

FORENSIC LINGUISTICS

Language and the Law

Specialisation of:
Humanities Research Master

Forensic Linguistics / Language and the Law is a new and exciting field. In its more specific sense it denotes the use of linguistic evidence in the courtroom. In its broader sense it refers to all areas of overlap between language and the law, including the language used in legal or quasi-legal settings by participants including judges, lawyers, witnesses, police officers and interpreters. As a graduate of this programme you will have acquired the theoretical background and practical casework experience to be able to analyse disputed texts, recognize a "language crime" such as bribery or threatening communication (nowadays often sent via social media), and identify participants in the police station or courtroom who are at a linguistic disadvantage, and therefore vulnerable to miscarriages of justice.

WHY STUDY AT VU AMSTERDAM?

The two-year Research Master in Linguistics, specialization of the Humanities research master, trains you as a professional linguistic

"The teaching takes place in small groups and active participation is encouraged. The university also offers good study facilities and there is a lively international student community."

Ruth Little, United Kingdom

researcher, specialised in Forensic Linguistics. This unique programme provides a solid training in linguistics, coupled with a challenging specialization in a young research field with a fundamental concern for current society.

CAREER PROSPECTS

As an expert in Forensic Linguistics, you will build up a unique expertise to find employment as a PhD, within government bodies, e.g. the ministry of justice or a forensic institute, or with commercial companies in need of linguists with a technical background.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must have a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics, Modern Languages, Cognitive or Communication Sciences or a comparable Bachelor programme, with an average grade of minimally 7.5.
- Applicants who do not meet all requirement(s) are also encouraged to apply, provided that they have a sound academic background and a demonstrated interest in and knowledge of linguistics and/or law.

FORENSIC LINGUISTICS
HUMANITIES RESEARCH MASTER
DURATION: 2 YEARS FULLTIME
DEADLINE: APRIL 1 (NON-EU STUDENTS)
1 JUNE FOR DUTCH AND EU STUDENTS

SCHOLARSHIPS

We are proud to offer support for highly motivated and excellent students:

- * The VU Fellowship Programme (VUFP) for EU and non-EU students
- * The Graduate School of Humanities offers three scholarships for excellent students from the Netherlands and other EU countries

HUMANITIES RESEARCH MASTER

FORENSIC LINGUISTICS

WWW.VU.NL/HUMANITIES



LOOKING FURTHER

YEAR 1

PERIOD 1

PERIOD 2 & 3

PERIOD 4

PERIOD 5 & 6

GENERAL LINGUISTICS (9 EC)

Advanced introduction to grammatical notions and theories that are used as analytical tools in applied linguistics. Aim: deepen knowledge of grammatical theory & of current approaches to phonology, morphology and syntax.

DIGITAL & ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES (6 EC)

Introduction to the history and philosophy of the Humanities, to the VU research environment and the cross cutting themes Digital Humanities and Environmental Humanities. How can we connect Humanities research with societal challenges?

HUMANITIES IN SOCIETY (6 EC)

This is the first Humanities research design course: you will train to position yourself in the international research field and learn to design and present innovative Humanities research. You will also take active part in the lectures of the Graduate School of Humanities.

TERM PAPER (9 EC)

Writing a paper outline forces you to define the boundaries of your research. Secondly, it helps to organize your ideas and to present them in a cohesive and logical form. And of course you will very much profit from detailed feedback.

WHY THE LAW NEEDS LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS (6 EC)

The law is expressed in and implemented through language. Evidence in a court is mainly linguistic in nature. This course will explore 1) the linguistic issues involved when police interviews are transformed into written statements, 2) language in the courtroom and 3) vulnerable witnesses in the legal process.

PYTHON PROGRAMMING FOR TEXT ANALYSIS (9 EC)

You learn the basic skills how to make your own program and run these from a command line. We gently submerge you into the world of Python. You learn the basics of programming in Python applied to processing text.

NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY (9 EC)

Many different resources and toolkits for processing text already exist and can be used freely. You will learn what these NLP tools are, how to use them, the good features and the less good features. Programming skills are not required.

METHODS OF AUTHORSHIP ANALYSIS (6 EC)

You will examine different methods that are currently used in Forensic Linguistics to analyze the authorship of texts, e.g. letters of threat, text messages, online reviews. You can choose a project of your interest and test different methods.

YEAR 2

PERIOD 1

PERIOD 2 & 3

PERIOD 4

PERIOD 5 & 6

NATIONAL RESEARCH SCHOOL (9 EC)

All students enrol with a Humanities National Research School at the start of their study. You may choose a selection of courses, masterclasses, summer or winter schools for 10 EC - over 2 years.

HUMANITIES RESEARCH CAREER PREPARATION (6 EC)

Through intensive training and supervision you will learn to write a research proposal for (inter)national science foundations, and learn to design and position an innovative humanities research project.

THESIS (30 EC)

LANGUAGE OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS (6 EC)

It is not just in criminal cases that forensic linguists can be of help. In this course we examine cases where ambiguities in legislation or in the language used by companies have led to law suits, e.g. involving car dealers, insurance companies, commercial manufacturers.





TUTORIAL (9 EC)

In this tutorial you will work on current issues in the field of forensic linguistics. You can work with faculty on current cases, be involved in research on methods for investigating case work, or do research on police practices and write an advisory report.

MORE INFORMATION

Forensic Linguistics is a track of the Humanities Research Master, specialisation Linguistics
For more details on the programme, admission and application:
Department of Language, Literature and Communication
WWW.VU.NL/MA-LINGUISTICS
Dr. Fleur van der Houwen
Email: f.vander.houwen@vu.nl

LEGEND:

-  Obligatory for all students of the VU Humanities Research Master
-  Obligatory for all students of the Linguistics Research Master specialization
-  Courses in track Forensic Linguistics
-  Optional courses: summer/winter school at a National Research School