



THE N.W. POSTHUMUS  
INSTITUTE

PhD TRAINING  
PROGRAMME

2021-2022

**N.W. POSTHUMUS** INSTITUTE

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## INTRODUCTION

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The N.W. Posthumus Institute is the Research School for Economic and Social History in the Netherlands and Flanders, including research focusing on non-Western history, world history, and social-cultural history. The Institute is named after Professor Nicolaas Wilhelmus Posthumus (1880-1960), the first professor to hold a chair in economic history in the Netherlands. He was the initiator of an impressive number of institutions which today still figure prominently in historical research, such as the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam.

The N.W. Posthumus Institute was founded in 1988 as an interuniversity training programme for Dutch PhD candidates. In 1994, the collaborating universities decided to turn the existing organisation into an Interuniversity Research Institute. In the same year, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) accredited the Institute formally as a Research School for a period of five years. A number of Flemish universities joined the N.W. Posthumus Institute in 2002 and 2011.

The Department of History & Art History of Utrecht University houses the administrative office of the N.W. Posthumus Institute since 1 July 2021. At this moment, fifteen institutions cooperate in the N.W. Posthumus Institute: three Belgian faculties, eleven Dutch faculties from ten universities, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, and the Fryske Akademy. Since 1993 the participating institutions pay an annual contribution in order to finance the PhD training programme and other research activities.

At this moment, over 300 PhD candidates have completed the Basic Training of the N.W. Posthumus Institute. A survey of projects currently undertaken by the young scholars of the Institute can be found on the Posthumus website. PhD candidates of the faculties or historical institutes participating in the N.W. Posthumus Institute can – and usually will – take part in the research training of the N.W. Posthumus Institute and remain a member of the Institute up until the completion of their dissertation. PhD candidates from non-participating institutions can also join the programme, but they will be charged a different fee. The PhD training programme starts with Seminar 1: ‘My project in a nutshell’ (see Chapter 6).

From the start, internationalisation has been a priority of our Research School. In 1990, the N.W. Posthumus Institute took the initiative to create a European network for postgraduate research training. This network is called ESTER: European graduate School for Training in Economic and social historical Research. Around fifty European universities belong to the ESTER network, which organises the yearly Research Design Course for starting PhD candidates as well as Advanced Seminars for PhD candidates further along in their research.

## RESEARCH NETWORKS OF THE N.W. POSTHUMUS INSTITUTE

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*It is our goal to foster a fruitful interaction between education and research and to bring young researchers in contact with established colleagues and vice versa. The integration of young with established researchers is important in the Posthumus philosophy, as the N.W. Posthumus Institute is not only aims to create a training network, but also an environment where researchers interact and cooperate. In order to facilitate this interaction, the N.W. Posthumus Institute has established six research networks.*

### **1. Economy and Society of the Pre-industrial Low Countries in a Comparative Perspective**

Directors:

Dr Pepijn Brandon (International Institute for Social History, pepijn.brandon@iisg.nl)

Dr Heidi Deneweth (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, heidi.deneweth@vub.ac.be)

### **2. Globalization, Inequality and Sustainable Development in Long-Term Perspective**

Directors:

Dr Robrecht Declercq (Ghent University, robrecht.declercq@ugent.be)

Dr ir Frank Veraart (Eindhoven University of Technology, f.c.a.veraart@tue.nl)

Dr Pim de Zwart (Wageningen University, pim.dezwart@wur.nl)

### **3. Inclusion, Exclusion and Mobility**

Directors:

Dr Bart Lambert (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, bart.lambert@vub.be)

Dr Marion Pluskota (Leiden University, m.pluskota@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

### **4. Life-course, Family and Labour**

Directors:

Dr Paul Puschmann (Radboud University, paul.puschmann@ru.nl)

Dr Corinne Boter (Utrecht University, c.a.boter@uu.nl)

### **5. Routes and Roots in Colonial and Global History**

Directors:

