



Call for Network Institute Academy Assistant Projects

Apply for an interdisciplinary research project and work with 2 student assistants

Deadline June 15th (Monday), 2026 at 23.59 pm

The [Network Institute](#)'s (NI) Academy Assistants program (NIAA) is now entering its 16th year. Initially funded through a KNAW grant and aimed at combining social sciences and computer science research, it has since been adopted by the Network Institute and opened up for other interdisciplinary projects which fall within the NI's research themes. The Academy Assistants program aims at promising high-potential master students who want to conduct scientific research and possibly pursue an academic career. As in previous years, this year the program will also be able to fund at least three proposals.

Accepted proposals will start in November 2026. The program aims to bring together **scientists from different disciplines**; therefore, the projects must combine methods and themes from two different disciplines affiliated with the NI. For each awarded project, the program will fund two student research assistants (0,2 FTE) for a period of ten months. The expected outcome of the project is a published paper and/or research proposal. In addition, at the end of the project (July 2027) we will publish all project final reports on the website.

This call is aimed at VU researchers who are willing to cross the boundaries of their own discipline, and who have a research topic in mind that would benefit from such an interdisciplinary approach. We especially encourage early career researchers, including post-docs and PhDs, to apply for this funding.

Applicants should send us a short research proposal as outlined in the [template proposal below](#). Send the completed proposals to: akademiestudent.fsw@vu.nl, **before June 15th 2026 at 23.59**. An independent review committee will evaluate the proposals based on interdisciplinarity, quality and fit to the NIAA program (i.e., centered on student development of research interest and competence). The successful projects will be announced **early July 2026**. All submitted projects are invited to attend the NIAA end-of-year event, where this year's projects will be presented (**June 30th 2026, 3-5pm**).

Quick facts:

- Proposals shall be **interdisciplinary** and within the **Digital Society** scope;
- Project supervision by **two researchers** (any researcher, e.g. teaching staff, research staff, PhD students, can be supervisors);
- At least one supervisor has to be both a VU employee and a member of the Network Institute (at the time of submitting the proposal and for the whole duration of the project);
- Regular team meetings (2 supervisors and 2 students) and progress reports are expected;
- Teams can include other people in supervising roles, as long as each assistant has one responsible co-applicant supervisor;
- **Clear research outputs** are expected by the project (e.g., scientific publications, seminars, white papers, reports);
- Proposed projects can be continuations of previous NIAA projects. In that case, supervisors need to address how this new proposal is different from the previous project;
- A maximum of **1 project per supervisor** will be awarded (although it is allowed to submit multiple proposals. In case multiple projects are awarded to a researcher, the researcher will have to find an alternative supervisor (please already indicate this in the proposal));
- Funding is for **two** student assistants for **9 months, at 1 day per week (0.2 FTE)**;
- 2000€ travel/expenses budget will be allocated per project;
- Each supervisor is the primary responsible for one student. In case of a conflict between the two supervisors, the resources of the project (the two students and any remaining budget) will be split equally between the supervisors;
- A maximum of 3 eligible NIAA projects will be funded.

Duties of researchers and students:

- The NIAA program includes a series of **scheduled meetings** where both students and supervisors are required to attend. This includes (1) three education meetings (targeting only students) and (2) two NIAA events (targeting both students and supervisors) where projects present their preliminary and final results. The schedule will be sent at the beginning of the NIAA projects. More than two unjustified absences will result in early termination of the funding (by either students or supervisors).
- A **written report** (light-weight) will have to be submitted at the end of the project.

For more information and inspiration, visit
<http://www.networkinstitute.org/academy-assistants>.

If you have any questions regarding this call or eligibility, please contact
akademiestudent.fsw@vu.nl

We look forward to receiving your proposals!
NI Academy Team
VU Academy Assistants Proposal 2026-2027



Proposal Title

Applicants

Eligible proposals must have two (and only two) applicants from different disciplines within the Network Institute.

Supervisor Name	Department/Group	Faculty
1.		
2.		

Project description

Provide a brief description of the research project (max. 300 words)

Project Organization

Each proposal requests two Academy Assistants from different disciplines. Describe their roles and describe the skills and expertise required from them in the context of the research team. In case of a larger team, also include names, affiliations roles of team members other than supervisors and AAs (max. 300 words)

Collaboration

Describe how your research improves collaboration and cross-pollination between the disciplines involved (max. 300 words)

Deliverables

Enumerate intended project results: papers, research proposals or otherwise (max 200 words)

Planning

Provide a breakdown of the project into phases with tentative timing (max 150 words)

Please report the word count and respect the word count limits: proposals that exceed the stated limits will not be eligible.

Evaluation Criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Scientific and/or societal relevance	10%

Interdisciplinarity	20%
Centered on student development	35%
Organization/workplan/project feasibility	25%
Fit with the NI Mission: "Understand, challenge, and improve the Digital Society"	10%