Development studies in Australia

Review and Recommendations

RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT NETWORK

A collaboration between the Australian Council for International Development and Australian universities

Development Studies in Australia:

Review and Recommendations

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The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network, formerly the ACFID University Network, is a collaboration between the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and Australian universities. The RDI Network is a network of practitioners, researchers and evaluators working in international development, supporting collaborative partnerships to improve the uptake and use of evidence in policy and practice. Working in close partnership with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the Network functions as a key cross-sectoral platform for shared learning and action in the international development sector.

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List of acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACFID	The Australian Council for International Development
ANZSRC	The Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification
ANU	Australian National University
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CASID	Canadian Association for the Study of International Development
CJDS	Canadian Journal of Development Studies
DSA	Development Studies Association, UK
EADI	The European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes
FOR	Field of Research
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
RDI Network	Research for Development Impact Network
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

Executive Summary

The subject of Development Studies has grown in popularity in universities, with an increasing number of students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in Australia. While most Development Studies programs share similarities in the thematic content of courses offered, or sometimes even in the teaching methodology used, there is however great diversity in specialist topics explored, as well as the practical and critical skills imparted.

The purpose of this review is to contribute to the debate around the future direction of Development Studies. The report looks at postgraduate courses in particular, but it is informed by discussion and information from undergraduate courses as well. The recommendations in this report include what core capabilities, skills, competencies, and themes need to be developed further or addressed by courses, and what teaching methodologies to employ. The aim is to better cater to students in their quest for a deeper understanding of relevant themes and topics, as well as for employment in the sector, and to ensure courses remain relevant to current trends and issues in development. Through the preliminary recommendations, the report aims to provide a starting point for future efforts at improving Development Studies courses.

This report derived its recommendations through a mixed method approach, combining a review of the literature on Development Studies, insights from participants at a symposium on development pedagogy and practice (organised by James Cook University in June 2017), as well as through a survey of current and former students, and lecturers of Development Studies in Australia. The report also benefited from the input and guidance of the project steering group — made up of NGO and university representatives — which was formed by the RDI Network to guide the review and recommendation process.

The literature referenced in this paper takes the view that Development Studies is an established academic field of study[1] — not only generating applied knowledge in the formulation, implementation, and practice of development policies and interventions but also critiquing the process of development. However, the literature review raises the following issues regarding developing core content in Development Studies courses and in the teaching of Development Studies:[2]

- The great diversity and depth of topics, themes, and issues that fall under the broad umbrella of Development Studies, making it difficult to fit 'everything' into course content.
- Pedagogical difficulties because of the interdisciplinary nature of Development Studies.
- Staying relevant in the light of the ever-changing and evolving practice of international development, as well as the complexity of the world we live in.
- Concerns over balancing academic commitments to learning *about* development (using a predominantly critical lens) with student needs involving learning *how to do* development (practical skills training for future employment in the sector).

1 However, Development Studies is not a formal academic discipline in Australia. The Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) system does not have a Field of Research (FOR) code for Development Studies.

2 A number of the findings from the literature review were echoed in discussions that emerged during a symposium on 'Development Pedagogy and Practice', organised by James Cook University (JCU) and supported by the RDI Network in June 2017 (See Appendix A). Insights from symposium participants around skills and competencies required of students of Development Studies — and the teaching methods employed in imparting these — contributed to the framing of this report's recommendations.

This report followed up the review of the literature with a survey sent out to students (both current and former) and teachers of Development Studies courses. The survey resulted in the following findings:

- Students generally came to these courses from all academic backgrounds, and with varying levels of experience in the development sector. A significant number were mid-career development professionals who signed up for courses either to build up crucial skills or to specialise in a theme.
- Most students (past and present) indicated that employment in the sector was the strongest motivating factor in signing up for such a course.
- A majority of respondents felt coursework had given them skills in critical thinking, reflective learning, communication, and cross-cultural understanding. However, others felt the courses could do more in imparting skills such as conflict management and negotiation/mediation.
- Most of those surveyed (students and teachers) stressed the importance of the ability to be able to specialise.
- The survey also indicated that practical experience (internships/ placements/ field trips, etc.) during the course of study was perceived as very important.

Based on the review of the literature, insights from the JCU symposium on development pedagogy, the survey of relevant respondents, and the comments from the steering group guiding this study; this report made the following preliminary recommendations:

1. **Understand the needs of students:** universities need to ensure that they equip students with the skills relevant and necessary for future employment, and to carry out effective assessments of courses.
2. **Increase engagement between universities and development professionals:** engagement with development organisations and international development professionals is crucial to ensure courses remain relevant.
3. **Enable further flexibility:** universities need to be flexible (both in terms of delivery and content) to respond to student diversity.
4. **Use a mixed method approach to teaching and learning:** universities should establish methods for effectively working with diverse[3] student cohorts. Teaching should include a variety of mixed method teaching approaches — combining theory-based learning with participatory approaches, practical or experiential learning.
5. **Build key skills and competencies:** These skills and competencies include those that are specified by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), as well as others that were suggested by the literature review, the survey, and the JCU symposium (e.g. critical thinking, learning and adaptation, negotiation, and communication).

3 The report is referring here to the varying levels of work and life experience that students have in the development sector, as well as the different academic disciplines they tend to come from.

Section 1. Introduction

Development Studies (DS)[4] is a field of study that increasingly appeals to students who want to engage with pressing global issues. Since its emergence in the wake of World War II, the field has seen its scope increase to include a number of themes including: development economics, conflict, communication, gender, policy, planning and practice, sustainability, humanitarian intervention, and community development, among others. The growth in the body of literature around development reflects growing interest in postgraduate enrolments in DS programs and a proliferation of the types of jobs on offer to graduates of such programs (Djohari, 2011; Chevry, 2008).

The purpose of this report is to contribute to the surrounding debate around the future direction of teaching in DS by providing a set of recommendations on how such courses can be improved to better cater to students in their quest for a deeper understanding of relevant themes and topics, as well as for employment in the field. It does so by examining the literature on DS, collating and extrapolating from a survey of students and teachers on their expectations of such courses, and insights from a symposium (organised by James Cook University and supported by the RDI Network in June 2017 entitled *Rethinking Development Pedagogy and Practice*, see Appendix A). Feedback received from a steering group made up of academics and practitioners was also crucial in the preparation of this report.

There are currently no guidelines for standardised content across DS courses in Australia (although they must comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework[5]), and comparing course content across universities was beyond the scope of this review.[6] This report has therefore drawn heavily from a body of literature on similar courses in the Canadian context. The literature review aims to:

1. Collate the literature that focuses on key themes within the teaching of DS.
2. Highlight the areas that would benefit from further research and analysis.

This report starts in Section 2 with some background on the study of development emerging from various disciplines (economics, politics, anthropology, etc.), and DS as a distinct field as examined in the context of this review. This is followed in Section 3 by a literature review of postgraduate (and some undergraduate) courses in DS - mainly in Australia and Canada, including the content of such courses, the different teaching and learning methods employed, and the challenges of teaching courses with such a wide remit. This section leads to a discussion on key skills that such courses need to impart, starting with the required generic skills outlined as a necessary component of higher education (specified by the AQF) and moving towards those specifically suggested for DS degrees in the literature. This discussion also builds on insights gleaned from the JCU symposium, details of which are presented in Appendix A.