Professor Ulbe Bosma (International Institute of Social History/Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, ubo@iisg.nl)

Dr Elisabeth Heijmans (University of Antwerp, elisabeth.heijmans@uantwerpen.be)

Dr Fenneke Sysling (Leiden University, f.h.sijling@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

### **6. Societies in Context: Interactions between humans and rural-urban environments**

Directors:

Dr Katharine Frederick (Utrecht University, k.r.frederick@uu.nl)

Dr Wouter Ronsijn (Ghent University, wouter.ronsijn@ugent.be)

## A SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE N.W. POSTHUMUS PHD TRAINING PROGRAMME

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### 3.1 Aims of the programme

The PhD training of the N.W. Posthumus Institute aims to contribute to a successful completion of dissertation projects in the domain of economic and social history. The quality of a dissertation is determined by the quality of the knowledge and academic tools of a future researcher. Therefore, this institute seeks to foster these qualities through a system of collaboration with fellow candidates and experts in the field of social and economic history, so they can learn from the best. The institute wants to attain these goals firstly by enlarging and deepening the knowledge of economic or social history the PhD candidates have acquired during their Master studies. Although each candidate has a different area of expertise, it is also important for them to further develop their general knowledge of economic or social history. In doing so, the PhDs are more likely to make better contributions to academic and non-academic debates.

Secondly, the N.W. Posthumus Institute supports PhD projects by encouraging PhD candidates from the start to write and present their work. Although the main focus of this programme lies on the individual projects of the PhD candidates, collaboration through feedback is an important aspect of the training. The candidates are expected to write a series of papers, to be presented during several seminars, and they will receive feedback from fellow candidates and renowned senior researchers from all across Europe. In doing so, the institute tries to foster an environment in which the PhD candidate can grow confident and become a skilled researcher in their own right.

Finally, the N.W. Posthumus Institute intends to integrate PhD candidates into the community of Dutch and Flemish historians specialised in economic and social history by stimulating them to engage in international activities (such as the Research Design Courses and Advanced Seminars of ESTER, Summer schools, conferences, etc.) and thus to become a part of international networks.

### 3.2 General structure of the PhD training programme

The PhD training programme of the N.W. Posthumus Institute covers the entire period of the dissertation project, but in practice, the programme focuses specifically on the first three years. We distinguish two parts: the Basic Training (roughly the first year), and the Advanced Training, which will be tailor-made to suit the individual interests and requirements of the PhD candidate.

The Basic Training consists of three seminars in the course of the first fourteen months:

**Seminar 1:** 'My project in a Nutshell'

**Seminar 2:** 'Work in Progress'

**Seminar 3:** Research Design Course

The Basic Training will be formally concluded with an Individual Assessment, in which two fellows of the N.W. Posthumus Institute will evaluate the development of the PhD candidate and his/her project. In case of a positive evaluation, the PhD candidate will receive the Basic Training Diploma during the annual Posthumus Conference. After the Basic Training, PhD candidates work individually on their Advanced Training. Once they have met the criteria, they can apply for the Certificate by sending in their personal dossier. The dossier will be assessed by the Education Programme Director. In case of doubt, the dossier will be sent to the Examination Committee for a final verdict.

## IMPORTANT FUNCTIONARIES & BODIES

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### 4.1 Examination Committee

The Examination Committee has been assigned the supervision of the PhD training programme. This committee also decides on the acceptance of candidates into the programme. Furthermore, it advises the Education Programme Director in case PhD candidates do not fully meet the criteria for a certificate of the N.W. Posthumus diploma. Candidates can request the examination regulations at the administrative office of the Institute via [posthumus@uu.nl](mailto:posthumus@uu.nl). These regulations also contain the procedures to be followed in case PhD candidates do not agree with a decision and want to appeal.

### 4.2 Education Programme Director

The Education Programme Director, Rogier van Kooten (via [posthumus@uu.nl](mailto:posthumus@uu.nl)), oversees the PhD training programme and provides candidates with advice and counsel in matters related to schooling and their career start as researcher, during the Basic Training as well as afterwards.

