

CAS CogSci for Dummies

A Study Guide to consider if you want to complete the CAS CogSci program

Welcome to the world of Cognitive Sciences!

With our certificate, we want to give you the opportunity to explore different areas of the interdisciplinary field of Cognitive Sciences and to exchange ideas with many other interested students and researchers. We invite you to become an active member of our network.

To help you get a realistic picture of the program before you join as well as an assistance to keep a clear mind in the sometimes not-so-clear sciences of the mind, we have compiled some practical tips for you. Are you ready to board?

The CAS CogSci Team

Table of contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Things to consider before enrollment..... | 1 |
| Step by step: What do you need to do to register for the CAS CogSci?... | 2 |
| Your first semester..... | 3 |
| The module "Individual Profile"..... | 3 |
| Structure of the Components of the Individual Profile Module..... | 4 |
| Some general comments on the Individual Profile Module..... | 4 |
| At last: the completion Module..... | 5 |

Things to consider before enrollment

- **Structure and workload:** Have a look at the description of the module structure on the [website](#) and in the [module handbook](#). The CAS program has 29 credit points, which is quite a workload to manage on top of your regular studies. It is usually assumed that 1 credit point corresponds around 30 hours of work. You will be confronted with knowledge, scientific traditions and epistemologies, and research methods that are very different from what you are used to. So this CAS requires a lot of hard work, open-mindedness, and the ability to deal with contrasting and fragmented knowledge. Ask yourself honestly: Do you think you can handle that?
- **Research-orientation:** Also, before you enroll, think about your goal in completing the certificate. The courses offered are quite varied and the module structure leaves room for shaping it according to your personal interests. However, much of what you can learn will be linked to research rather than to application in non-academic contexts. Also, if your foremost goal is to acquire AI engineering skills, other offers might be better suited for you.

- **Introductory lecture series:** It is recommended that you attend the Cognitive Science lecture series either in your first semester or even before you decide to register for the CAS. Attending the lecture series before deciding is a very good way for you to test whether this certificate matches your interests and goals, or to become clearer about what your interests and goals are. Please note that for the final acceptance for the certificate you need to pass the exam of the CogSci Lecture Series by the end of your second semester.
- **Introductory seminar:** Note as well that active participation in the Fundamentals II seminar is required in the **first semester** of the CAS. So if you are accepted, make sure it fits into your schedule. It is unfair to others who want a spot in the seminar if you sign up and are not serious about attending. If you do not attend the seminar, final acceptance for the certificate will not be granted.
- **Not sure?** If you are not sure whether the certificate offers what you are looking for, please do not hesitate to contact us for advice.
- **FAQs and contact:** If you have questions regarding the certificate, you may contact cas-cogsci@uni-heidelberg.de. However, before contacting us please have a look at our [website](#), **especially the FAQs**. You will find the answer to many of your questions there without the need to write an email and wait for the answer.

Step by step: What do you need to do to register for the CAS CogSci?

1. Make sure you are clear about the goals of the CAS.
2. Go to our [website](#), scroll down: You can find all details about the application procedure and acceptance under the tab Application / Duration.
3. Think about why you want to apply for the certificate, how your previous study program is linked to the CAS or what you want to achieve by doing the CAS. Then write your motivational letter. (max. 500 words)
4. Download the Application form. You can find it either under the tab Application / Duration or at the starting page on the upper right side.
5. Send the filled Application form as well as your motivational letter as a PDF-file with standard format to cas-cogsci@uni-heidelberg.de
6. After you sent the email we will come back to you in time.

Your first semester

- Participation in the introductory seminar is mandatory and participation in the lecture series strongly recommended, unless you already did it before enrollment. Apart from that, you are free to start with courses from the Individual Profile module, but see our respective comment “First or second CAS semester?” below.
- **Introductory lecture series** (Fundamentals I): You can find all information about the content of the lecture series on the website of the lecture series. Use the link on our [website](#) to be sure that it is the content of the current semester. You find the link at the starting page on the right.
- **Introductory seminar** (Fundamentals II): The seminar will provide you with the historical background and theoretical tools to get a first grip on the diversity of the cognitive sciences. It is a philosophically oriented seminar, so prepare yourself to read texts and think them through. A big part of the sciences of the mind is also the understanding of the theorizing about the mind from the time of Plato up to the modern debates about 4E-Cognition in the 21st century. Keep in mind that attendance is obligatory.
- **Statistics:** If you have already visited a statistics course in the past, chances are good that you can credit it for the certificate. Please send an email to cas-cogsci@uni-heidelberg.de with a document stating that you successfully completed the course and a document showing the contents of the course. If it is a module handbook or some other long document, please indicate on which page we can find the information.