In Section 4, the report then summarises the findings of a survey of 70 respondents in Australia (including current and former students of DS, and teachers) on the quality and content of current courses and the skills they felt need to be imparted to students through such courses. Finally, in Section 5, the report presents preliminary recommendations on how such courses can be improved and stay relevant to an ever-evolving and changing development sector.

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4 Sometimes referred to in the literature as International Development Studies

5 Box 2, Section 3.

6 See Appendix B for findings from a previous RDI Network review (Richards and Kilby, 2015) and a forthcoming mapping of DS courses in Australia, compiled by UNSW Sydney.

Section 2. Background: Development Studies

It must be noted at the outset that the very term 'development' is highly contested, being associated at various times with the decolonisation process, neoliberal values, and modernisation (Sumner & Tribe, 2008; Sumner, 2006; Shaw, 2004; Bernstein, 2005), or with self-interest (either around issues of trade and commerce, or national defense) (Brown et al., 2016).

'Development' has been defined widely as a "historical and complex process of social change (in a country or community)" (Aghajanian and Allouche, 2016), and as "deliberate efforts by various agencies, organisations, governments and movements aimed at improvement [in a country or community]" (Thomas, 2000, p. 777).[7] Although initially viewed in strictly economic terms, the concept of development has been theorised to take on a number of different meanings, including but not limited to: long-term progress of the human condition towards a good life; intentional change; freedom of choice; human well-being for all; reduction in poverty; unemployment and inequality; needs satisfaction; indigeneity and self-reliance; environmental harmony; and structural transformation (Makuwira, 2016).

Development as an academic field of study - involving a critical look at the process of social (and often economic and political) change in a country or community - has emerged from various disciplines, including economics, political science, anthropology, geography, and other social sciences. The themes covered under the broad umbrella of DS have grown over the years to include: underdevelopment, social indicators of development, gender issues, ecological concerns, environmental issues, sustainable development, poverty reduction, inequality, social capital and networks, freedom, democracy, human rights, globalisation, climate change, conflict, capacity development, energy, migration, entrepreneurship, and new and emerging donors, among other issues (Thelwall and Thelwall, 2015).

This means that there are frequently shifting priorities of development interventions and of DS courses, with themes such as poverty alleviation, civil society and nation-building, and sustainability taking precedence at various points in time (Brown et al., 2016). Haines and Hurst highlight a number of recently incorporated trends, including growing concerns for environmental sustainability, the inclusion of the gender perspective, and the addition of the security-development nexus (2011). They view the adaptability and flexibility of DS, as well as its interdisciplinary nature, as a strength for dealing with "the demands of a perpetually changing world" (Haines & Hurst, 2011, p. 24).

This reference to theme diversity is common throughout the literature (Närman, 1997; Sumner, 2006) and a number of scholars have suggested that this is due to the constant growth of and change within this area of study. Närman highlights the contradictions within the vastly expanding literature in development, stating that "what has been the solution at one time might even be part of the problem at a later stage" (1997, 219). However, while acknowledging the practical difficulties of effective interventions in the face of such shifting priorities, Brown et al. (2016) also argue that the ever-changing nature of trends, interests and issues facing the world necessitate this constant adaptability A common defining feature suggested by development scholars is the goal of 'positive change' and improving peoples' lives. This is consistent with Malik's view;

> What marks the discipline of Development Studies out from earlier and now transcended interdisciplinary fields…is its focus on development and underdevelopment but also with formulating practical improvements to the living standards of people in the developing world. (Malik, 2011, p. 14).

7 The concept of development originates from the 1949 inaugural speech of President Harry S. Truman (Rist, 2014; Schuurman, 2014), which introduced the term 'underdevelopment' for nations, meaning economically backwards. It also argued for the need to support international development, focused almost exclusively on facilitating economic growth.

There is now a school of thought that describes *Development Studies* as distinct from the *study of development*, arguing that the former is more dedicated to generating applied knowledge in the formulation, implementation, and practice of development policies and interventions. The latter involves a more critical lens into how development has and is taking place — with intended and unintended consequences — against a backdrop of complex and often interconnected issues (Bernstein, 2006; Bernstein, 2005; Thomas, 2000). Sumner (2006) even suggests that DS has relevance as a separate discipline from the study of development, since the former has "has a normative point of departure — to improve people's lives" (2006, p. 645). However, for most scholars, DS is a mix of both perspectives, including aspects of the normative (how you ought to do development) and the critical (how development is done).

2.1. The interdisciplinary nature of Development Studies

The vast body of literature on DS is still being added to in an interdisciplinary sense. While this interdisciplinarity has added value to the discourse within DS when viewed as a whole, it is not without its issues. Scholars point to the problems of academics continuing to address or discuss development problems through only their own disciplinary lenses;

> For example, the economists deal with poverty through an economic point of view, i.e. following economic growth standards as their main concern. On the other hand, sociologists address development concerns using sociological lenses, without considering other areas like political science, geography and rural development, while all these are areas in development studies. Anthropology has had an ambiguous relationship with development and its interventionists. The agricultural sciences, forestry, geology, biology and the like add to the complexity of approaches, not to mention the computer sciences and its possibilities in dealing with so-called big data now increasingly available also in the developing world. (Kilonzo and Kontinen, 2015)

Jakimow also comments on this issue:

> The department of Development Studies at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia, is a multi-disciplinary group of scholars. We share an interest in development, but from different scholarly backgrounds including international relations, sociology, environmental science, and anthropology. Striking a balance between critical engagement with development, without foreclosing pathways into development practice, is a central concern of our undergraduate program, and one that has been the topic of reflection within our team. (2015, p. 42)

Perhaps one repercussion of having multiple disciplinary antecedents is that DS is, as yet, not recognised as a formal academic discipline[8] in and of itself, although efforts to propose a demarcation of the field based on its 'distinctive and identifying characteristics' are ongoing both in the UK and Europe (EADI, 2005; www.eadi.org). The challenge, however, is that "accreditation frameworks around the world are predominantly mono-disciplinary" (*ibid*).

> Development as an academic specialisation is challenged by inhabiting a broad field of study… upon which other [disciplines] graze (Copestake, 2014, p.12)

8 Development Studies is not a formal academic field in Australia. The Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) system does not have a Field of Research (FOR) code for Development Studies.

The lack of clarity and defined borders are an area for concern for some scholars, with Malik (2011) arguing that "the biggest challenge facing Development Studies is the fallacy that it is an interdisciplinary field devoid of any disciplinary integrity". Others argue that it should be taught by experts trained in various mono-disciplines — such as economics, demography, political science, sociology and geography — depending on the content on what one wants to teach (Msoka, 2015). However, despite the challenge in defining it as an academic discipline, DS scholars point out that interdisciplinarity has its advantages — bringing together diverse groups, from different backgrounds, into a shared discourse. According to Currie-Alder, DS creates a disciplinary "meeting place for different dialogues" (2016, p. 20).

According to Repko et al. (2014), students trained as DS scholars and researchers have a unique angle of looking at issues that cannot be obtained in a single discipline.

