CAS PhD program

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GENERAL INFORMATION
CAS PhD program is part of the Graduate School of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University (GSSBS). For general information about the Graduate school, the PhD programs and organization and quality assurance, please see “Educational Quality Assurance Plan for PhD programmes at the Graduate School of Social and Behavioural Science”.

The CAS PhD program includes three components: 1. Individual supervision, 2. General part, and 3. Domain specific part, and covers the entire period of the PhD track with emphasis on following courses specifically during the first years. For PhD-candidates with a Research Master diploma the minimum program size is 10 EC. For PhD-candidates with a ‘Doctoraal’ diploma (Drs) or academic master, the minimum program size is 20 EC (1.5 EC = 1 week, or 1 EC = 28 hr).

In addition, to gain teaching experience, PhD candidates are supposed to spend a maximum of 10% of their time on teaching tasks as part of their research training. The scope of the teaching obligations will be individually determined, but most frequently it will involve individual supervision of the bachelor project or the Master’s thesis (please see the faculty guideline “Regulations for the teaching activities by doctoral candidates 2011”).

Immediately upon start of their PhD track, PhD candidates must submit Request for Exemption and Admission to the Doctoral Program form:
As soon as the request has been approved and no later than 3 months after the starting date of the PhD track, the PhD student, together with supervisors, fills in the Education and Supervision Agreement form, which includes the list of general and/or domain specific courses to be followed by the PhD student, as well as the list of teaching tasks.
1 INDIVIDUAL SUPERVISION
The yearly hours of supervision minimally should amount to 60: two weekly meetings with daily supervisor [co-promotor] and monthly meetings with both daily supervisor and promotor.

2. GENERAL PART OF PHD TRAINING
GSSBS offers several general courses and workshops to PhD candidates. These courses and workshops focus on general academic skills (for example: Scientific writing in English, Presenting your research at conferences) or statistical analyses (for example: Multivariate analyses, Introduction to SEM using Mplus). See website of GSSBS for overview of general courses and application forms:

The Graduate School offers also seven research master programs, accredited by the Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). If courses are followed by less than 15 research master students it is possible for PhD candidates to participate in these courses. More information on these research master programs can be found on http://www.uu.nl/masters/en

The courses offered by GSSBS (incl. advanced courses of research masters) are accredited by the GSSBS. This is also the case for the courses taken from KNAW accredited national Research Schools and national research networks accredited by the GSSBS. For courses not (yet) accredited by the GSSBS, approval by the PhD program coordinator and the Dean of the GSSBS is needed.

3. DOMAIN (CAS) SPECIFIC PART OF THE PHD PROGRAM
This part of PhD program is offered by the CAS staff. Some parts are obligatory for all CAS PhD students: Introduction seminar CAS, yearly presentation at Research seminars, and organization of one workshop in the course of the PhD-project. In addition, the CAS staff offer several specialized courses that PhD students may choose, depending on their interests. The course offering is determined yearly by the CAS board. For specific information about the courses, please contact the course coordinator.

I. Introduction seminar CAS  1 ECTS
(coordinator: Deković)
This seminar gives a broad overview of the research conducted by four research groups participating in the CAS programs: 1. Social and personality development: A transactional approach, 2. Development and treatment of psychosocial problems, 3. Adolescent development: Characteristics and determinants, and 4. Youth in changing cultural contexts. Program leaders present the major theoretical developments and the ‘state of the art’ in a particular field of research, offer short description of the ongoing PhD-projects in their program, present their perspectives on present debates in the field, and on how the PhD-projects in their program are meant to contribute to these debates. This overview should give the future PhD-students a feel for how their own project fits the field of Child and Adolescent Studies. In addition, they get acquainted with all ongoing research in the participating research groups and with all the other PhD-students.
Format: 4 lectures (intro, lectures of each full professor ), January-February each year
Participants: new PhD-students in their first year

II. Research seminar CAS  2 ECTS
(coordinator: Dubas)
In this seminar, all PhD students are requested to present their plans for the research and their ongoing work and planned publications in the PhD-project. In addition, all PhD-students have to act as referees for the presentation of the other students. Staff members act as referees as well.
Format: two half days each year (November and May). PhD-students present. All students have to present once each year. All staff members of CAS are required to be present.
Participants: all PhD-students enrolled in the program

III. Workshops CAS  5 ECTS
(coordinator: Deković)
In workshops, ongoing work with respect to particular theoretical or methodological issues is presented and discussed. PhD students organize the workshops: they propose a theme, invite (inter)national experts to be
present at the workshop and give an introductory lecture on their work, they collect relevant literature that has to be read as preparation for the workshop, and organize all logistics involved in organizing a workshop.

