

Minutes webinar corona measures (19-05-2020)

Break out session individual scholarships

Present from the Sounding Board: Wieke Blaauw.

Present from Nuffic: Inge Schouten (instrument manager scholarships and host), Marleen Verhagen (short course scholarships), Siu Liën Tjoa (master's scholarships), Anneke Zijlstra (team leader), Samira Zafar (moderator), Lianne Schepers (minute taker).

Nuffic presents: Leniency measures for Round 1 & Round 2

For Round 2, we adhere the same procedure as Round 1 for the Employer statement and Government statement.

We encourage the (partial) replacement of face-to-face courses by online courses for all courses scheduled between mid-March and 1 September **2021**.

Subsistence allowances remain in line with Grant Obligations and Conditions.

All measures regarding new grants will be published as soon as possible

All measures presented below are regarding existing Orange Knowledge Programme grants that were awarded in 2019 and prior. Through emails and the question form, Nuffic gathered questions which are discussed in this presentation. Each Nuffic announcement is followed by Q&A.

Nuffic presents: Reimbursement of subsistence allowances

Courses offered online entirely -> E-learning conditions apply (as found in the GOC)

Course offered partially online -> Student gets Dutch subsistence allowance for 3 months when continuing course in OKP country or starting (online) course in OKP country

This applies to both Masters and Short courses

Questions and answers:

Q: Is approval needed when switching to an online course?

- A: Switching to online is allowed for course programmes until 1 September 2021. A generic framework has been developed, to prevent case by case answers. As such, no approval from Nuffic is needed on a course-specific basis, as long as the measures of the generic framework are adhered to.

Q: What are the e-learning conditions?

- A: These can be found in the Grant Obligations & Conditions.

Q: Is there still a minimum of 12 days for online short courses?

- A: Yes, the same minimum and maximum duration apply to online and face to face Master's and Short Course programmes.

Nuffic presents: What is the flexible space?

Flexible space formed by 'vrijval' ('release of costs'): costs that were included in the initial grant amount but that haven't been used and/or may not be declared in the final report according to the OKP corona measures as published.

Max. 5% within initial grant amount for unforeseen costs due to corona, for example to be used for: non-refundable costs for accommodation that has not been used, extra travel costs (e.g. extra tickets that had to be booked for scholarship holders leaving – or coming back - at a different time than originally planned), subsistence allowance and insurance costs for students who got stuck, etc.

Please note I: the flexible space may *not* be composed of the scholarship amounts of (a) withdrawn scholarship holder(s).

Please note II: the flexible space may not be used towards costs made to develop online learning materials.

Non-refundable ticket and visa costs that have not been used may be declared within the original scholarship amount of the scholarship holder concerned on the condition that the student will do their utmost to complete the course. They do thus not have to be declared under the flexible space. Please note: this does not apply to non-refundable accommodation costs.

Questions & answers:

Q: If students start a course in their own country, do they still receive full allowance?

- A: For the first 3 months they receive the Dutch subsistence allowance, after 3 months this will be lowered to the subsistence allowance for an OKP country. This only applies if a course is partially offered online, the e-learning reimbursements apply to courses that are entirely offered online (see: Grant Obligations & Conditions).

Q: What about students who are in the Netherlands at the moment and cannot go back?

- A: Accommodation, subsistence allowance and insurance costs that are made for them (beyond the duration of the course) may be declared under the flexible space, but: up to a maximum of 5% of the initial (total) grant amount

Q: What if we need additional subsidy above the initial grant amount to cover the costs?

- A: It is legally not allowed to offer additional grants. Therefore, the flexible space is designed to facilitate as much flexibility as possible within the current grant amounts.

Q: What should we communicate to students who cannot go home? Guidelines would be appreciated. They make extra costs as they are stuck for months. Is housing provided?