> The interdisciplinarity of DS has given them the tools to think holistically — a system of thinking that takes on board context — and such students are taught to relate the smallest parts of the system to the whole. (*ibid*)

Along with interdisciplinarity, scholars also point out the positive feature of fluidity within DS, given that it aims to "…understand and shape how society changes over time" (Currie-Alder, 2016, p. 6). Sumner and Tribe highlight this fluidity, stating that while "previously reference was made to an apparently homogenous Third World there is now an emphasis on diversity". (2008, p. 33)In addition to this increasingly complex view of developing countries, Sumner and Tribe also point to the need to broaden the traditional scope of DS to include "the analysis of socioeconomic change in higher-income industrialised countries…[as] all countries are developing in a sense" (*ibid*, p. 33). This broadening is encouraged by the Sustainable Development Goals, which, unlike the Millennium Development Goals, apply to all countries and poverty in all forms everywhere.

While the diversity of topics and themes — and their complexity — under the broader umbrella of DS reflect the ever-changing nature of the field, it creates challenges in the teaching of DS as an academic discipline, especially in creating relevant course content. The next section reviews the literature specifically around DS courses, particularly in Canada and Australia, examining what they aim to achieve in order to look for ways in which they can be improved.

Section 3. Development Studies Courses in Australia and Canada

The literature on postgraduate DS courses in Australia is limited in scale and scope,[9] which is why this review draws on a variety of resources, including both peer-reviewed and grey literature, found through a scan of various academic journals, books, search systems, and databases. Given the extensive discussion on DS undertaken in the Canadian context, this report draws heavily from discussions featured in the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. Scholarly publications with a focus on DS in Australia were also included.

The previous section highlighted the complexity of DS as an area of study. Mehta et al. observed that DS is "more loaded and contested than other kinds of research" (2006, p. 1), given its various disciplinary antecedents. With this in mind, establishing a stringent framework for core content in DS teaching would be inevitably difficult, not to mention difficult or even impossible to standardise across universities.

Topics around development are also constantly changing and evolving, exemplified by the relatively recent emergence issues of climate change adaptation and entrepreneurship in DS. Given the ever-changing nature of the discipline, content for degrees in this area is also immensely diverse and subject to constant updating. Box 1 below presents just a *small* sampling of themes that appear in DS courses in Australian universities. Given the overlapping of themes and disciplines, this report has chosen not to organise these themes under sub-headings (Appendix B Figure 8 presents these in greater detail).

Box 1. Selection of development issues or themes in DS courses

- Agriculture, environment and sustainability
- Applied anthropology and participatory development
- Community development
- Conflict
- Crisis, change and management
- Democracy, justice and governance
- Development planning
- Economics of development
- Emergency and disaster management
- Gender and development
- Gender, conflict and security
- Global health and development
- Governance
- Humanitarian action
- Indigenous policy
- International development economics
- International sustainable tourism management
- Monitoring and evaluation in development
- Organisation management of NGOs
- Politics of global development
- Poverty alleviation and microfinance
- Poverty and development
- Project management and design
- Public policy and development
- Role of the state and governance debates
- Refugees and displacement
- Security and development
- Society and environment
- Sustainable resource management
- Terrorism and security studies
- Urban and rural development

9 This report does, however, draw on the findings of an earlier report submitted to ACFID and the RDI Network (Richards and Kilby, 2015).

Sumner (2006) points out the challenges in developing content in the absence of any universally agreed-upon guidelines, and suggests that there needs to be more consideration around how best to address this within the field of DS. Similarly, Currie-Alder acknowledges that:

> …administrators and teaching staff face critical choices when crafting curricula or research programs, including the focus and scale of inquiry and how to situate development studies in the broader landscape of scholarship and knowledge. (2016, p. 20)

Woolcock does not write specifically on what content needs to be included in postgraduate DS degrees, but instead chooses to focus more strongly on the relevant skills, due to the "heterogeneity and unpredictable nature of their [students'] career trajectories" (2007, p. 63). Unsurprisingly, the bulk of the literature reviewed does not comment specifically on content in DS degrees.

Given the staggering number of topics relevant to DS, several universities offer students the option to specialise in themes.[10] Table 1 below presents just some of the specialisation options offered in a selection of Australian university postgraduate DS degrees, all of which had information posted online about course content. It must be noted that several universities also offer subjects around these themes, even if they do not give their students the option to specialise in them.[11]

Table 1. Specialisations in selected Australian postgraduate DS degrees

University	Course Title	Streams/Specialisations
Australian National University (ANU)	Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development	• Conflict and Development • Gender and Development • Humanitarian Action • Indigenous Policy and Development • Regional Studies in Development • Society and Environment
Monash University	Master of International Development Practice	• Democracy, Justice and Governance • Gender, Conflict and Security • Crisis, Change and Management • Sustainable Resource Management
University of Western Australia (UWA)	Master of International Development	• Development Policy and Practice • Economics of Development • Politics and Development
University of Melbourne	Master of Development Studies	• Gender and Development
University of Queensland	Master of Development Practice	• Community Development • Development Planning • Politics of Global Development • Social and Cultural Dynamics of Development

10 Anecdotal evidence from the steering group guiding this report suggests that most students choose not to specialise, instead choosing a general stream option.

11 Also see Figure 8 Analysis of Development Studies Offerings 2015, in Appendix B

University	Course Title	Streams/Specialisations
Deakin University	Master of Community and International Development	• Community Development • International Development • Dual Stream – International and Community Development
UNSW Sydney	Master of Development Studies	• Refugees and Displacement

Given the wide range of topics and themes, and the fact that they are constantly evolving in an ever-shifting global context, this report does not focus on examining the thematic content of these courses in order to draw conclusions and provide recommendations; rather, it focuses on cross-component skills and competencies that can be further developed.

These skills can be divided into discipline-specific skills for DS degrees or more generic skills, relevant to all postgraduate degrees, specifically in the social science field. The following sub-section will outline what generic graduate attributes are specified for Australian postgraduate degrees, followed by an assessment from the literature around skills and competencies that DS degrees need to impart.

3.1. Skills and competencies[12]

3.1.1 Generic graduate skills and competencies

Currently, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) 2013 (with an addendum in 2014)[13] specifies the criteria required to demonstrate achievement of a Masters level degree (see Box 2).

Box 2. Australian Qualifications Framework for Masters degrees[14]

Summary
Graduates at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for research, and/or professional practice and/or further learning.

Knowledge
Graduates at this level will have advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.

Skills
Graduates at this level will have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently:
- analyse critically, reflect on and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories
- research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice
- interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences

Application of knowledge and skills
Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.

Bath et al. reiterated the importance of building up certain core attributes in graduate students, including "critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, problem-solving, logical and independent thought, communication and information management skills, intellectual rigour, creativity and imagination, ethical practice, integrity and tolerance" (2004, p. 313). The authors suggest that these skills need to be taught as part of the discipline and embedded into the curriculum (*ibid*).

3.1.2 Skills and competencies specific to DS

In addition to the generic graduate attributes across all postgraduate degrees, a number of scholars have commented on the competencies specifically needed to complete DS degrees, and the skills students develop through their courses.

