

RESEARCH CLINIC

General information

Supervisor:	Joeri Reinders
Title of clinic:	KlimaatHelpdesk: Improving Science Communication About Climate Change Through Questions or Education.
Number of students:	Max. 2 students
Major (<i>if applicable and approved by the Major Convener</i>):	
(Pre)requisites (<i>if applicable</i>):	

Research context

The KlimaatHelpdesk is a unique science-communication platform that—contrary to most traditional models—is *demand-driven*. Members of the public submit questions, which are answered through a peer-review process by experts and scientists. These questions address not only the natural sciences behind climate change but also its societal impacts. Over the past six years, the KlimaatHelpdesk has answered 256 questions with contributions from more than 350 experts. During this period, we have won several science-communication awards and received funding from organizations such as NWO, the Triodos Foundation, and multiple universities.

From this initiative, many related projects have emerged. For example, we are transforming all our written content into video formats, we have developed an online game based on our answers, and we are creating educational materials in collaboration with KlimaatWijzer. Yet initiatives like these often struggle to reach their intended audiences and instead remain concentrated among early adopters. Educational resources, for instance, are primarily used by teachers who are already enthusiastic about sustainability education, while others make little use of them. Likewise, people who already possess substantial knowledge about climate change are often the ones submitting questions to the KlimaatHelpdesk.

In this research clinic, you will join one of the initiatives mentioned above and help develop—and scientifically test—a plan to improve our science-communication efforts and reach a wider audience. You will participate in co-creation sessions and engage directly with different target groups to test the communication products you help create. Through this process, you will gain experience in researching communication strategies, analyzing intended audiences, and understanding how volunteer-driven organizations operate.

Students' tasks and activities

This research clinic will run for an entire semester (Block 3 + Block 4), and at the end of each block there will be a deliverable:

1. End of Block 3: The student(s) should have developed a communication product based on KlimaatHelpdesk content *or* a communication plan to promote an existing KlimaatHelpdesk product.
2. End of Block 4: The student(s) should submit a short report describing how they tested their product or plan, the data they collected, and a final discussion of the results.

During Block 3, students are expected to participate in the KlimaatHelpdesk community—specifically by joining either the communication team or the education team (based on their interests). They will use this time to get to know the team and, in collaboration with me and the community manager, identify a specific goal to work on. Potential products include:

- Promoting the KlimaatWijzer education platform among Dutch high school teachers.
- Promoting the KlimaatCasino educational game.
- Creating a communication product to collect questions from underrepresented groups within the KlimaatHelpdesk.
- Creating a communication product to recruit more volunteers (both experts and editors).
- Creating a communication product to promote the KlimaatHelpdesk internationally among scientists.

Prototypes will be developed together with members of the KlimaatHelpdesk community through co-creation sessions.

During Block 4, students will test their prototypes with the intended audience using survey techniques or interviews. The results will be used to refine and improve the prototypes.

Learning objectives:

- Students can explain different theories of science communication, specifically related to climate change.
- Students can run Design Thinking workshops to create a communication product.
- Students can develop, test, and evaluate a communication product.