

# PhD Training Course

March to June 2021 (four modules)

[note the possibility of revisions due to COVID-19]

## Online Registration

Access: <https://ceresresearchschool.nl/phd-activities/phd-training-course/>

## CERES Office

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CERES is the only accredited research school in the Netherlands that offers research training to Dutch and foreign PhDs in the field of Development Studies. Among the [five courses offered this year](#), the CERES PhD Training Course is the centrepiece. It is aimed at first year PhDs who are working on their research proposals, as well as Research Masters students who wish to experience this stage of doing research. By mixing colleagues at the same stage of their PhD from across the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders), the course provides a unique learning experience that is both diverse and multi/interdisciplinary.

## CERES 2021 PhD Training Course: Outline

The course begins in mid-March with an opening day, followed by four modules of four or five days, ending in June. Normally participants are expected to be resident during these modules (three in a retreat setting and one at the ISS), although given the exceptional times of COVID, much of the course will need to be delivered online via Zoom. At the fourth and last block, PhDs present their proposals and receive feedback from their peers, facilitators and invited teachers.

Participants are expected to attend all four modules, in addition to the opening day at ISS and one 'come-back' day in June. However, an exception is made for the third module at ISS, which is focused on methods (see below). PhDs not involved in other parts of the course can participate in this block as a stand-alone. Member institutions generally recognise the Training Course as contributing towards the ECs required for a PhD degree.

## Facilitators

Dr Andrew M. Fischer (Scientific Director of CERES, ISS)

Dr Gemma van der Haar (Wageningen University)

## Invited lecturers:

So far confirmed: Dr An Ansoms, Prof Arjun Bedi, Dr Ajay Bailey, Dr Rosalba Icaza Garza, Dr Naomi van Stapele, Dr Kristen Cheney, Dr Rolando Vazquez Melken, Prof Rivke Jaffe, and others tbc.

## Cost of PhD Training Course

The CERES PhD training course is open to participants from CERES and non-CERES member institutions, although at different prices – those from member institutions pay a reduced rate. The tuition fee includes food and accommodation costs, although in the event that the course needs to be entirely delivered online, the fee will be revised.

***In principle, member institutions pay for these fees, not the participants themselves.***

## Full Tuition

PhDs from member institutions: € 2500

PhDs from non-member institutions: € 5000

## Tuition for Module 3 only

PhDs from member institutions: € 600

PhDs from non-member institutions: € 1200

**ECs:** 16 (3<sup>rd</sup> Module only: 4)

## Schedule

Content	Date
Introduction Day (location: online)	15 March
Module 1: Proposing Research in Development Studies (tbc)	29 March – 1 April
Module 2: Moving from Questions to Methodology (tbc)	26 – 29 April
Module 3: Overview of Methods (ISS or online)	17–21 May (+ 24–28 May if online)
Come-back day (ISS or online)	3 June
Module 4: Presentation Tutorials (tbc)	14 – 17 June

# Objectives and Overview

*NB: Due to COVID-19 measures and the shift to online teaching, there are some modifications in what we are able to offer online, particularly with respect to the non-credit and para-academic aspects of the course, e.g. discussions around coffee, socialising, etc. We will nonetheless try to remain as much as possible within the original learning objectives as stated below.*

The CERES PhD Training Course has two main objectives. The first is to cultivate a general and shared integrative understanding about what it means to do a PhD degree in the field of Development Studies, from the perspective of both theory as well as empirical research. This involves positioning and familiarization within the broad interdisciplinary field of Development Studies, in order to map out a systemic awareness of the field and the place of one's research within it; learning how to recognize concepts from across the field and to place them in their relevant contexts; and situating various theoretical, disciplinary and policy approaches and concepts with respect to others. By deepening and questioning one's knowledge, experience, and positionality, the course aims to cultivate greater fluency and interpretative abilities in the language and literature of Development Studies, as well as an ability to converse with each other through common vocabularies regardless of disciplinary specialization or background. The overview nature of the course means that we will deal with a certain level of generality rather than specificity, with the aim to lead all PhD candidates to a PhD-level of theorization and critical analysis with respect to the broad themes that run throughout the field of Development Studies. This specifically tailored approach to the needs of research in Development Studies is an aspect that makes this PhD training programme unique among research schools in the Netherlands.