- A: This is a broader issue than just for the OKP. Therefore, this is being discussed on a high level, by Ministries and education organisations and the Nuffic Mobstacles team. Meanwhile, accommodation, subsistence allowance and insurance costs that are made for students stuck in the Netherlands (beyond the duration of the course) may be declared under the flexible space, but: up to a maximum of 5% of the initial (total) grant amount

Q: What about the subsistence allowance if the entire course moves online?

- A: If an entire course is offered online, the e-learning reimbursements apply (see: Grant Obligations & Conditions).

Q: What about accommodation costs that are not being used?

- A: They may also be declared under the flexible space, but: up to a maximum of 5% within the initial (total) grant amount.

Q: If students stay in their home country, can we pay a partial allowance and use the rest for the empty housing?

- A: The subsistence allowance must be paid to, or on behalf of, the scholarship holder (see: Grant Obligations & Conditions). If accommodation has been booked on behalf of the scholarship holder, the subsistence allowance may (partially) be used to cover these costs as well – as would be the case of (s)he was still in the Netherlands. In the end, as grant recipient, you are responsible for the disbursing of the scholarship to the scholarship holder.

Q: Accommodation reservation needs to be made well in advance and often cannot be cancelled. If the OKP scholarship holder returns to his/her country during the study programme or stays in his country at the start of the programme and is entitled to receive monthly allowance, can the university deduct the rent of the reserved accommodation from the scholarship?

- A: The subsistence allowance must be paid to, or on behalf of, the scholarship holder (see: Grant Obligations & Conditions). If accommodation has been booked on behalf of the scholarship holder, the subsistence allowance may (partially) be used to cover these costs as well – as would be the case of (s)he was still in the Netherlands. In the end, as grant recipient, you are responsible for the disbursing of the scholarship to the scholarship holder.

Q: Can the 5% be used to cover the extra costs that students make, who are stuck in the Netherlands, after their studies?

- A: Yes. Nuffic gives the grant recipients the freedom to cover unforeseen expenses to a max of 5% within the available grant amount that has been granted to the grant recipient per deadline. Extra costs for accommodation, travel, insurance or visa that have to be made due to COVID-19, can be declared under this category.

Nuffic presents: Changes in course modalities and course dates

A new employer statement is not necessary for courses that have been postponed. Do ask for additional confirmation of employer in case of rescheduling courses.

(Partial) replacement by online courses is possible for all courses, if scheduled between mid-March and 1 September 2021.

Flexibility regarding changes in course dates is possible, as long as they fit within the programme's official end dates for scholarships, for granted scholarships only.

Questions & answers:

Q: What if the employer is not reachable for a confirmation due to Covid-19?

- A: It is important that the employer agrees with the rescheduled course dates. Should there be an exceptional situation where the employer cannot be reached, then please contact us to discuss the situation.

Q: Does this mean that courses can also start earlier? For online courses you need more time so it would be useful if could get subsidy earlier.

- A: In principle yes, as long as they do not surpass the end date. Nuffic will come back to this question. However: it is not possible to *grant* earlier.

Q: Is an extra start date possible?

- A: It is important to keep rounds separated. Scholarships granted under the November 2019 round and earlier can be moved forward, up until the OKP's official implementation deadlines. For these courses, it is also possible to split the group of scholarship holders for a specific course, for example: having half of the group start in September 2020, and the other half in February 2021. For the scholarships that still need to be granted, replacement of face-to-face classes by online alternatives is allowed between mid-March 2020 and 1 September 2021, however, the dates of these courses may not be moved forward beyond the timeframe of the application round they belong to. So answer depends on the round it applies to.

General questions and answers (including those from the chat):

Q: How to register course duration or period in total days, actual days? In DELTA when partly online and partly face to face, course will be a combination full-time and partly part-time.

- A: Good question. We are working on the technical adjustments to Delta that are necessary to administer the corona measures correctly, you will be informed about the required procedures as soon as possible.

Q: Can you elaborate on the grant stop?