The module "Individual Profile"

- **What will be your individual profile?** Cognitive science(s) is a large field with many different topics and approaches. No one can claim to be an expert in the entire field. This module allows you to create your individual profile within cognitive science. Use this organizational freedom to design your own individual profile and integrate the knowledge of different sources. (e.g., if you are a natural scientist, it may be an option to take courses in linguistics or philosophy to complement your profile. If you are already familiar with the “non-natural” part, take a look at the computational or biological courses)
- **Complementary foundations:** You need to take 2 courses for the Complementary foundations component, and both need to be from a subject area different from your own. They may be from the same faculty, but should not be closely related to your major. That is, if you were able to have it credited for your major, it is not "different". As an example: If you study at the Institute for German as a Foreign

Language Philology, a seminar in cognitive linguistics at the Department of German or English studies instead of your own institute (which offers very similar seminars) would not be a valid choice.

- **Advanced topics:** We recommend that for the "Advanced topics" component you choose a seminar based on what you have learned in the "Complementary foundations" component.
- You must be **enrolled** in the University of Heidelberg to complete the courses of this module.

Structure of the Components of the Individual Profile Module

- The Individual Profile Module consists of **4 components** with a total of **16 CP** in workload. The Complementary, Methods and Advanced component will give you 14 CP, the exam is worth 2 CP.
- **Be aware!** You might wonder how 14 CP are split between the 3 components of Complementary, Methods and Advanced. In **every component** it is obligatory to do **at least 4 CP**. To fill up the missing CP, you have to do an **extra 2 CP in only one** component of your choice: 4 CP + 4 CP + 6 CP = 14 CP
- **Complementary:** Choose a least **2 different (introductory) courses** from disciplines other than your own studying program.
- **Methods:** Choose **at least 1 course** that gets you familiar with a method used in the Cognitive Sciences.
- **Advanced:** Choose **at least 1 advanced course** (Master level) that complements one of the disciplines of your Complementary component.
- **Module II exam:** Prepare a talk (15-20min) containing contents of what you learned in the Individual Profile.

Some general comments on the Individual Profile Module

- **Course offer:** To understand the nature of this module it is important to know that whereas courses in the Fundamentals module are being offered specifically for the CAS Cognitive Science, the courses offered inside the framework of the Individual Profile module are courses from various institutes and their regular study programs whose teachers kindly offered to accept a certain (often limited) number of CAS students in their courses. Thus, every semester different courses are being offered, and we cannot guarantee that certain topics are covered in a certain semester, nor do we normally know in advance.
- **List of courses for the current semester:** Each semester, we prepare a list of all offered courses on our Moodle course. You will get access to the Moodle course when you are accepted to the

seminar. The list specifies the module you can use the course for, prerequisites and other information, e.g., on registration. The Moodle course also serves for allocating limited spots in seminars.

- **Each course is different, also in terms of organization:** Each course is individual in its characteristics. Registering may work one way for one course and another way for the second, the same is the case with the requirements, e.g., if attendance is required, whether you need to have prior knowledge to be able to follow, or what you need to do to pass the course.
- If you find **courses that are not included** in the list but might be suitable for the CAS, tell us! We will check and ask the lecturer if the course can be included in the CAS.
- **Be fair (and prudent) when choosing!** Choose your courses carefully and do not take too many. If you sign up for a lot of classes and end up dropping out of half of them, it is unfair to your fellow students who were not able to attend that class because there were no more spots available.
- **Registering:** For each course, please check whether there are instructions on how to register and whether you fulfill the requirements (e.g., regarding prior knowledge). Please note that it may be necessary to register twice: in the internal list and, if required, with the lecturer or on heiCO. In any case, registering in the internal list is required from our side.
- Use the **course template** to structure your individual profile courses beforehand and to get feedback from us. You can download the template from our [website](#).
- **Crediting:** You may use the CAS course certificate to get your courses credited. You can download the form from our [website](#). A digital signature of the lecturer is sufficient.
- **First or second CAS semester?** Following our curriculum, you have to attend the Fundamentals II seminar in the first CAS semester. In addition, you need to pass the Fundamentals I lecture as well as the Fundamentals II seminar within the first two CAS semesters. If you still want to choose courses of Module II in the first semester, you are free to do so but keep in mind two points: Firstly, don't underestimate the workload! Secondly, Fundamentals I and II are the basic layer of the CAS and are not without a reason called 'Fundamentals'.

At last: the completion Module

- It is **not** mandatory that you are still enrolled in the University of Heidelberg to finish this module
- You may use this Module e.g. to already finish literature work and drafts of future thesis or research.

Remember! If you still have questions or if you are still unsure, you may contact one of the more experienced CAS students:

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Now after being "cleared", we wish you a great experience with the CAS CogSci! Have some fun with your fellow students from all kinds of disciplines in exploring one of the most profound phenomena you can think of. Last but not least, it is exactly this thinking we are trying to pin down a little bit closer.

(Information last updated in August 2024)