The second objective is to assist participants in advancing the development of their research designs, in preparation for the defence of their research proposals at the end of their first year (e.g. variously called ‘Dissertation Design Seminar’, ‘Upgrade Seminar’, etc). A range of issues is considered, relating to epistemology and ontology, positionality and subjectivity, philosophy of science, and an overview of the spectrum of interdisciplinary methodologies and methods that researchers commonly draw from in Development Studies, both quantitative and qualitative. Specific methods will not be taught in detail given insufficient time for this purpose in the course. Rather, the aim is to give a broad overview of the range of options available and the reasoning for using each. From this overview, participants can then seek out further instruction in the specific methodologies and methods that they choose.

An additional benefit, which has been one of the highlights that has been consistently appreciated throughout the history of the course, is to cultivate friendships and a support network among the annual cohort of first-year PhDs, which they can continue to rely on throughout their PhD trajectory. The course also prioritizes providing a safe space for PhDs, where they can discuss their research openly and creatively with their peers and senior researchers who are not (necessarily) in their supervision team.

### Teaching methods

The course emphasises a ‘learning by doing’ approach to support the different steps of developing a convincing and defensible research proposal. The focus is on moving from research topic to problem, question, hypotheses (or educated guesses), analytical frameworks, critical literature reviews, and methodology and methods. Emphasis will be given to working through these steps with critical analysis, in a way that articulates a clear and coherent logical development and bears relevance to issues in the field of Development Studies. ‘Critical analysis’ in this sense refers to questioning the assumptions and logical foundations of the ontologies, epistemologies, positionalities, theories, empirical analyses and practices within the research.





The approach mixes both teacher-led and participant-led sessions, starting with more of the former and with a greater emphasis of the latter towards the end of the programme. It combines taught plenary sessions, seminars, and group and individual work overseen by the facilitators, on different topics related to doing or conceiving research, specifically tailored to the themes and needs of Development Studies. Several evening meetings will also be used to informally discuss more practical issues such as supervisor-candidate relationships, ethics, publishing, publication ethics, research integrity and more. The last block will be focused on presentations by the participants of their research proposals, with feedback and guidance from the facilitators, combined with presentation training.

Before the start of the course, participants will be sent a syllabus with readings that they are strongly advised to read in advance. They will also be asked to send in a snapshot assignment and, in order to assist introductions with guest lecturers throughout the course, they will record a video introduction of themselves and their research so that guests can preview this before their sessions, in part to save time. Instructions will be given during the opening day.

The course will use Moodle as its online environment.

### Other activities

In addition to the Training Course, we are offering three more courses for the 2020-21 academic year (one already took place in November), and we regularly run other activities as well. Please sign up to our mailing list (scroll to the bottom of our [home webpage](#)) in order to stay connected and to receive updates and notifications.

***Note that, if they have not already attended a fieldwork security course, participants are recommended to participate in the parallel [CERES safety and security course](#), offered on 9-10 June, free for PhDs from CERES member institutions and for participants of this training course.***

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## Outline of the Modules

### Introduction Day CERES PhD Training Course

**15 March (all day)**

**Location: Online via Zoom**

The official opening day will feature one keynote lecture, together with a brief introduction to the CERES Research School, practical and logistical information concerning the PhD Training Course, and exercises to get to know each other, including each other's prospective research. The two facilitators will also give two interactive lectures, one on conceptualising development studies (by Fischer) and one on understanding development studies as a field dense with interventions (Haar). Two assignments in preparation for the first module will also be explained.