- A: The grant stop is a Ministry decision and therefore Nuffic cannot make any statements about when it will end. Of course, Nuffic has clearly expressed the possible consequences of this grant stop and stressed that we would need to see it lifted before 1 June 2020 to be able to continue the OKP scholarships process for the current rounds. In the meantime, Nuffic continues as normal, for example with the assessment of proposals and scholarship applications. When new information is available, this will be shared as soon as possible.

Q: Some of our students were in the middle of a course that was cancelled before they finished it, due to corona. The course cannot be continued online. Will it be possible for them to return to the Netherlands to finish the course?

- A: They are allowed to return to the Netherlands to finish the course at a later time, provided the alternative course period falls within the implementation deadlines of the OKP. However, there will not be any additional subsidy available for them. Extra costs to be made to facilitate their return to the Netherlands, may be declared under the flexible space however, up to a maximum of 5% within the original (total) grant amount.

Q: How to submit a final report for the Nov 2019 deadline if the duration of the course extends that deadline?

- A: We are working on the technical adjustments to Delta that are necessary to administer the corona measures correctly, you will be informed about the required procedures as soon as possible.

Q: What is the expectation on future grants to be issued, e.g. April deadline etc.

- A: We strive to allocate scholarships as planned and will keep you updated if the grant freeze from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs changes our current planning.

Q: OKP scholarship holders who stay in their own country during first period of their study need to have a reliable bank account to transfer their allowance to. Often this is not the case. Also bank cost will be deducted. Can we start paying their allowance after they have arrived in The Netherlands and have opened a Dutch bank account?

- A: This is a decision that you as grant recipient are allowed to take on your own. As grant recipient, you are responsible for all decisions with regard to the scholarship, including the timing of disbursing of the scholarship to the scholarship holder.

Q: In the information it is stated that all given rules apply for existing grants. But at the same time, an example is given for a programme that starts online in September and continues in The Netherlands in January. I assume this example concerns a NEW grant.

- A: The leniency measures provided solely apply to existing grants. Measures regarding new grants will be announced as soon as possible.

Implications:

Q: What are the implications for students with an OKP scholarship who return home to follow education online for the remainder of the academic year, beyond adjustment of the subsistence allowance, after a period of 3 months, to the allowance available for an OKP country.

- A: There are no further financial implications that follow from our leniency measures. This means that for face-to-face courses that have been interrupted before they were finished due to corona, all other reimbursements corresponding to a 'Not E-learning, partly in the Netherlands' course (p. 14/15 of the Grant Obligations & Conditions) apply, also for the remainder of the course that the student followed online from her/his home country.

Q: What are the implications for students with an OKP scholarship who return home to follow education online for the remainder of the academic year and who return before the start of academic year 2020-2021?

- A: There are 2 financial implications: Firstly, the subsistence allowance will be adjusted in case a student would stay in the OKP-country for more than 3 months. Secondly, the extra costs for flying back- and forth an extra time is not by default covered by the scholarship but could be covered by the flexible space with a maximum of 5% within the available (total) grant.

Q: What are the implications for students with an OKP scholarship who return home to follow education online for the remainder of the academic year and who are unable to return to NL before the start of academic year 2020-2021.

- A: The subsistence allowance will be adjusted in case a student will stay in the OKP - country for more than 3 months. (This question only applies to Master's scholarships)

Two examples are shared of online education and graduation:

Laura Kwak (IHE Delft) presented pictures of an online graduation ceremony, of which parts were prerecorded and parts were performed live. The ceremony was watched by 800 people and has now received 8200 views. It was very well received by students and their families.

Lisanne Gerstel (KIT) presented the switch from face to face education to online education. At KIT almost all education was continued through Zoom, including open book exams. Aspects that are different are for example, the length of the classes, as well as the interaction. Even if face to face education would be possible again in smaller groups, KIT will ensure alternative are always available.