directly influence physical infrastructure needs and socialized costs at the national scale. Main challenges to be addressed in this theme are: 1. What are the consequences over time and space scales of local energy activities, and which ones are optimum considering system efficiency; 2. How can citizens anticipate with their choices on techno-socio-economic-regulatory conditions and 3. how can these conditions be adapted over time and space to create favourable circumstances for the optimum choices.

Ockels III: Climate Adaptation
The climate is changing and this affects both humans and nature. Climate adaptation is simultaneously a technological, ecological, social-cultural and political challenge. This requires the adoption of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. In addition to engineering and ecological perspectives, perspectives from the social sciences need to be explicitly integrated with existing and future material and technological solutions, to allow adaptation solutions to be inclusive, bankable, socially just, acceptable and attractive – enhancing local and regional spatial qualities. This included focusing on social innovation, addressing adaptation goals while also including societal stakeholders in processes of co-creation, and study issues ranging from behavioral change, governance, regulations, spatial and institutional design, blockchain technology and economic business cases. These interdisciplinary aspects can represent the specific added value of Groningen research in the international climate adaptation debate. Ph.D. projects should be focusing on a combination of ecological challenges, technical challenges, legal/governance challenges, business/economic challenges, societal acceptability challenges and spatial configuration of climate adaptation (at least two challenges).

Agricola I: The State, Multi-Level Governance, and Sustainable Development
In the past few decades the state has faced tremendous challenges from epochal transformations such as globalization, neoliberalism, and European integration, and increasing pressures to provide responses to global problems related to sustainable development, such as environmental and land-use change, human migration flows, rising inequality, biodiversity loss, and the development of artificial intelligence. At the same time, the state remains a key ordering principle of social, economic, political, and environmental life, and an actor with unparalleled authority and resources. This theme for PhD proposals

explores the tensions and equilibria between patterns of state transformation and resilience vis-à-vis sustainable development challenges, and their coexistence within systems of multi-level governance combining local, regional, national and international levels. Proposals must come from one (or a combination of multiple) existing interdisciplinary research groups within Agricola. The supervision team should span at least two different faculties. Moreover, a transdisciplinary approach is important. Projects should at a minimum have clear societal relevance and closely involve one or more societal stakeholders. Such involvement may include meaningful and demonstrable forms of collaboration or even cutting-edge ways of co-creation.

Agricola II: Development and Crises
Poor development policies can heighten the likelihood of disasters by promoting unsustainable practices such as deforestation, inadequate infrastructure, and urban sprawl in vulnerable areas. Insufficient consideration for environmental conservation and climate resilience can exacerbate the impact of natural disasters, such as floods and wildfires, leading to greater devastation. Additionally, neglecting social and economic disparities in development planning may result in marginalized communities facing disproportionate risks and limited resources during times of crisis. Successful proposals may address and try to deeper understand these interconnections and find ways for more effective policies that support development and reduce vulnerability to disasters. Proposals must come from one (or a combination of multiple) existing interdisciplinary research groups within Agricola. The supervision team should span across at least two different faculties. Moreover, a transdisciplinary approach is important: Projects should at a minimum have clear societal relevance and closely involve one or more societal stakeholders. Such involvement may include meaningful and demonstrable forms of collaboration or even cutting-edge ways of co-creation.