

BLUEPRINT

Master of Social and Cultural Anthropology

Faculty of Social Sciences



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VISION AND PROFILE

Focal points

- *Research-driven teaching*

The education provided in the Master of Social and Cultural Anthropology programme is based on the expertise of two research units at the Faculty of Social Sciences: the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA) and the Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre (IMMRC). Master's students are guided and coached by a team of committed and highly talented lecturers, who actively contribute to the international development of anthropology as a discipline, and who apply anthropological research findings to a broad and diverse range of social contexts.

- *Ethnographic research*

Ethnographic research plays a central role in the two-year master's programme in social and cultural anthropology. From the first semester of the first stage of the master's programme, students are introduced to this crucial field through a learning sequence that culminates in the master's thesis. Gradually, they become familiar with a range of qualitative research methods, techniques and (multi-media) reporting tools and output types. To this end, a variety of teaching formats is used, such as interactive lectures, seminars and educational peer-to-peer exchanges.

- *Learning community*

Master's students in social and cultural anthropology have very different backgrounds in terms of prior education, nationality and life experience. We value this diversity and harness it to build an open and internationally oriented learning community. Through group work, team presentations and peer evaluation, we try to respond to this diversity and to encourage a multi-perspective approach to anthropological research problems. In addition, the programme stimulates and facilitates a collaborative study environment, in which first-years can interact with more experienced students, for example in informal study groups and reading groups.

- *Opportunities for personal development*

The careful design of the master's programme in social and cultural anthropology guarantees that all students are guided along a learning trajectory in which they acquire in-depth knowledge of anthropological theories and concepts, and become skilled in designing and carrying out ethnographic research motivated by problems of concern to the social sciences and society at large. To this end, the curriculum consists of a set of mandatory courses complemented by a wide range of electives. These elective courses ensure that students are offered a multitude of opportunities to develop their 'disciplinary

future self', as they cover a variety of themes and approaches, enabling students to tailor their study programme to their own research interests and professional perspectives. Moreover, the programme strongly focuses on (self-)reflection as an essential academic competence.

- *Smooth transition to the job market*

The master's programme in social and cultural anthropology prepares students for various professional challenges. Anthropologists are highly valued for their critical thinking and analytical skills combined with an open worldview and the ability to adopt an insider perspective. This enables them to approach and explore complex problems and situations from multiple angles. Furthermore, because of the programme's strong international orientation and because graduates have learned to work in very heterogeneous student teams, they are well prepared to meet professional challenges in an international and/or intercultural context.

Target audience

The master's programme in social and cultural anthropology is primarily aimed at students with an academic bachelor's degree in a social sciences discipline (direct entry). Candidates holding an academic bachelor's degree in another discipline (e.g. in exact science) can be admitted on the basis of an application file.

Holders of a professional bachelor's degree can also be admitted to the master's programme, provided that their degree meets the admission requirements and after completing an extensive bridging programme.

Crucially, candidates should have good observation skills, be engaged in society and be aware of (international) current affairs. In addition, they are expected to have a wide-ranging interest in anthropological themes, as well as respect for ethical norms and cultural identity. Finally, a good level of English is required, as well as a communicative attitude and an ability to work in teams.

Objectives

Based on empirical research, social and cultural anthropology aims to provide insight into the historical, social, political and cultural processes that affect and shape societies and social groups, here and elsewhere. However, anthropology is not a purely theoretical discipline. It also seeks to challenge common and seemingly self-evident classifications or categorisations and to question emotional, aesthetic and cultural perceptions and (implicit) conceptual frameworks.

The programme aims to unite both aspects in a curriculum that draws on the research expertise of the professors and other teaching staff at the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA) or the Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre (IMMRC), while also using the heterogeneity of the student group as an educational

instrument to translate experiences of different cultural attitudes (encountered both on a personal and an academic level) into opportunities for students to critically reflect on themselves and on the anthropological approach.

The programme-specific learning outcomes, which are included as an appendix to this blueprint, reflect these multiple and multi-layered objectives and can be considered as their educational operationalization. Within the programme, these learning outcomes are viewed as an interrelated whole, to be achieved in conjunction with each other, but clustered analytically around three main axes:

- *Knowledge*

Anthropology tries to observe and understand various realities from the particular point of view of the group being studied. This requires theoretical and methodological guidance.

It is essential for a social and cultural anthropology graduate to have in-depth knowledge of and insight into a multitude of anthropological interpretative frameworks and theories as well as the ability to distinguish and apply discipline-specific concepts.

At the same time, he/she is expected to be familiar with the history of the discipline, if only to be able to approach this discipline from a contemporary, postmodern and postcolonial perspective on research. An integrated understanding of historical, social, political and cultural processes should allow him/her to specialise in a particular theme or region.