Belda et al. identified some of the common competencies needed for development practice, including; "navigating complexity, understanding and engaging with power, and the capacity for continuous learning and adaptation" (2012, p. 574). Woolcock (2007) echoed a similar sentiment, suggesting that Masters level graduates need to be capable of evaluating "programs and ideas using diverse sources of empirical evidence,

12 Although skills and competencies are often used interchangeably, including in the literature reviewed in this section, this report acknowledges a difference between the two. Skills are generally defined as something learned in order to be able to carry out one or more job functions. Competencies may incorporate skills, but are more than the skill; they include abilities and behaviours, as well as knowledge that is fundamental to the use of a skill.

13 The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training, and incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications network.

14 AQF website (www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-levels), access October 2017.

[and] can actively integrate different perspectives, and communicate to (and negotiate between) diverse audiences" (2007, p. 70). He also suggests that DS degrees:

> …should focus on helping students acquire three core competencies — those of "detectives" (data collection, analysis and interpretation), "translators" (reframing given ideas for diverse groups), and "diplomats" (negotiation, conflict mediation, deal-making) (*ibid*, p. 55).

This assessment has been commonly cited by scholars aiming to understand the area of skills and competencies in postgraduate studies (Patel, 2015; Sumner, 2011; Rosser, 2012).

Currie-Alder states that an "education in development studies must include the ability to reflect critically on one's work" (2016, p. 14).[15] Cameron et al. identified the purpose of DS as a "critical analysis of pressing global issues of exclusion, inequality, and ecological destruction", calling on university courses to provide students with the "skills and aptitudes to confront those issues" (2013, p. 356). Hurst (2011) suggests that "the most crucial demand placed on practitioners, researchers, theorists, and students is for critical, flexible, and creative thinking". This is in line with the suggested generic skills for graduate degrees in Australia, but discussed more pointedly with reference to DS. The focus on critical thinking is a necessary component of students' capacity to become active agents in the learning process, allowing them to better navigate the "interdisciplinarity and the contested nature of the subject matter" (Morrison, 2004, p. 189).

Another area that some of the literature points to as key to development practice, and therefore teaching, is cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness. Woolcock does not overtly suggest this but implies the importance of cultural understanding through his suggested competency of 'translator'. He highlights the value of this skill when he outlines the variety of contexts through which development takes place, including different cultures, stating that "it is vital to find more effective ways of connecting meaningfully across these different realms" (2007, p. 66). He also observes through the 'diplomat' competency that students can learn to "understand the others' hopes, agendas, values and concerns" (*ibid*, p. 68) and better contribute to social transactions. Reflecting on his experience in a Canadian context, Morrison highlights that "humility and cross-cultural sensitivity are essential" and that students need to understand their position long before they reach the field. He states that "it is vital for them to appreciate that their experience will be no more than a privileged opportunity to meet local people" (2004, p. 190). Student understanding of positionality is especially relevant in the context of DS teaching and learning. To achieve this, "perpetual self-scrutiny and critical reflexivity is needed when analysing development" (Sumner and Tribe, 2008, p. 51).

Summarising from the literature available, we can start to see the beginnings of a set of key skills and competencies across DS courses, listed in Table 2 below. It must be noted that this list is neither definitive nor all-encompassing, has the potential to be expanded further, and can cross over to other broad competency headings. A number of these suggested skills and competencies were also highlighted during the symposium hosted by James Cook University (JCU) in June 2017, entitled *Rethinking Development Pedagogy and Practice: New Visions for Global Development* (see Appendix A), where participants from universities across Australia further discussed and drew up a list of the key skills (tangible and intangible) required of DS students. Symposium participants suggested the need for both practical and academic skills, and certain knowledge and reflective capabilities (see Table 2).

15 The literature reviewed, by and large, does not distinguish between reflective thinking and reflexive thinking and uses one or the other to mean the same thing. Some scholars, however, suggest a difference between the two terms. According to Hibbert et al. (2010), reflection suggests a mirror image which affords the opportunity to engage in an observation or examination of our ways of doing. Reflexivity, however, suggests a complexification of thinking and experience, or thinking about experience. Thus, reflexivity is a process of exposing or questioning our ways of doing.

Table 2. Suggested core skills and competencies for DS courses

Competencies	Skills
• **Critical thinking, analysis and reflection on one's own work and that of others** • **Critical reflexion** • **Critical analysis of pressing global issues** • **Ability to analyse through different lenses: inequality, gender, power, ecological destruction, etc.** • **Skills to navigate complexity** • **Navigating interdisciplinarity and the contested nature of the subject matter** • **Understanding and engaging with power and hierarchies**	• Strategic analysis • Diagnostic studies • Institutional histories
Monitoring and evaluating interventions, programs and projects	• Theories of change • Log frames • Capacity to evaluate programs and ideas using diverse sources of empirical evidence • Impact assessment • Benchmarking • Network mapping
Research	• Identification of research questions • Data collection, analysis and interpretation • Methodological approaches • Literature reviews • Comparative analyses, etc • Theoretical and historical background
Project design and management	• Grant writing • Building partnerships • Scenario planning
Communications	• Ability to communicate (both written and verbal) to different audiences (policy briefs, journal articles, blogs, project reports, etc.) • Reframing ideas from different groups • Building and maintaining partnerships • Public presentations
Critical reading	• Literature reviews

Competencies	Skills
Conflict resolution and negotiation	• Deal-making • Integrating and managing different perspectives
Cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness	• Understanding different perspectives
Capacity for continuous learning and adaptation	• Develop skills to adapt to and confront ever-changing global issues (poverty, sustainability, climate change, etc.)

Considering the diversity of the field and the unpredictable nature of students' career trajectories, incorporating transferrable skills throughout the curriculum may be beneficial to students. Certain scholars have suggested that the potential goal of DS degrees is to make students 'job ready', with an "increased pressure on both program directors and faculty to 'professionalise' International Development curricula" (Denskus & Esser, 2015, p. 74). However, it must be noted that DS degrees also increasingly appeal to mid-career students, who are keen on refining existing skills or acquiring new careers, or deepening their knowledge and critical awareness of their sector. A more in-depth discussion involving research on Australia-based scholars would be a valuable addition to this conversation.

3.2. Teaching and learning methods for Development Studies

This section aims to draw out some of the different teaching/learning methods that can be used in DS to build up the key skills and competencies discussed above. Given the literature on DS courses focuses much of its discussion on practice-based or experiential learning (while acknowledging the importance of theory-based learning), the following sections examine the former in greater detail. What follows is a brief analysis of the benefits and challenges of practical experience through activities such as internships, placements, and university-led field trips, as well as the potential methods of incorporating these experiences and the related skills into the classroom. This is done by exploring the literature on participatory and student-centred learning styles, as well as scenario-based learning, and the use of case studies and storytelling.