Format: the workshops take the form of a one- or two-day seminar. All PhD-students are required to organize one workshop in the course of their PhD-project, in collaboration with one other PhD-student. A maximum of 3 workshops will be organized each year. Proposals for workshops are presented to the board of CAS. Participating in workshops is voluntary, but PhD-students have to participate in at least 3 workshops during their PhD-trajectory.

Participants: all PhD-students enrolled in the program

IV. Specialized courses offered by CAS staff

#1 - Publishing in Social Science
(coordinator: Thomaes) (offered every other year i.e. 2019, 2021, 2023)
The aim of this 2 × 4h course is to gain more insight into key aspects of the publication process: How do I prepare for writing a paper? How can I write persuasively? What information do I incorporate in my paper, and what information do I leave out? How do I choose a target journal? How do I revise my paper? In this course, we will focus on style of presentation, tactical decisions, and how to persuade your readership, your scientific peers.
In the first part of the course, we will focus on why it is important to publish, and how one can achieve to publish one’s research. The second part of the course deals with the writing of the paper itself – how should we present our findings so that they are attractive and convincing for our readership? Finally, in the third part of the course we discuss how to best handle reviews and respond to reviewers’ comments.
The course is suited for PhD students in the first few years of their PhD project.

#2 - Person-Environment Transactions
(coordinator: Laceulle)
The aim of this prolonged course – returning 4-weekly meetings– is to develop a deeper understanding of person-environment (PE) transactions. This understanding is developed by reflecting on and discussing: the evolutionary background of person-environment transactions, the types of interactions that exist and on which explanatory level they take form (i.e., personality traits, temperament, genes), the neurobiological phenomena associated with these transactions, which developmental periods have special relevance for the study of these transactions, etcetera. Also, the empirical means with which these transactions can be unveiled will be scrutinized.
As many participants will at least have some basic knowledge on PE transactions, the didactic concept of this course is grounded in elaborate group discussion and reflection. Each meeting, one or two group members will prepare a critical contribution, that is taken as the starting point for the meeting. This contribution can have different forms, such as discussing a recently published or seminal research paper, presenting data and/or results from one’s own study on PE transactions, sharing possible research ideas or ideas for grant proposals, strategies for adequate analyses, and so on. In this way, a group-based effort can spur on each individuals’ knowledge about and competence in research on PE transactions.

# 3 - The role of peers in young people’s development
(coordinator: Harakeh)
In this course the focus lays on the role of peers in different stages of young people’s life, i.e. childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Different theories, perspectives and research methodologies (e.g. social network designs, experimental design, observational design) will be discussed to get a deeper understanding on how and why peers play an important role in the life of young people’s development.

1 The specialized courses can be followed also within other PhD training programs, either in Utrecht, or at another university. The only requirement for taking up a particular course as part of the PhD-curriculum is, that the pertinent course is part of either a PhD-program in a national Research School, part of a PhD-program or a graduate school at another university. Proposal for choice of courses will be registered in the Education and Supervision Agreement of the Graduate School, and will be in accordance with the criteria of the Graduate School.
This course is primarily for participants (PhD students and/or CAS staff) who are conducting research on this topic, or are interested to do so in the future. Because participants will have a basic knowledge on this topic and work on different sub-themes using different methodologies, this will contribute to participant’s knowledge and initiate possible collaborations between participants. The meetings will be once every 6 weeks, in which participants will present their findings on this theme and/or introduce and discuss a paper with an interesting perspective, analysis and/or research methodology. Also, other experts in this research field from other Universities will be invited to present their research on peers.

#4 – Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Intervention Research
(coordinator: Van der Valk and Koning)
During this advanced course, which is primarily intended for PhDs who are themselves involved in the intervention research, participants (PhD students and/or CAS staff) will present their own work and problems/questions they encounter. These questions concern conceptual, methodological, and practical issues involved in planning and carrying out intervention research: conceptualizing, designing, and testing behavioral/social interventions; use of empirical evidence, theory and clinical practice in formulating study aims and hypotheses; implementing rigorous design in clinical practice: eligibility, recruitment, enrollment, assessment of intervention integrity; testing interventions for diverse populations; selecting measures; planning and conducting the data analysis: statistical power, effectiveness, moderator/mediator models; issues involved in reporting and publishing of intervention studies: what to report, in which journals; and ethical issues involved in intervention research.

The course is organized around the elements of the empirical cycle, such as the process of conceptualization and operationalization, research strategies and methods, data gathering, data analysis and writing of report. However, the exact topic of each session will be determined based on interests/needs of participating PhD students. For each session, two to three participants (PhD students and/or CAS staff) prepare presentation and send the literature to be read for this session. The main aim of the course is that PhD learn how to critically reflect on the conceptual and methodological choices they (and others) make. The sessions take places once in 6 weeks.