- *Competences and methods*

Social and cultural anthropology graduates maintain close, prolonged contact with their 'field'. This should enable them to situate their specific domain-related knowledge within a so-called 'emic' perspective. While adopting an insider perspective, the anthropologist formulates research questions in terms of people's current concerns and social problems. Graduates are therefore skilled in finding, selecting, synthesising and critically assessing relevant anthropological sources and information.

Guided by scientifically relevant and thoroughly informed research questions, social and cultural anthropology graduates are able to design and carry out supervised independent ethnographic research projects, using a range of relevant epistemological and methodological approaches. During the master's programme, they have become familiar with a range of techniques for collecting data and for communicating (in writing, orally or audio-visually), taking into account prevailing ethical and deontological norms and the need for critical (self-) assessment.

- *General academic development*

A key objective of the programme is to foster a self-aware and critical approach to anthropological data and their function or role in current social debates. This means that graduates can articulate a well-reasoned position, using their anthropological knowledge and critical skills to interpret social issues and to present relevant insights.

They should be culturally sensitive and able to adapt their discourse to the specificity of the audience, both in international and in multidisciplinary settings.

Vision on education

The structure of the master's programme in social and cultural anthropology and the wide array of options it offers, gives students ample opportunity – within certain boundaries – to control their own development as an anthropologist.. By providing this broad range of profiling opportunities, the programme achieves a core objective of KU Leuven's institution-wide educational concept, which is grounded in the principle that students develop a vision of their future and choose to specialise in a specific theme or region, with a view to realising that vision of the future.

Degree programmes and research groups provide the ideal environment for a master's student to make choices that fit this *disciplinary future self*. In this way, the student's future self acquires form and content, while he/she is being prepared for taking on a socially meaningful and challenging role. This is the underlying reason why master's students are encouraged to undertake complex projects and bring these to successful completion independently and efficiently.

The master's programme in social and cultural anthropology therefore offers a broad range of electives, presented in an accessible overview. This ensures that the course offer is sufficiently focused, making it easier for students to design a programme of study that is coherent in terms of content.

A characteristic feature of the master's programme in social and cultural anthropology is that it is almost taken for granted that students will spend a study period abroad: in order to conduct fieldwork in preparation for their master's thesis and/or as an exchange student at a European (under Erasmus+) or non-European university (under bilateral cooperation agreements). Undertaking at least one of these two types of international study experience offers students additional opportunities – apart from those already contained in the curriculum – to develop a professional- anthropological profile of their own, which is not only intellectually enriching but may also be an asset in the transition to the labour market.

IMPLEMENTATION

Structure

The master's programme comprises 120 credits and consists of a mandatory common core (methodological and theoretical courses, research seminar and master's thesis) and a set of elective courses. Like the mandatory courses, many electives are offered by lecturers affiliated to one of the two research units: the Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre (IMMRC) and Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA). Electives can also be chosen from other programmes of study, closely linked to the anthropological discipline, in order to support and strengthen the multi- and interdisciplinary profile of the anthropology curriculum. From the range of electives on offer, students choose courses relevant to their master's thesis, making sure that the course load is balanced across semesters.

This basic structure and the specific rules for the design of individual study programmes and progress requirements allow both programme administrators and students to ensure that coherent curriculum pathways are developed. These principles, along with the individual courses, are included in the programme guide. This is an important educational tool which allows students to actively and independently manage their learning process, thus contributing to the development of their disciplinary future self.

Learning sequences and content-related choices

As a matter of course, the curriculum is geared towards programme objectives or learning outcomes presented above, and structured around two programme stages.

- In the first, introductory programme stage, master's students in the social and cultural anthropology programme gain insight into the basic concepts and theoretical approaches to anthropology, and are initiated into the basic principles and the methodologies and technicalities of conducting qualitative research.

Students become familiar with cultural, social and religious diversity in the world and learn to approach a social problem from the point of view of the actors involved (see emic perspective). Particular attention is paid to the development of the anthropological discipline as a whole, coupled with an exploration of various sub-fields of contemporary anthropological research.

As this first stage progresses, master's students start their own research project, which should result in a master's thesis. During the first programme stage, the student chooses a topic and a supervisor, and – supported by guidance sessions and workshops – develops a problem statement in an initial report. This initial report forms the basis for the master's thesis, which will take definite shape in the second programme stage.

- In the second, more in-depth programme stage, the emphasis is on the specialisation in an anthropological theme and/or region. To make this possible, a mandatory in-depth methodologically oriented curriculum is provided, complemented by a set of elective courses, taught by lecturers from the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA) or the Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre (IMMRC).

In this way, master's students to a large extent develop their own programme of study, based on preferences and interests and combining in-depth exploration of an anthropological sub-field with broader interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary insights. In designing their individual programme of study, students are expected to focus on areas of particular relevance to the master's thesis.