3.2.1 Practice-based learning through internships and volunteering[16]

Practical experience is a common discussion point in the literature and has been painted as both an opportunity and a challenge. Although there are limited resources discussing this topic in an Australian postgraduate DS context, it is worth recognising the current debates. Morrison (2004) discusses this in a Canadian context and recommends that DS programs actively encourage students to include in their studies some direct experience in a developing country. Engel (2016), considering an Australian International Relations perspective, questions such practical experience, particularly internships and volunteer work, stating that they are "fundamentally a form of precarious work and there is growing debate about their morality".[17] During the JCU symposium, concerns were raised about the ability of less affluent students or students with families to be able to do volunteer work or unpaid internships, and still cover their costs of living.

16 This report views volunteering as an activity focused on service while an internship is focused on learning. Also, internships usually involve work for a specific amount of time — usually an academic semester. Volunteer programs can range from one week to three years.

17 Anecdotal evidence from members of the steering group guiding this report suggested that it was difficult for some universities to get ethics approval for internships, especially international work. Although discussions at the JCU symposium raised the possibilities of domestic internships (in refugee centres or indigenous communities, for example), the same ethical concerns would apply. However, anecdotal evidence also suggested that this was not a problem for other universities, which embedded internships with learning and course credit.

Hodge et al. (2011) discussed 'how we learn' in higher education using the context of seven different degrees from three Australian universities: The University of Melbourne, University of Newcastle, and University of Queensland. Their study approaches the topic in a broad sense, focusing on both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a number of disciplines. The authors point to the importance of multi-directionality in learning and the roles of teachers, students, and host communities, suggesting that all "have flexible and important roles as teachers, facilitators and learners" (*ibid*, p. 168).

The authors go on to observe that practical experience, or practice-based learning, "facilitates circulatory reciprocal learning…[and] academics, students and hosts all gained from, and contributed to, the students' mobile knowledges" (*ibid*, p. 180). Despite these potential benefits, this article also acknowledges that "not all practice-based learning exchanges go according to plan" (*ibid*, p. 180). Epprecht echoes this observation, stating that despite the benefits of practice-based learning, even "well-intentioned, well-prepared, and well-behaved students, well-thought-out ethical guidelines, and well-administered projects can all have unanticipated harmful impacts" (2004, p. 704). Rosser (2012) assessed the Australian undergraduate DS students' experiences in overseas work-integrated learning practica in the form of short-course internship programs in Jakarta. Although the program was considered largely successful at achieving its pedagogical goals, Rosser reiterates the need for practical experience to be "well-designed and managed" (*ibid*, p. 351). There were consistent complaints from host organisations that the program needed to be longer for "organizations to get real value out of their interns" (*ibid*). This observation points to the impact that these programs have on host communities; highlighting that risks are not only an important consideration for student wellbeing but also for host communities.

Tiessen and Kumar discuss the ethical concerns associated with placing Canadian DS students in international settings, particularly with regard to "the ethical implications of individual social interactions in cross-cultural settings" (2013, p. 418). According to the authors, ethical dilemmas are a necessary consideration for students, universities, and host communities when encouraging students to undertake practice-based learning. Encouraging and facilitating student reflection before, during and after this type of experience is suggested as a necessary component of dealing with these ethical concerns. "Education about ethics in international development needs to begin before the decision to go abroad is made as the ethical issues raised will shape [students'] decision-making process" (*ibid*, p. 424). Lewis highlights concerns around issues of impact:

> There has long been a debate about the levels of skills which make international service effective, or the level of local cultural knowledge which can best equip a volunteer to do a good job. There are also anxieties about the disproportionately high levels of benefits which tend to accrue to the server — in the form of adventure, practical skills building and informal education — as against the less positive impacts that may be apparent in relation to the served. (2016, p. 21)

However, other authors point out the potential benefits of practical, field experience. Lewison suggests the potential for mutual benefit between host communities and students, but outlines that programs need to be carried out effectively and be "consistently and conscientiously run, particularly over a longer term" (2013, p. 368). Billett (2009) has discussed this area more generally in relation to higher education, arguing that "preparing students to be proactive learners, capable of exercising critical, but productive, agentic learning… is likely to arise through including and integrating episodes of practice-based experiences within the totality of the higher education curriculum" (2009, p. 840). Bennett et al. also suggest that practical experience in higher education can contribute significantly to student learning, proposing that "graduates who enter the labour market having completed work placements are supposedly more committed and possess superior transferable skills" (2007, p. 106).

There is clearly still some controversy over the inclusion of practical work experience in DS teaching, on ethical, moral and legal grounds. Other considerations arise from the diversity of student cohorts in Australian DS degrees, with a significant number of students surveyed already having work experience in the sector and not

being interested in internships.[18] The literature also does not discuss the difference between international, and domestic-based volunteer or internship positions, in any detail.[19] Finally, there are also teaching methods that can be an alternative to practical work experience, and which can still build the necessary skills such as critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding, and reflective practice.

3.2.2 Student-led teaching and learning

The following section considers the prospect of student-led, student-centred, or peer-to-peer teaching and learning styles. This refers to teaching and learning techniques that encourage students to learn from each other without constant direction from a teacher. Northedge (2003) identified this approach as a focus area due to the level of diversity and experience found in postgraduate DS students. Utilising student experience and breaking down the teacher-student barrier has been suggested as a key step in teaching DS (Makuwira, 2011, p. 138).

The value of student knowledge and experience has been expressed numerous times in the literature. Beckmann and Kilby (2008) outline their use of student-led learning in the Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (MAAPD) program at the Australian National University (ANU). They state that lecturers in this course encourage student-led learning "with extensive opportunities to engage in structured, critical reflection on their learning, and to share this reflection with one another" (*ibid*, p. 62). Makuwira (2011) considers his experience teaching DS at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and points out that "students come to the classroom situation as experts in their own rights" and teachers should develop a "culture of respect for students' strength and weaknesses".[20] Stackpool-Moore et al. (2006) emphasises this point and observes the need for egalitarian relationships based on "mutual trust and respect, and valuing the differences that may be offered". Many scholars have suggested that teachers should step back as subject 'experts' and focus more strongly on the facilitation of student learning (Northedge, 2003, p. 170). Makuwira suggests the teachers' role "is to highlight the complex terrain of development by emphasising the need to pay attention to context… It's about engaging students to be critical" (2011, p. 147). Jakimow talks about moving:

> …beyond out-dated notions of knowledge (or culture) being "delivered", filling students much like an empty vessel, to consider how interactions between teacher and students, and students and students, lead to the construction of knowledges (in the plural). (2015, p. 45)

It is not just the potential to engage with the already existing experience in the classroom but also the diversity of students (both cultural diversity and in terms of work experience) that can be a valuable teaching tool. This diversity "helps teachers approach the subject with multiple pedagogical lenses to recognise that they have a huge resource before them — the students themselves" (Makuwira, 2011, p. 141). Närman outlines the potential usefulness of students as a resource, stating that problems "can be turned over and given new dimensions and aspects" (1997, p. 219). This view is consistent in Makuwira's observations: effectively embracing classroom diversity and student-centred teaching and learning "not only offers teachers an opportunity to utilise various development stories and perspectives but it also deepens our understanding of the conflicting debates about what works, where, how and why" (2011, p. 141).

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18 More than two-thirds of the current students surveyed for this report (see Section 4) indicated that they had prior work experience in the development sector. While some of these students felt practical, experiential learning was important to their degree, others felt they did not have much to gain from it, given their prior work experience in the sector.