### 4.3 Education Committee

The Education Committee presides over the way in which the PhD training programme functions, in collaboration with the Education Programme Director. Together, they evaluate and re-evaluate, and discuss any necessary alterations eventually needed to keep the programme aligned with the needs of the candidates. The committee also advises the General Board of the N.W. Posthumus Institute on changes in the curriculum and recommends new initiatives. The committee consists of fellows of the N.W. Posthumus Institute and the PhD representatives.

### 4.4 PhD council

Every PhD candidate of the N.W. Posthumus Institute is a member of the PhD council. This council selects PhD representatives, who in turn advise the General Board of the N.W. Posthumus Institute. The council discusses all matters relevant to the PhD candidates. The council meets annually, usually during the annual conference.

### 4.5 ESTER network

Creating an international network of academics in the field of social and economic history is a priority of the N.W. Posthumus Institute. Therefore, there are several international activities that figure prominently in the PhD training programme, such as the international Research Design Course, the third seminar in the Basic Training of the N.W. Posthumus Institute. It also includes candidates and experts from outside of Belgium and the Netherlands. Formally, this course is organised by the ESTER network, the European graduate School for Training in Economic and social historical Research.

## REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION OF PHD CANDIDATES

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*PhD candidates interested in joining the N.W. Posthumus Institute can apply for admission. They must fill out the online application form at the website of the N.W. Posthumus Institute, taking into consideration the time limits for registration. Requirements for admission are as follows:*

- Candidates should have a relevant Master's (or equivalent) degree. The Examination Committee decides which preparatory training is necessary to qualify for admission to the N.W. Posthumus Institute in case the obtained degree in itself appears insufficient for direct admission.
- Candidates should be formally assigned to a PhD project. AIO's or scholarship PhD candidates ('*bursalen*') also qualify as such. A candidate who did not yet go through such a formal procedure of selection, can only be admitted if the supervisor provides a written statement confirming that this PhD candidate has the expertise to attend and complete the Posthumus Training Programme successfully.
- The annual cohort of PhD candidates entering the curriculum usually consists of between 15 and 25 candidates. If the number of applicants exceeds this number, the Examination Committee will need to make a selection.
- Regulations concerning the annual fee PhD candidates of participating institutions in the N.W. Posthumus Institute have to pay are listed in the financial appendix of the Common Agreement of the Common Agreement between the institutions participating in the N.W. Posthumus Institute Research School. More info on this can be obtained via [posthumus@uu.nl](mailto:posthumus@uu.nl).
- PhD candidates from institutions not participating in the N.W. Posthumus Institute will be charged a higher fee compared to PhD candidates from participating institutions in the N.W. Posthumus Institute. These fees are listed in the agreements between these institutions and the university that hosts the N.W. Posthumus Institute.
- PhD candidates of the N.W. Posthumus Institute have to complete the full Training Programme. External candidates can compose their own programme in consultation with the Education Programme Director.

## THE PHD TRAINING PROGRAMME OF THE N.W. POSTHUMUS INSTITUTE IN DETAIL

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The Basic Training of the N.W. Posthumus Institute entitles the PhD candidate to a N.W. Posthumus diploma, if the PhD candidate has met the following requirements:

- submission of an updated study plan before the individual assessment;
- active participation in the three seminars of the Basic Training (see below);
- composition and presentation of the required papers for these seminars;
- successfully passing the Individual Assessment and supplying the required information.

Moreover, every PhD candidate is expected to attend the annual Posthumus Conference.

