

Master Philosophy of Science, Technology & Society

Michael Nagenborg, director of the Master

1. What are the key objectives of the Master Philosophy of Science, Technology, and Society?

We teach our students to ask the right questions. Thus, we enable them to analyse, evaluate, and – at times – improve the interactions between science, technology, and society.

2. What sets this programme apart from others in the field, particularly in terms of curriculum and approach?

We are a two-year MSc programme, which allows us to bring together students with a background in the humanities, in engineering, and in design. Students become familiar with different research styles and orientations in the first year. In the second year, they deepen their knowledge in specialised electives and tracks to prepare them well for the final project. We offer opportunities to work towards an academic career while also supporting alternative career paths.

3. Could you elaborate on any notable faculty members or industry experts involved in the programme, and how they contribute to the learning experience?

We are an interdisciplinary programme taught by leading scholars in philosophy, STS, and the history of technology. Almost every teacher in our programme holds a significant grant or contributes to international and national research projects. For example, the University of Twente is leading a 10-year-long international research programme of 7 academic institutions on the Ethics of Socially Disruptive Technologies, to which multiple teaching staff members contribute. It's hard to single out one individual researcher, but I cannot emphasise enough that we deliver high-quality education taught by top researchers.

4. In what ways does the Master's programme prepare students for real-world applications and challenges in the fields of science and technology?

We not only offer internships and joint educational programmes with other MSc programmes but also collaborate with researchers from other faculties and non-academic partners. We enjoy the luxury of teaching at a Technical University in an innovative region. For example, I recently co-supervised a thesis project on responsible waste mapping in informal settlements. The student did not only collaborate with colleagues working on remote sensing but also with data scientists from the Red Cross and a group of community mappers in Nairobi. But we also had students doing internships at the Ethics board of the municipality of Enschede or working with roboticists from our university.

5. How does the Philosophy of Science, Technology, and Society Master's programme prepare graduates for diverse career paths, and what are the typical career trajectories of alumni in this field?

We have a good track record for educating future PhD candidates. At the same time, our students are in high demand whenever institutions or companies need a deeper understanding of the role of science and technology in society. Former students have become advisors to municipalities and governance bodies. Some became artists and designers, while others started to work for big tech companies. To support such diverse career paths, we leave the students many choices and offer a supportive learning environment with an excellent staff-per-student ratio. The fact that we are a two-year programme allows students to learn about multiple approaches and adopt what fits best for them.

6. How does the programme address the evolving intersections between philosophy, science, and technology in today's society?

Besides being involved in state-of-the-art research projects and collaborating with stakeholders, we learn a lot from our students who bring their international experience to the classroom. Since half of our students have a background in Engineering and Science, we can't afford to engage with technologies superficially. But we not only stay up to date with the latest developments and hypes, but we also critically reflect on our own approaches and frameworks. New technologies bring about new questions – or ask for a new perspective on old problems. For example, Artificial Intelligence raises questions about what it means to think and the many ways data-driven decision-making processes impact our lives.