The keynote lecture, co-sponsored by ISS, will be given by [Professor Valentina Mazzucato](#) from the University of Maastricht, on Migration and Development (precise title tbc).

### Module 1: Proposing Research in Development Studies

**29 March – 1 April**

**Location: Probably online (tbc)**

This first 4-day module focuses on three objectives. The first is to continue cultivating a general and shared integrative understanding about what it means to do a PhD degree in the field of Development Studies, from the perspective of both theory and empirical research, as described in the Outline above. One day will also be dedicated to Decoloniality and related critical themes (led by Rolando Vazquez). This will involve some interactive lectures by the facilitators and some invited teachers, and seminar-based discussions.

The second objective is to introduce the different elements and processes involved in developing a research proposal, which are similar regardless of whether PhDs are working with qualitative or quantitative approaches, in anthropology, economics or other disciplines. This will start with the elaboration and articulation of research problems and questions, the role of cases in framing problems (as opposed to their later use as methodology) and then will move from these into thinking about analytical research strategy, such as mapping the various concepts and theoretical debates that come to bear on the research question and how these can then be developed into critical and analytical reviews of literature.

Within both of these objectives, a third objective is to engage with principles of ontology, epistemology, and topics in the philosophy of science such as deduction and induction, and how these relate to developing research, such as with respect to underlying assumptions that are either implicit or explicit within the research proposal.

The module will end with an elevator pitch exercise on the research problem, question and strategy going forward, to be prepared throughout and presented on the last day.