### 6.1 Seminar 1: 'My project in a Nutshell'

In this first seminar the PhD candidates of the new cohort get to know each other and their projects. In addition to PhD candidates of the new cohort, the seminar can also be attended by Research Master students who are close to writing a PhD proposal or applying for funds. The seminar provides a forum to present initial ideas and to get feedback from both other starting researchers as well as from a Posthumus fellow. Prior to the meeting, every participant writes a short research note in English about the historiographical background and the content of the project they are involved in: 'My project in a Nutshell'. The aim is to position the project within the academic debate. Participants will read and discuss each other's notes.

When	: Brussels, Belgium (December 2021)
Deadline research note	: TBA (November 2021)
Preparation	: c. 1 week
Attendance	: 2 days
EC	: 2 (1 EC = 28 hours)

### 6.2 Minor Paper & Seminar 2: 'Work in Progress'

The minor paper should provide a first substantial discussion of the PhD project. The objectives of this paper are to position the research project in the relevant academic debates, formulating the research questions and discussing the methodologies and techniques (10-15 pages A4). The minor paper should be written in English and has to be presented at the two-day Seminar 2: 'Work in Progress'. At this Seminar 2, each PhD candidate will present the candidate's own minor paper, and will also be a discussant of another PhD candidate's minor paper. A senior researcher, usually one of the fellows of the N.W. Posthumus Institute (although external experts are an option too), will also comment on this paper. Participants of Seminar 2 will read all of the minor papers of the other PhDs in their group and actively take part in the general discussion. Furthermore, each participant will referee on one specific paper. If they see fit, experts can also assign some reading materials to the participants. The Education Programme Director of the N.W. Posthumus Institute will be present during this seminar.

When & where	: TBA (April/May 2022)
Preparation	: c. 1 week
Attendance	: 2 days
EC	: 6 (4 for the paper, 2 for attendance)

### 6.3 Major Paper & Research Design Course

The writing of the Major Paper provides an opportunity to create an advanced discussion concerning the PhD projects. It should evaluate the structuring of the research so far and the choices made for the eventual thesis. The candidate must be able to justify these choices in the light of good academic practice. The Major Paper thus should provide a well-founded overview of the research question and sub-questions, the expected answers, the methods to be used, the research steps to be taken, the timeline, the required information, and the (provisional) structure (chapters) of the thesis. The Research Design Course invites to reflect upon issues discussed in academic literature, including scientific ambitions, the perspectives adopted and rejected, and problems with combining theory and empirical research. It is expected that issues specifically relevant to the individual project will be included in the Major Paper after the Research Design Course. The Major Paper will therefore result in a draft version of the first chapter of the dissertation. It should include an extensive introduction to the project as well as a dissertation plan.

The Research Design Course is an international seminar of three to five days, at which PhDs will present their Major Papers and receive feedback from fellow candidates in their group as well as from international senior researchers. All participants will read each other's work and will prepare for a discussion based upon what they have read. Because the Research Design Course is open to PhD candidates from all over Europe, this course is organised by the ESTER network and its partners in collaboration with the Education Programme Director of the N.W. Posthumus Institute. You should be aware that the application process is competitive, and enrolment is limited. Participants will therefore be selected on the basis of the progress of their research project, which means that their proposal should meet minimum standards. Participation in the Research Design Course may be substituted by participation in another activity, such as a Summer School, provided that this has been agreed upon by the Education Programme Director.

When & where	: exact dates (October/November 2022) and location TBA
Deadline Major Paper	: exact deadline (in September 2022) TBA
Preparation	: c. 1,5 week
Attendance	: 3 or 4 days
EC	: 8 (5 for the paper, 3 for attendance)

### 6.4 Individual Assessment

The Basic Training ends with an individual assessment. At this meeting of approximately one hour, two fellows of the N.W. Posthumus Institute will assess, together with the PhD candidate and the PhD's supervisor, the first year of the PhD project and the expectations for the remainder of the project. The major aim is to assess whether the PhD is likely to complete the PhD project in time. Problems and possible solutions can also be discussed. If the fellows conclude after the assessment that the PhD candidate will in all likelihood finish the Posthumus training with a dissertation, the candidate will qualify for the Posthumus diploma, provided the PhD candidate has fulfilled all other requirements of the Basic Training. If the fellows conclude that the PhD candidate is unlikely to complete the PhD project, the PhD candidate may be asked to write an additional paper in which remaining questions must be answered. A last option that can be decided upon during the individual assessment is the consultation of the Examination Committee regarding ending the membership of the N.W. Posthumus Institute and the advice to the supervisor that there are serious doubts about the successful completion of the project. The PhD candidate submits a report beforehand in which they include the previous comments they received, as well as a reflection on how they will deal with this feedback.

