

Master of Philosophy (Mphil) Cultures of Arts, Science, and Technology (CAST) 2007

The goal of the research master 'Cultures of Arts, Science, and Technology' (CAST) is to train young academics to do research into three important domains of modern culture: science, technology, and the arts. It is unique in combining these three domains into one comprehensive programme of study. CAST focuses on the 20th and 21st centuries, with explicit attention to the historical roots in the 17th – 19th centuries.

The central tenet of CAST is that science (including the humanities and social sciences), technology (in its material forms and as a discipline) and the arts (both in elite and popular expressions) are such pervasive constituents of highly developed societies, that our modern culture can only be understood when these key roles are recognized and explicitly studied. Science, technology, and arts have an *impact on culture*. There is, *vice versa*, a *cultural impact* on science, technology, and the arts too. Science, technology, and the arts are, finally, also *cultures themselves*.

- CAST is a selective, two-year, international Master of Philosophy programme, that takes 25 students per year
- CAST is a research master to train young researchers to either (1) continue in a PhD programme, or (2) directly accept a research job in a knowledge-intensive institute
- CAST students work closely with experienced researchers, and participate in their research practice through colloquia and projects
- CAST is rooted in the research programme of the Faculty of Arts and Culture, which was evaluated by the VSNU assessment board as *good – very good*
- CAST is taught in English
- Dutch CAST students receive a fifth year of study funding (*studiefinanciering*)

CAST is an interdisciplinary research master. If you have an inquisitive mind and are curious to find out how the world hangs together and how things work (or not); if you are open-minded and you are attracted by the adventure to explore the interrelations between philosophy, history, sociology, and arts theory; if you are creative in defining surprising problems, suggesting innovative solutions, and seeing fresh connections; if you have a passion for critical inquiry and debate — then CAST is the right programme for you.

CAST prepares for two kinds of career: (1) a research career in universities (via a subsequent PhD programme); and (2) a research career in any kind of knowledge-intensive institution (varying from a ministry to an industrial company, to an international organisation).

Aims and objectives

CAST combines humanities and qualitative social sciences. The research style itself is interdisciplinary. Important methods include ethnographic and historical studies, conceptual analysis, rhetorical and narrative analysis and theories of metaphor, and phenomenology. Students work closely with the researcher-teachers, resulting in an integrated treatment of doing and learning research. The research methods will thus not be taught in separate 'methods and techniques' courses but integrated in researching substantive questions. Students will be confronted with methodological issues such as the choice between methods, the relation between empirics and theory. A variety of research skills will be taught and practised, ranging from writing and presenting to interviewing and archival research.

Students will also learn about the practices of research. They will learn to make a research proposal, a review article, a conference paper, or an edited volume. Because increasingly research is carried out in multidisciplinary teams, one joint project forms the final step of the first year. During the research internship at the beginning of the second year students will work within the context of contract research.

Contents of the programme

CAST consists of two years. In the first semester, students are introduced to the state of the art and the methodologies for studying the cultures of arts, science, and technology. In the second semester one of three optional modules is chosen, and a joint project is carried out. In the third semester, students work as research assistants in knowledge-intensive institutes and (foreign) research universities. In the fourth semester they research and write their MPhil thesis.

Entering the Field. The state of the art in studying the cultures of arts, science, and technology

In the introductory module, the students immediately 'plunge in deep water' and are introduced to the current frontlines of research. They will interview researchers in the institute about their latest article, their current research project, and about their views of where the international research agenda will be moving in the near future. Choices of leading research question, research site, methodology, and theoretical framework will be explicated. Students will review the last decade of leading international journals.

The Rules of the Game. CAST Research Methods

The module consists of two, closely related, parallel lines. The first consists of the research-learning projects in which small groups of 3-4 students do research, and discuss their progress weekly with each other and the senior researcher-teachers. The second line is formed by a series of lectures about methodological issues, and small training workshops to learn and experiment with research skills such as interviewing, ethnographic observation, and archival studies.

Intermediate training: Getting a feel for doing research and planning your own

In this training the lessons of the first two modules will be put into practice by exploring a research theme together with a senior researcher. Students will use this exploratory research to write a research proposal.

Three parallel modules to explore one of the three main themes of the underlying research programme

In the first half of the second semester students will focus on one of the three core themes of the CAST programme and the underlying research programme — 'the culture of innovation', 'digital culture', and 'beyond the three cultures.' The three modules will offer substantive readings about that particular research core theme, as well as ask the students to do a small research project.

Joint Research Project

The topic of the project will be different each year. These topics will be related to on-going research in the institute. This will allow students to experience the excitement of participating in research at the international forefront. The project will be thoroughly interdisciplinary and will ask for employing the whole gamut of research methodologies that has been offered in the previous months of CAST.

Research internships

During the first four months of the second year, students will work as research assistants in the form of internships. An internship will have the character of a junior research job: a well-defined research task to be carried out, within clear boundaries, with well-defined deliverables, and before a strict deadline. The student will work relatively independently, though under close supervision by a senior researcher.

Thesis workshop, colloquia, and master classes

During the whole period of thesis research — January to June — monthly seminars will be used to discuss general aspects, to exchange experiences, and to present preliminary results. All students are required to participate in these seminars, which will be led by the CAST Director of Studies. Some seminars will take the form of master classes.

Master thesis research

The thesis research is the *pièce de résistance*, and the final stage in the CAST programme. As the final ‘master piece’, it not only is the real test of accomplishing the ability of a researcher, but it also represents one of the most important phases of learning for the student. Here the master-apprentice model of teaching will be used in *optima forma*, supplemented by the seminars and master classes described previously.

Admission requirements

Students need to meet the following requirements:

- Relevant undergraduate degree in the humanities or social sciences
- Ability to speak, read and write in English
- Keen motivation and clear personal vision on being a researcher
- High scholarly abilities, as testified by the quality of specimens of bachelor's work
- All basic computer skills, including word processing, presentation design, database management, spreadsheet operation, and file transferral and conversion

Selection of students

The selection procedure distinguishes three elements: written documents, an English language test, and a personal interview or dedicated essay. The application portfolio will include at least

- Two specimens of writing, done in the undergraduate programme
- A personal letter (800 – 1200 words) describing the motivation to join the CAST programme
- Two letters of recommendation

All students (including those from English speaking countries) have to pass the Academic IELTS English language test (minimum score: 7.0).

More information:

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