## Module 2: Moving from Questions to Methodology

26 – 29 April

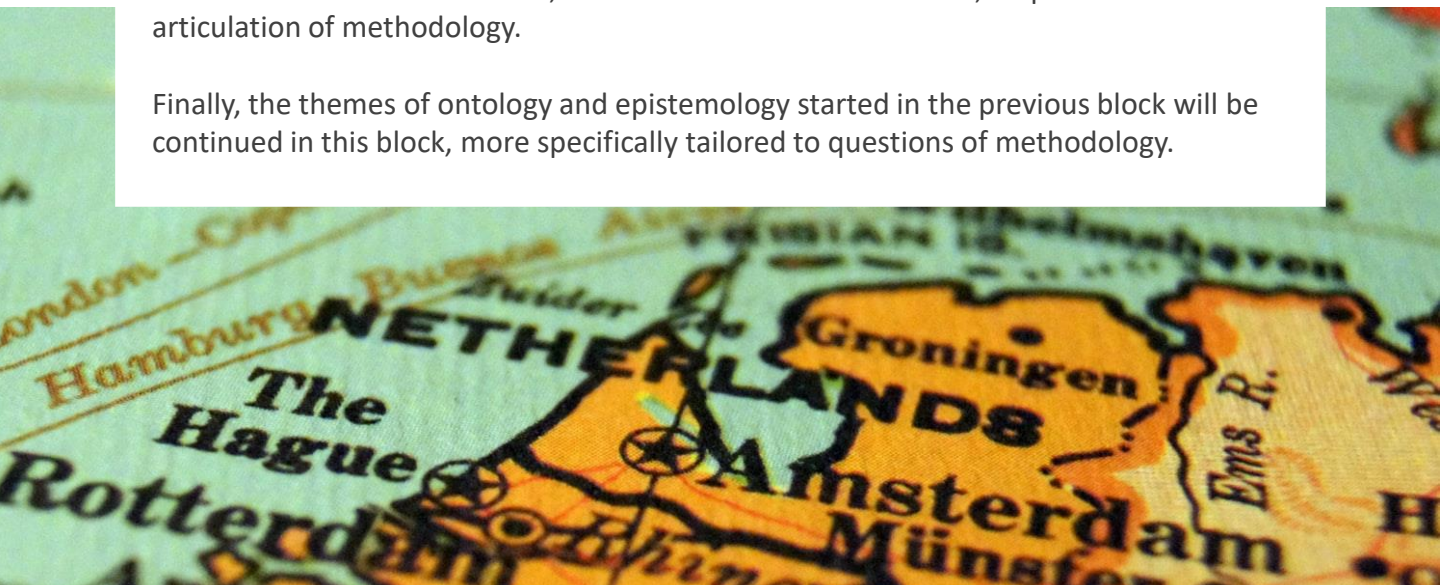
Location: Online via Zoom

The second 4-day module focuses on topics of methodology in relationship to research questions, particularly with respect to the applied field of Development Studies that, although not always interdisciplinary, nonetheless requires some understanding of inter- and multi-disciplinarity. The main focus will be on the operationalisation of research questions, i.e. making the relationship and logical links clear between research questions, choice of methodology and methods (including mixed methods), and how these choices relate to different approaches to knowledge. Both sides of the quantitative-qualitative spectrum will be discussed, such as the challenges faced with regard to generalizability or 'validity' (especially for focused qualitative research, such as ethnography) or else context specificity and relevance (for more quantitative research, especially 'large n' regression analysis but also experimental approaches).

Particular focus will also be given to case selection, given that as an applied field of research, PhDs in Development Studies invariably involve case studies and hence the methodology of case study research is almost always involved, whether implicitly or explicitly at various scales or dimensions. We will reflect on the meaning of a case and case study, research, and the relevance of their chosen cases in relation broader research objectives.

A additional attention will also be given to thinking through the distinctions between structure, institutions and individual behaviour, choice or agency. Such distinctions are central to understanding development processes, broadly conceived as structural and societal transformation, within which other dynamics of change or causality need to be located and analysed in relation to these broader processes. Hence developing a better awareness of their distinctions, as well as debates around them, helps to refine the articulation of methodology.

Finally, the themes of ontology and epistemology started in the previous block will be continued in this block, more specifically tailored to questions of methodology.





### **Module 3: Overview of Methodology and Methods in Development Research 17–21 May (+ 24–28 May if online)**

**Teachers (in addition to the programme facilitators): Dr An Ansoms, Prof Ajay Bailey, Prof Arjun Bedi, Dr Kristen Cheney, Prof Rivke Jaffe, and others to be confirmed.**