When & where	: Utrecht (Netherlands) and Antwerp (Belgium), exact dates (January/February 2023) TBA
Preparation	: 3 days
EC	: 1

## 6.5 Advanced Training

The Basic Training is followed by the Advanced Training, an individual curriculum. This Advanced Training aims to assist the PhD candidate to become an autonomous and known colleague among the national and international community of researchers in Economic and Social History and other relevant disciplines. The N.W. Posthumus Institute expects the PhD candidates to participate in the Research School on an individual basis and to design their own portfolio. This portfolio must fulfil five criteria with its subsequent training activities:

1. Internationalisation criterion: one paper in an international academic peer-reviewed journal or one working paper in an international Working Paper series as well as a paper to be presented at an international conference (other than the Posthumus conference);
2. Network engagement criterion: participation at the annual Posthumus conference, in the second year as commentator and in the third year as speaker;
3. Exercise criterion: presentation of a paper on two research training activities, such as a masterclass, seminar, workshop or colloquium organised by the N.W. Posthumus Institute or another academic institute (other than the home department of the PhD);
4. Organisation criterion: organising a masterclass, seminar, conference panel or valorisation activity, or similar event;
5. Job preparation criterion: attending the Posthumus Career Event. Alternatively, the PhD candidate may fulfil this criterion by following an elaborate coaching trajectory at the home university of the PhD.

The elements mentioned above constitute the minimum level of advanced learning. PhD candidates can participate in as many Posthumus activities such as masterclasses or advanced seminars as they want. They can also participate in workshops and other activities organised by the research networks of the N.W. Posthumus Institute.

A PhD candidate qualifies for the Posthumus Research Certificate if the candidate has fulfilled the requirements specified above. PhD candidates are encouraged to plan masterclasses and write an article/paper during their second and third year, so that the certificate can be granted well before the end of their project and they can concentrate on finishing their thesis. The PhD candidates are required to send articles, papers and additional documentation to the office of the N.W. Posthumus Institute.

## RESEARCH TRAINING ACTIVITIES

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*PhD candidates participating in the PhD Training Programme of the N.W. Posthumus Institute can participate in as many research training activities as they want. Moreover, they are actively encouraged to also organise activities themselves. The N.W. Posthumus Institute can help anyone who wants to organise a workshop or a conference with financial as well as personal and practical support. In order to give an idea about the practical forms that are frequently used, several activities are listed below.*

### 7.1 Masterclasses (2 EC)

A masterclass is staged around a well-known (usually foreign) expert who visits Belgium or the Netherlands. A small group of up to five or six PhD candidates and/or Research Master candidates will have the opportunity to interact intensively with the 'master'. The projects of the participants will be the point of departure for the masterclass. Participants therefore have to write a paper about their research and the problems they experience. The research of the master can be raised during the class. Note that even though each masterclass can be tailor-made, a lecture or a seminar where visitors only present their papers is not regarded a masterclass.

The expertise of the master defines the content of a masterclass. The PhD candidates must assess whether they can profit from a particular masterclass. The N.W. Posthumus Institute welcomes initiatives of PhD candidates to organise masterclasses and will offer financial support.

### 7.2 ESTER Advanced Seminars (4 EC)

ESTER, the European Graduate School for Training in Economic and social historical Research, occasionally organises Advanced Seminars around a particular domain of research, intended for advanced PhD candidates. During an Advanced Seminar, PhD candidates are brought together with a number of international experts and discuss the papers and presentations of the PhD candidates. The Advanced Seminars will be advertised on the website of the N.W. Posthumus Institute.