19 Participants at the JCU symposium spoke further about the option and benefits of domestic placements e.g. volunteering in a local community, or interning at an Australian based NGO or refugee centre. The Macquarie University Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) Program, for example, offers local learning opportunities.

20 Current Australian DS students surveyed for this report felt they also gained some perspective on the development sector through interactions with international students in their courses, who provided valuable insight and experience.

Northedge (2003) suggests that some students resist teaching methods centred on student-led learning, as they preferred to learn from 'experts' (in other words, teachers) rather than 'non-experts' (their peers). For the most part, however, the literature highlights the importance of student-led learning in DS courses, as it harnesses inputs and experiences from very diverse student cohorts — in terms of cultural backgrounds, levels of work experience, and different academic disciplines.

Due to the experience that already exists in the classroom at the postgraduate level, the use of storytelling can be beneficial to student learning and allows teachers to utilise students' strengths and experience. Methods of storytelling considered include the incorporation of students' personal reflections and experiences in the classroom and even the use of fiction (in the form of novels and movies). Encouraging student reflections is commonly suggested to supplement practical experiences such as internships (Lloyd, et al., 2015). This is seen as an effective method of reflective learning. Lloyd et al. (*ibid*) discuss their incorporation of this in Macquarie University's Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program as a method of encouraging student reflection following practical experience, thereby promoting mutual learning and reflection.

Although storytelling as a method of teaching has not been written about in detail, a number of scholars have suggested some benefits that may come from it. Hodge et al. point to the capacity to 'absorb' culture through storytelling, suggesting that "stories constitute a vital part of diagnosing and reinterpreting shared practices while fashioning forms of memory and reflection" (2011, p. 171). This paper observes that storytelling can be used as a reflective activity in conjunction with other styles of learning. Based on student reports, Hodge suggests that students can gain "a deeper and broader level of practical understanding" when this style of learning is incorporated into teaching (*ibid*, p. 176). In a reflection of his teaching DS at RMIT University, Makuwira (2011) refers to storytelling as 'stories from the field' where he allows students to share their personal experience working in the sector (2011, p. 147). According to Makuwira, "stories have proven to be an effective way to bridge theory and practice", inspiring students who are yet to gain their own experience and allowing more experienced students to reflect on their preconceived ideas of DS (*ibid*).

As noted above, storytelling not only comes from the students, but can also be achieved through the use of fiction. This is not commonly suggested in the literature, however Morrison (2004) briefly comments on the use of fiction as a valuable tool to accommodate for the wide scope of issues covered in DS teaching, suggesting that the improved cultural understanding can be "facilitated through the written word — analytical and descriptive books and articles by academics and development practitioners, novels and poetry".

3.2.3 Teaching and learning through case studies and scenario-based activities

Scenario-based activities and case studies[21] are considered to have a number of potential benefits in higher education (Flynn & Klein, 2001, pp. 71-72), including:

- Allowing students to understand and apply theory in the context of real-world events;
- Increasing student engagement, developing better listening and communication skills;
- Enabling students to engage in the subject material and relate it to their own experiences, furthering their understanding; and
- Exposing students to some of the complexity of real-world problems which is often missed in university lectures.

21 Case studies depict real-life situations in which problems need to be solved. Scenario-based teaching may be similar to case studies, or may be oriented toward developing communication or teamwork skills.

Walker (2009) conducted an assessment of the benefit of long, structured case studies with undergraduate students from UNSW Sydney. This research was carried out with a student questionnaire following their completion of a four-week case study. This analysis lists three key benefits of this type of teaching, stating students were able to:

> (a) develop generic skills required for policy practice, (b) gain a deeper understanding of policy theory, acquire knowledge about policy theory and the policy process in the context of practice, and (c) demonstrate an ability to apply theory to analyse policy problems. (*ibid*, p. 214).

The student perceptions from the questionnaire clearly identified the perceived effectiveness of case studies as a prospective teaching method. Around 94% of students indicated that "the case study was effective in developing their understanding of policy theory" taught in their course (*ibid*). Additionally, case studies could potentially be carried out over a shorter timeframe, depending on the level of experience in the classroom.

Handler et al. (2016) observed that case studies can play a critical role in engaging students to reflect on the tension between development theory and practice. This is especially necessary due to the often sensitive social and ethical issues students are required to consider (Spence & Makuwira, 2005, p. 21). Morrison states that DS degrees should have:

> selected monographs and case studies that illustrate differing theoretical positions, models, and methods of analysis, and that — most importantly — engage students with the lived experience of development at local, national, and global levels. (2004, p. 192)

This draws in the key skills of critical and reflective thinking and provides a potential method to incorporate these into DS teaching. Jakimow also suggests that a constructivist approach, "in which students are explicitly asked to draw upon their experiences (including in the classroom) to tackle 'real-life' stimulated problems of development, can demonstrate the relevance of their knowledge". (2015, p. 46)

The approaches discussed above are just a selection of learning and teaching methods that can contribute to a toolkit of mixed-method approaches. Anecdotal evidence from the project steering group suggests that many universities in Australia already employ elements of these approaches. Further research into how these could be better utilised and expanded upon would be an important next step.

3.3. Discussion and concluding remarks

The literature review of DS courses (both postgraduate and undergraduate) has touched on a number of longstanding debates and highlighted a host of issues that could benefit from further research and analysis.

There is a great diversity and depth of topics, themes, and issues that fall under the broad umbrella of development studies, making it difficult to come up with comprehensive coursework even for a postgraduate level program. An added level of complexity is the fact that these themes often need to be constantly updated, given that the issues that affect the world are ever-changing and evolving. However, scholars also reiterate the relevance of DS as an academic field, given its adaptability, flexibility and interdisciplinary nature.

Owing to the inherent challenges, the literature reviewed for this report focuses on developing certain core skill sets and competencies, both in terms of generic skills that are crucial for all postgraduate students, as well as some that might prove particularly important for DS students. The literature reviewed also recommended employing a mixed-method approach to teaching DS, including practical learning, case studies and student-led learning. This review provides a broad starting point, highlighting areas that would benefit from deeper and more comprehensive examination and analysis by the sector.

Section 4. Survey Results and Findings

4.1. Survey results

In an effort to gain more of an Australian perspective on DS courses, this report includes a survey of current students, recent graduates, and DS lecturers and teachers. Tailored surveys were disseminated to the RDI Network's database of contacts and posted on the social media pages of at least two universities that offered DS courses.[22] The survey aimed to draw out more data (on the Australian context) on a number of key areas outlined in the preceding literature review.

The survey attracted 70 respondents across 12 Australian universities,[23] including:

- Current students: 36 (25 domestic and 11 international students)
- Recent graduates: 22 (16 domestic and 6 international students)
- Lecturers and teachers: 12 (8 having studied DS; 4 who did not; eight 8 had worked in the aid, development and humanitarian sector prior to teaching and 9 continue to engage in this sector through volunteering and consulting).[24]

Given the small sample size, the survey only provides a base level analysis that can be built upon in future research. The key results of the survey are presented below under various headings, followed by a discussion of the findings.