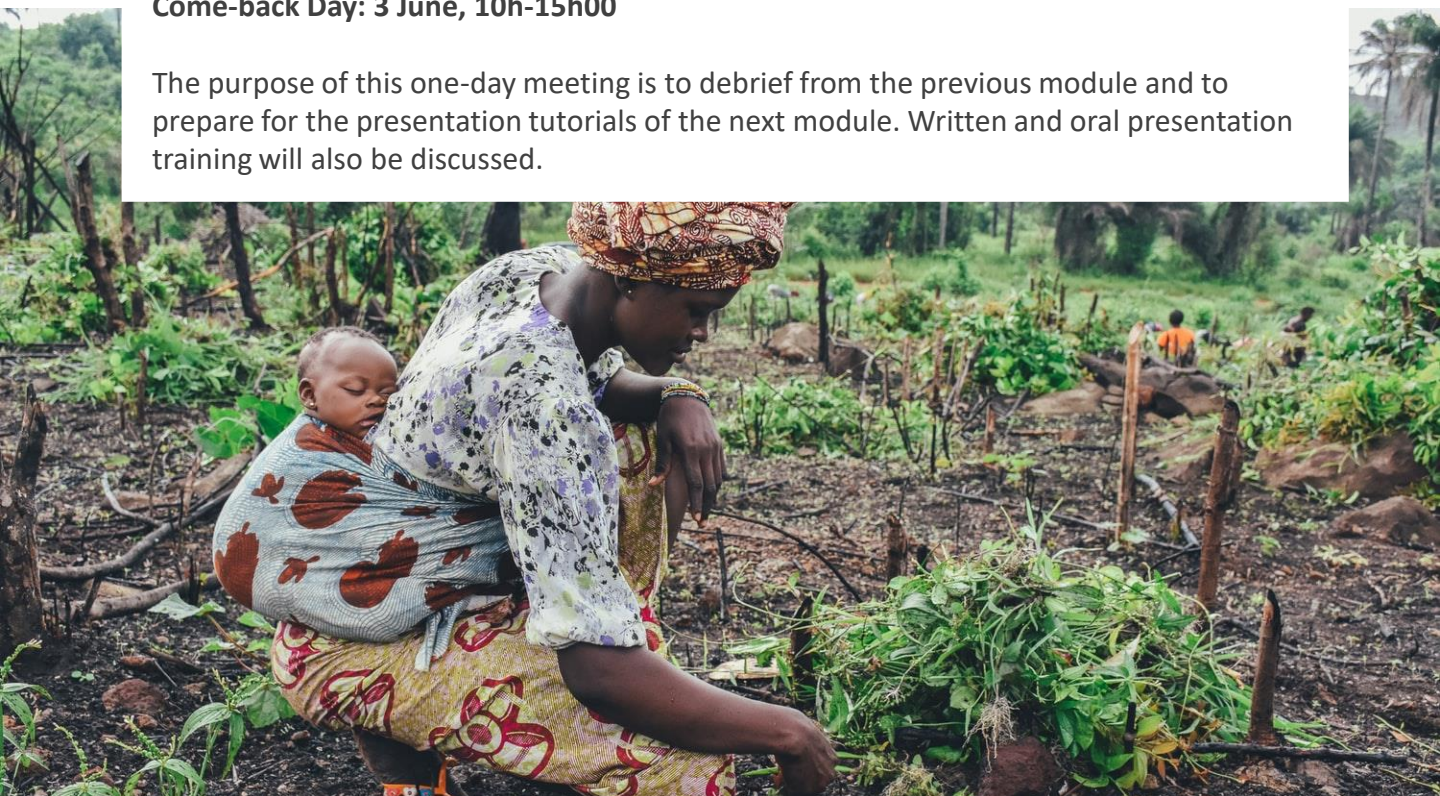
The aim of this module is to provide all participants an exhaustive overview of the range of qualitative and quantitative methods commonly used or available for research in Development Studies. Full training in the methods will not be given, as the module (and the course) is too short for this purpose. Rather, the intention is to equip participants with knowledge of the full range of methods so that they can tailor the method/s most appropriate for their research and/or can seek those in which they would like further training. In service of this intent, a database will be prepared of all of the methods training options available across the CERES member institutions, from which further in-depth instruction in specific methods can be sought.

Special sessions will also be given on the methodology and practicalities of doing fieldwork, on data collection and reliability, on virtual methods, and on publication strategies and ethics.

***Note that, if they have not already attended a fieldwork security course, participants are recommended to participate in the parallel CERES safety and security course, offered on 9-10 June, free for PhDs from CERES member institutions and for participants of this training course.***

#### **Come-back Day: 3 June, 10h-15h00**

The purpose of this one-day meeting is to debrief from the previous module and to prepare for the presentation tutorials of the next module. Written and oral presentation training will also be discussed.



#### Module 4: Presentation Tutorials

14-17 June  
In-person or online via Zoom (tbc)

The presentation tutorials are the final part of the Training Programme and offer PhDs an important opportunity to present and discuss their research projects, and to receive comments and suggestions on their research proposals/designs. PhDs will present their draft research proposals/designs in a seminar format, e.g. with a chair and two discussants assigned to each presentation, and they will participate in the presentations of their peers. The latter participation is especially important given that an intuitive understanding of presenting research is deepened through the experience of going through the process multiple times. As such, it is a key moment that cements the pedagogical principle of ‘learning-by-doing’ followed throughout the programme.

The first day of the module is on presentation training. The module ends with a discussion of the subsequent stages of the PhD journey.