### 7.3 Annual PhD conference (2 EC)

Together with the Education Programme Director, the PhD representatives organise a PhD conference as part of the annual N.W. Posthumus Conference, usually in Spring. During this conference third-year PhD candidates will present their projects and in particular the results of their research two years after the Research Design Course. The PhD candidates are asked to submit a paper, which will be distributed to the participants. Each paper will be refereed by both a second-year PhD candidate and a senior fellow of the N.W. Posthumus Institute or another expert. The second-year PhD candidates act as referees during this conference. The first-year PhD candidates are expected to attend the conference.

### 7.4 Research network activities

The research conducted by the senior fellows of the N.W. Posthumus Institute is grouped in six networks (see Chapter 2). The PhD candidates are expected to join at least one of these networks as their primary choice, and they may add another one as a secondary choice. They are expected to contact the research director(s) of the network they are interested in and to let the Office Manager of the N.W. Posthumus institute know which network they would like to join. The Institute invites the PhD candidates to take part in the conferences or other activities organised by their group. They also can and should suggest group activities with value added to their projects.

## 7.5 External Activities

Some departments of Economic and Social History organise postdoctoral workshops or seminars, where papers are presented and debated or lectures given. The website of the N.W. Posthumus Institute ([www.posthumusinstitute.org](http://www.posthumusinstitute.org)) gives information on seminars, meetings, courses, and conferences. Information is also e-mailed to the members of the Institute by means of the Posthumus Newsletter.

The N.W. Posthumus Institute cannot provide full coverage of all activities in the field. PhD candidates are encouraged to look around and see which activities are interesting. It pays off to be attentive, so keep an eye out for Summer schools organised by the European Business History Association ([www.ebha.org](http://www.ebha.org)), or check FRESH-meetings (Frontier Research in Economic and Social History, FRESH - Queen's University Centre for Economic History ([quceh.org.uk](http://quceh.org.uk))) that take place at different locations. The number of temporary, international research groups is increasing rapidly, such as the Tensions of Europe group for those interested in technology and its societal embeddedness ([www.tensionsofeurope.eu](http://www.tensionsofeurope.eu)), or <https://www.transitiestudies.nl/> for the Foundation of the History of Technology.

The listserver organised by EH.net ([eh.net/](http://eh.net/)) regularly provides information on upcoming events and distributes calls for papers, and subscribing to their newsletter is recommended. The website of the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam ([www.iisg.nl](http://www.iisg.nl)) distributes information on international activities. A valuable site, but in German and focused on that country is HSoz-u-Kult: [hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de](http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de).

Other research schools may offer specialised courses, which may be of interest for individual PhD candidates of the N.W. Posthumus Institute. Among those schools are

- Huizinga Institute, Research School for Cultural History
- Research School of Medieval History (see also the online Initiative for medieval studies Reti Medievali)
- Tinbergen Institute
- Research school Science, Technology and Modern Culture (WTMC)
- Dutch Research School of Women Studies (NOV)

Local Graduate Schools and faculties also organise useful courses. The N.W. Posthumus Institute generally does not organise courses for improving general skills, like academic writing in English or the use of ICT.

## APPENDIX: PLANNING COHORT 2021

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15 October 2021	Deadline registration
November 2021	Deadline research note Seminar 1
December 2021	Seminar 1: 'My project in a Nutshell'
March/April 2022	Deadline Minor Paper
April/May 2022	Seminar 2: 'Work in Progress'
Spring 2022	N.W. Posthumus Conference
Summer 2022	Deadline Major Paper
Autumn 2022	Research Design Course
January / February 2023	Individual Assessment



*Walking high in the mountains on a glacier in the Harz mountains, Geldolph Adriaan Kessler, c. 1903*

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