4.1.1 Reasons for studying DS

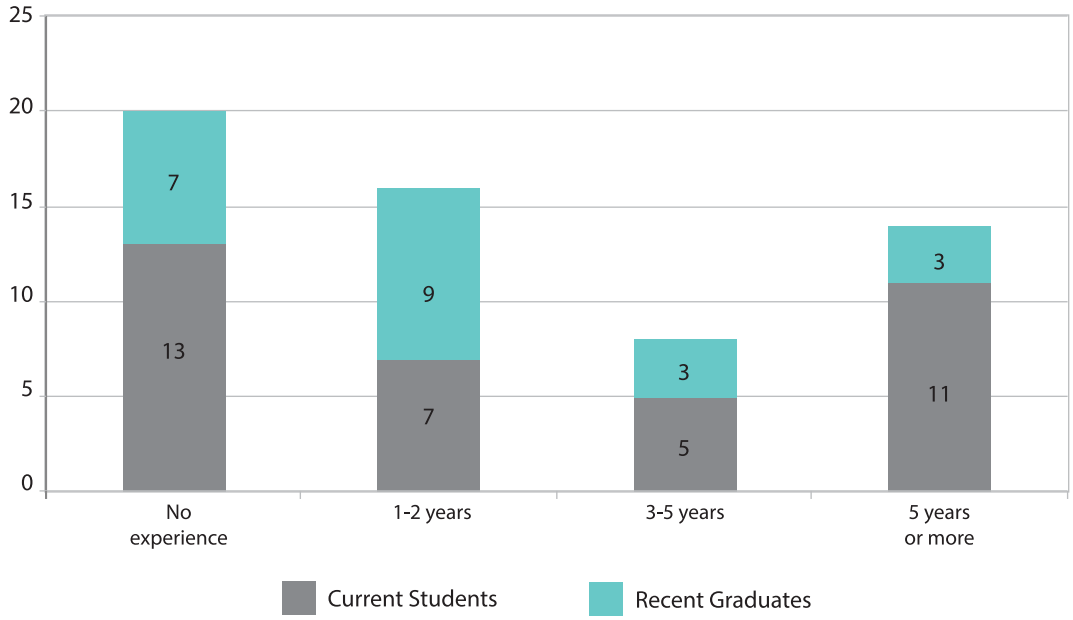
Current and former students of DS were surveyed on their reasons for their chosen academic discipline. Prior work experience in the field is also included in this finding, given the number of mid-career students seeking out further training. As Figure 1 shows, two-thirds of all students enrol in DS without prior work experience (66%), with a third (34%) having some. Among those with work experience, there is nearly an even split between those with limited work experience (1-2 years, 42%) and those with 5 years or more (37%), with only 21% of students falling in the middle (3-5 years of experience). This already shows that DS courses have to cater to a student body with a diverse level of prior work experience.

22 The author of this report could only gain access to the social media pages of two universities — La Trobe University and Monash University.

23 Respondents came from 12 universities across Australia: Flinders University, University of the Sunshine Coast, La Trobe University, Monash University, the Australian National University, Murdoch University, James Cook University, UNSW Sydney, Deakin University, University of Queensland, RMIT and University of Melbourne.

24 Those who did not study DS came from a mixed background including history, human geography (or geography) sociology and international relations, South Asian studies, and natural resource management (some having studied different disciplines at MA and PhD levels). The diversity of background perhaps also explains that most thought of DS as a multi-disciplinary field.

Figure 1. Level of prior (work) experience in the field of development (N=58)



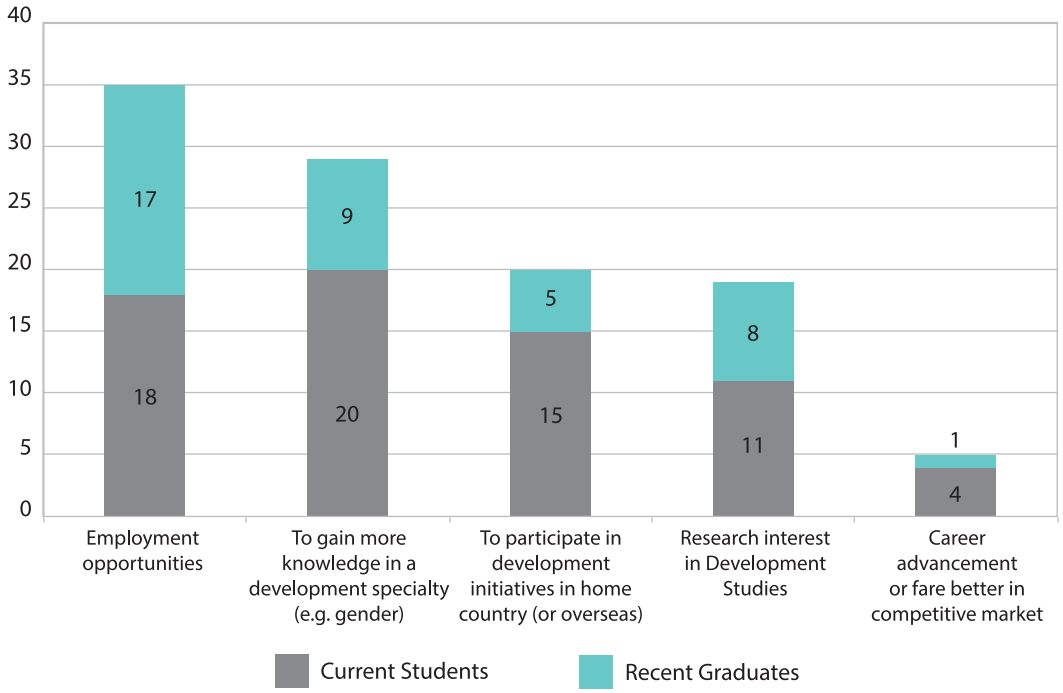
Another survey question asked students and recent graduates for their reasons "for choosing to undertake a postgraduate degree in international development studies (or similar)?" Respondents were able to provide more than one response, and responses show that indeed there is no one single reason for studying DS (see Figure 2). In addition to five initial choices provided, two others emerged from responses (career advancement and interest in subject matter). The two most frequently mentioned motivations were employment opportunities (31.5% of all respondents), followed by wanting to gain more knowledge in a development speciality (26%). Another five respondents referenced career advancement as a reason, which suggests that a total of 36% of all respondents enrol in a Masters in DS for employment-related reasons. In sum, responses by both current students and recent graduates indicate that employability in the field is a strong motivating factor to sign up for a DS degree in Australia.

The following are some specific career-related comments:

> Government will give me further responsibility in development jobs. (Current international student, university not specified)
>
> Career change (Current student, ANU)

A wish to participate in development initiatives in home country or overseas, and research interest in the subject matter came in third (18%), and fourth (17%) respectively; with three respondents citing general interest in DS. Wishing to contribute to one's country was referenced as a key priority for international students, and one current Australian student also cited altruistic motivations. None of the respondents studied the degree because it was recommended by a family member or friend, showing that students of DS arrive at their degree choice out of personal interest. This being said, one recent graduate noted that they enrolled in a Masters in DS based on the recommendations of a supervisor.

