

Programme overview, Research Master African Studies 2008/2009

- [Objectives](#)
- [Programme](#)
- [Programme schedule](#)

Objectives

The Research Master in African Studies introduces students to a range of curricular and career options in the field of African Studies and to a wide network of researchers and their current academic work. Leading scholars from the African Studies Centre in Leiden, and from the Universities of Leiden, Wageningen, Utrecht, Nijmegen, Amsterdam (VU) and Leuven are involved in the programme in a teaching and/or supervisory capacity. Participating staff members' research projects are central to the programme and allow students to come into contact with and work alongside scholars at the front line of African Studies. The programme's interdisciplinary approach is crucial in bridging the gap between the humanities and the social sciences and various research methods, offering a combination of courses and the in-depth study of a particular theme and region. The programme is aimed at talented and highly motivated students who have already undertaken the required preparatory degree courses. Having successfully completed the research master's programme, students will be qualified to engage in research at an academic level (it is the ideal preparation for future PhD candidates), or work in the government sector or for an NGO.

Programme

During the two-year programme (120 ects), students specialise in a topic and a region. After two interdisciplinary courses in the first semester (September-December), they choose one of three tracks: 'Patterns of Power', 'Culture and Modernity' or 'Development and Social Change' (see below) in the second semester (January-June). A regional specialisation – West Africa, Eastern Africa or Southern Africa – is also selected. Parallel to these thematic and regional courses, students attend a methodological course and start to write a research proposal.

In the first semester of the second year, they carry out their own research under the supervision of a researcher from their chosen field of study. The programme provides options for research in South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Cameroon, but also in archives in Oxford, Aix-en-Provence and London, and at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. Research can also take place within an institutional framework such as the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Master's thesis and requirements for graduation

The second year of the programme is concluded with the writing of a thesis and a related article, policy document or PhD research proposal based on the student's research project. Also see: hum.leiden.edu/students > [regulations](#).

Specialisations

Patterns of Power

This specialisation revolves around the way in which people in Africa have developed ideas and mechanisms of power over time. It is a point of debate as to whether and how far colonial types of administration have assimilated older indigenous techniques of domination or whether in fact the reverse process has taken place. The historical roots of various current crises will also be investigated. The course consists of three modules:

- i) the long-term relationship between human beings and their environment,
- ii) the relationship between Africa and the outside world,
- iii) the establishment and survival of African ideologies of power.

Culture and Modernity

This programme provides an introduction to the analysis of the notions of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’, both of which are problematic in Africa. One major focus of research and debate on Africa has been on the ways in which the so-called particularities of culture and the so-called universality of modernity relate to each other in the African context. The central topics of research are the implementation of modern institutions in Africa, the ‘invention of tradition’, the effects of ideologies of modernity, and the changes and development of notions of personhood and belonging in modern African society. Subsequent elaboration will be on the basis of two important focus points that characterise this field of studies in the Netherlands and Belgium: art, popular culture and the mass media, and the study of global religions in Africa.

Development and Social Change

Development is a complex phenomenon. It is an on-going process in which negotiation and conflict between institutions and individuals are central. Development can thus be seen as the arena in which social, political and economic processes take place at different levels, from the international to the local. In the first module, ideas about development in Africa and in particular the relationship between technical knowledge and social engineering are placed in a social and historical context. The second module looks at processes of differentiation and negotiation related to a variety of social and natural resources. The third module deals with forms of vulnerability: how people deal with and anticipate precarious situations, and how large-scale (multilateral) interventions, for example in war and drought, affect local settings.

Programme schedule

Year 1

	sem	course title	ISIScode	t.a.	level	ECTS
I		Aims and results of Africanist research	RAS1IAS1	1 & mc	400	10
I		Processes of Africanist Research	RAS1IAS2	1 & mc	400-500	10
I		Methodological Specialization	RAS1MS		500-600	10

30

II Thematic Specializations:

II	Patterns of Power	RAS1TPP	s	500-600	15
II	Culture and Modernity	RAS1TCM	s	500-600	15
II	Development and Social Change	RAS1TDC	s	500-600	15
II	Regional Specializations:				
II	Southern Africa	RAS1RSA	s	500-600	10
II	West Africa	RAS1RWA	s	500-600	10
II	East Africa	RAS1REA	s	500-600	10
II	Proposal	RAS1PRO	tu	500-600	5
					30

Year 2

sem	course title	ISIScode	t.a.	level	ECTS
I	Research Project : Fieldwork	RAS2RES		600	25
II	thesis	RAS2THE	tu	600	30
II	Academic Publication	RAS2PUB	tu	600	5
					60