#5 – Experimental Research
(coordinator: Huijding)
How do I conduct experimental research? And more fundamental; why would I want to do experimental research in the first place? What kinds of questions can I answer using experimental designs, that I cannot answer using other designs? How can I set up my experimental research, and what aspects do I need to consider before I start? Questions as these will be addressed in the present course. In particular, this course aims to provide theoretical background knowledge and hands-on expertise on conducting experimental research (i.e., laboratory experiments, field experiments) with children, adolescents, and young adults. Students will also learn about possibilities to use existing labroom facilities and equipment within CAS.

The course is meant both for novices and more advanced experimental researchers. It will help novices designing their studies and choosing their sampling and randomization strategy. It will help more advanced experimental researchers optimizing their research design, and generating potential follow-up studies or conceptual replications. Other important issues, such as involving ethical concerns and dealing with IRBs will also be addressed. Students will be asked to present their experimental research, or their (very) preliminary plans for experimental research, and will receive extensive feedback from the other participants. Depending on the number of participants, this course will be given in four 2-hour sessions. Obviously, conducting experimental research is an ongoing process, and so the teachers of this course will be more than willing to continue to provide their advice after the course is over.

#6 – Studying Development: Longitudinal Analyses
(coordinator: Branje)
The aim of this prolonged course – returning six-weekly meetings– is to develop a deeper understanding of longitudinal analyses. Different types of longitudinal analyses can be discussed: Cross-lagged path analyses, latent growth models, latent class growth models and mixture models, latent transition models, sequential analyses, etc. A deeper understanding of these analyses is developed by reflecting on and discussing the types of longitudinal analyses that exist and which type of research questions they can answer, which types of analyses fit with different ideas about development, the complexities and common problems associated with these analyses, the interpretation of the results, etcetera.
As many participants will at least have some basic knowledge on longitudinal analyses, the didactic concept of this course is grounded in elaborate group discussion and reflection. Each meeting, one or two group members will select an article and prepare a critical contribution, that is taken as the starting point for the meeting. This contribution can have different forms, such as discussing the results of longitudinal analyses of a recently published or seminal research paper, presenting data and/or results from one’s own longitudinal analyses, strategies for adequate analyses, and so on. In this way, a group-based effort can spur on each individual’s knowledge about and competence in longitudinal analyses.

#7 – Tacit Academic Knowledge: Hidden Rules for Academic Success in Times of the Replicability Crisis
(coordinator: Thomaes) (offered every other year i.e. 2018, 2020, 2022)

In preparing for an academic career, PhD students spend much time and effort on gaining what may be called “formal” or declarative knowledge—knowledge of the subject matter and methods relevant to one’s field. They typically gain less “tacit knowledge”—knowledge of how one should deal with oneself, with one’s work, and with others. How do I decide what are important problems to work on? How do I write up my research findings in a way that interests and convinces others? How can I decide on the best potential outlets for my manuscripts? How can I be a productive scholar without neglecting other responsibilities? How do I wisely create opportunities for myself on the job market?
Tacit knowledge, and the ability to act upon it, is critically important at determining young scholars’ success in academia. The goal of this course is to teach tacit academic knowledge in a way that helps PhD students to make more informed work-related decisions, and in a way that supports PhD students in their building gratifying, successful careers. The course will consist of six 2-hour sessions, in which the following questions will be addressed: (1) How to get your research published?, (2) How to get your proposals funded?, (3) How to optimize your productivity?, (4) How to deal with setbacks and experience gratification from your work?, (5) How to develop an own style of work?, and (6) How to avoid sloppy science and to ethical research? Students can attend all sessions, but alternatively they can also choose to attend those sessions that are of most interest to them.

#8 – Conducting a Meta-Analysis
(coordinators Van der Graaff & Van der Valk)
This course is primarily intended for researchers (DaSCA students/PhD students/CAS staff) who are involved in, or who start doing a meta-analysis. The aim is to go through all the steps of a meta-analysis, from defining the research question and designing a literature search strategy, to writing down the results in a scientific article. The course consists of seven meetings (max. 2 hours each) that are each dedicated to a specific step of the meta-analysis: 1) research question & in- and exclusion criteria, 2) literature search & coding system, 3) writing the introduction, 4) effect sizes & multilevel approach, 5) heterogeneity & publication bias, 6) reporting results, 7) writing the discussion. Participants prepare for the meetings by reading literature on meta-analyses as well as high-quality examples of meta-analyses, by bringing in drafts of sections of their own study, and by preparing short presentations. The meetings provide researchers with the opportunity to cooperate, to give and receive peer-feedback, and to share tips and tricks regarding best practice for meta-analyses. An expert on meta-analysis will join several of the meetings to give a theoretical introduction on the topic and to answer questions.