The master's thesis is a key component of the curriculum in which all aspects of anthropological research come together (from selecting a problem statement to reporting the findings) and in which the ethnographic research sequence reaches its

culmination. Therefore, the preparation process is supported by various teaching formats. The master's thesis involves anthropological fieldwork in Belgium or abroad.

In this preparatory process, regular consultation between the master's student and the supervisor is paramount, but, in addition, the programme also provides sufficient feedback sessions, interaction with the learning community and peer-to-peer sessions. A clear timeline listing all elements of the master's thesis process provides additional guidance and support.

Teaching formats

Teaching formats are tailored to course objectives and learning outcomes. We strive to ensure that the teaching formats used optimally support students in achieving programme objectives and that the variety of teaching formats form a diverse and coherent whole.

The weight of the different teaching formats evolves across programme stages and is related to the growth and deepening of the students' anthropological knowledge and insights. Increasingly, more interactive teaching formats that focus on deepening and integration are being used, whereby the emphasis is on coaching rather than on directive teaching. This is particularly the case for the preparation of the master's thesis.

Assessment policy

The lecturers have primary responsibility for the assessment of the courses they teach. In consultation with the Programme Committee (POC), they determine the content and format of tests and exams, making sure that these are aligned with the learning outcomes, include a variety of evaluation methods and take into account the specific characteristics of the various courses.

The lecturers are also responsible for the administration of tests and exams and for the provision of feedback. To this end, depending on the evaluation method and the content of the exam, they use correction keys or assessment rubrics, which contribute to the validity, reliability and transparency of the evaluation. They are also invited to take part in various workshops offered both by the Faculty and university-wide to foster the development of a professional and adequate educational environment.

APPENDIX: DOMAIN SPECIFIC AND PROGRAMME SPECIFIC LEARNING RESULTS & EDUCATION GOALS

DOMAIN SPECIFIC LEARNING RESULTS	PROGRAMME SPECIFIC LEARNING RESULTS	EDUCATION GOALS
<p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>The master of anthropology has profound knowledge of anthropological theories and concepts.</p>	<p>The master of social and cultural anthropology has profound knowledge of and insight into the anthropological interpretation frameworks and theories.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology has knowledge of the history of the discipline.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology can apply and distinguish domain-specific concepts.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology has a thorough knowledge of thematic and regional specialisation.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology has insight into the historical, social, political and cultural processes to which a society is subject here and elsewhere.</p>	<p>The master of social and cultural anthropology is prepared for lifelong learning and the follow-up of scientific evolutions and current debates within the anthropological discipline.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology is willing to use diverse professional contexts of anthropological interpretation frameworks and theories.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology shows an intellectual interest in social developments and trends and is able to analyse these through acquired disciplinary knowledge.</p>
<p>COMPETENCES / METHODS</p> <p>The master of anthropology can apprehend social and socially scientific issues and explain</p>		<p>The master of social and cultural anthropology develops a research-oriented attitude to</p>

<p>them in anthropological concepts and translate them into anthropological research questions.</p> <p>The master of anthropology answers anthropological research questions conform the scientific criteria of ethnographic research.</p> <p>The master in anthropology adopts a critical attitude towards socially scientific research.</p> <p>The master in anthropology presents and reports clearly and smart in a scientifically and ethically responsible manner, both written and orally.</p>	<p>The master of social and cultural anthropology can define research questions about a social theme that contributes to the anthropological discipline.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology can look up, select, synthesise, critically assess and use anthropological sources to answer research questions.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology can, under guidance, put on independent ethnographic research, carry out, plan ethnographic research, identify a suitable fieldwork site and select the appropriate research methods, set priorities and respect deadlines.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology has knowledge of and takes into account the ethical and deontological rules within the discipline.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology adopts a reflective attitude towards his own research and can frame this research within existing theories.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology can report in a clear manner, written and orally, and refrains from plagiarism.</p>	<p>problematise social themes, put them in an anthropological perspective and subject them to a critical attitude.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology is committed to apply the methods and techniques of ethnographic research in an adequate, contextual way in the active academic career.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology is willing to act in accordance with a scientifically sound, reflective basic attitude and the applicable professional deontological codes.</p>
<p>GENERAL ACADEMIC EDUCATION</p> <p>The master in anthropology adopts a reflective attitude towards current social debates. The</p>		

<p>master in anthropology can present his own research in an international, multidisciplinary context.</p>	<p>The master of social and cultural anthropology can explain and critically interpret concrete social issues from their own knowledge and insights into anthropology and can adopt a substantiated point of view in current debates.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology has a cultural sensitivity and can adapt their communication style to a diverse audience.</p>	<p>The master of social and cultural anthropology show a willingness to engage in collegial, multidisciplinary cooperation.</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology cultivates an emical attitude towards various environments</p> <p>The master of social and cultural anthropology shows the willingness to present own ideas in a reasoned and self-critical way and to actively participate in social debates.</p>
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