Figure 2. Reasons for studying DS (N=58)



4.1.2 Required and desired skills

The survey also addressed the skills students wanted or felt they had gained and the methods through which this occurred. Respondents were given 10 options for skills they had either already acquired or wanted to acquire through the course of their degree (and were also allowed to respond with "do not want" or "unsure"). The results are presented in Figures 3 and 4, and Table 3.

- Conflict management
- Cross-cultural understanding
- Gender knowledge
- Sustainable practice
- Indigenous knowledge
- Critical thinking
- Written communication skills
- Verbal communication skills
- Reflective learning
- Negotiation and mediation

Figure 3. Acquired skills by current students (CS) and recent graduates (RG) (N=58)

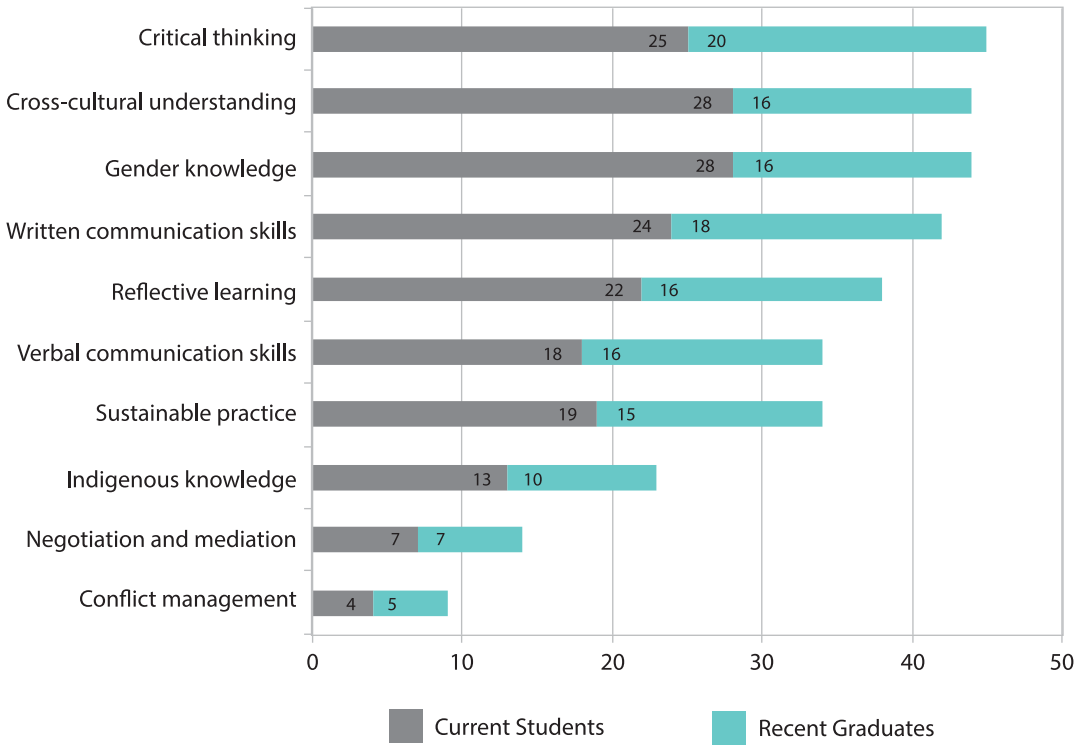
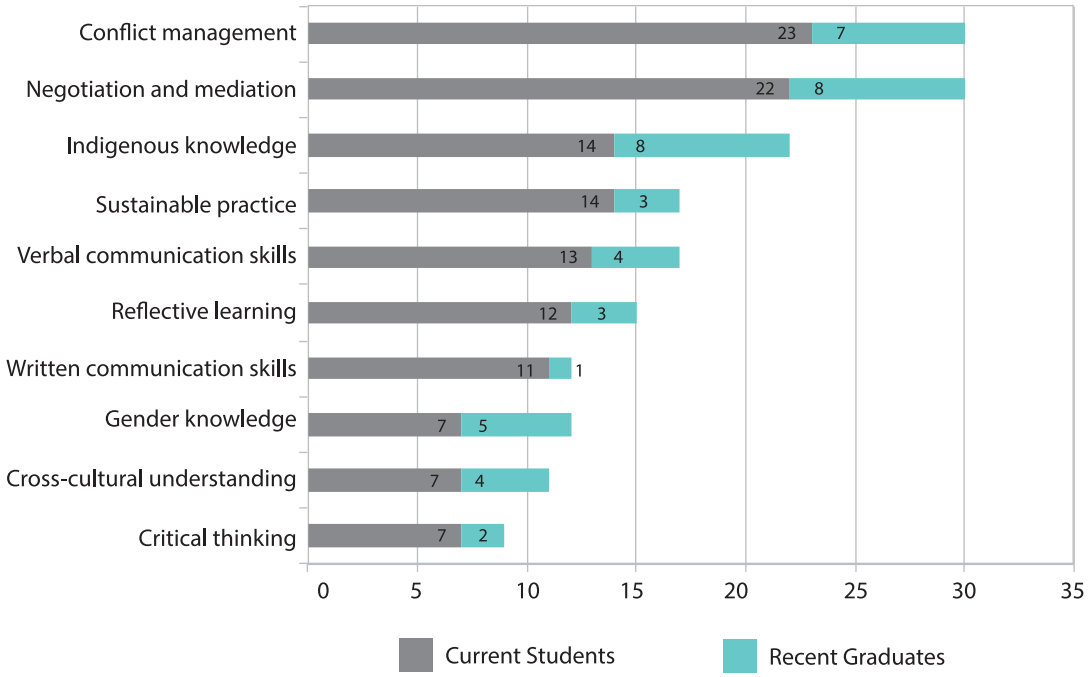


Figure 4. Skills wish-list of current students (CS) and recent graduates (RG); N=58



When comparing both figures, it becomes clear that four skills were the most frequently gained by both current students and recent graduates respectively: critical thinking (69% and 91% respectively); gender knowledge and cross-cultural understanding (each 78% and 73% respectively), and written communication skills (67% and 82% respectively). The three skills that both current students and recent graduates reported as least likely to have acquired are conflict management (11% and 23% respectively), negotiation and mediation (19% and 32% respectively) and indigenous knowledge (36% and 45% respectively). These skills, however, were among the most desired ones (see Figure 4), as one student commented:

> The course lacks some practical skills (such as conflict management, negotiation, etc.), which I am undertaking a TAFE course to try to gain. (Current student, ANU)

Table 3. Acquired and Desired Skills by current students (CS) and recent graduates (RG) (N=58)

	Have Gained						Want to Gain						Combined Gained/ Want to Gain			
	CS (N=36)		RG (N=22)		Total (N=58)		CS (N=36)		RG (N=22)		Total (N=58)		CS (N=36)		RG (N=22)	
Critical thinking	25	69%	20	91%	45	78%	7	19%	2	9%	9	16%	32	89%	22	100%
Cross-cultural understanding	28	78%	16	73%	44	76%	7	19%	5	23%	12	21%	35	97%	21	95%
Gender knowledge	28	78%	16	73%	44	76%	7	19%	4	18%	11	19%	35	97%	20	91%
Written communication skills	24	67%	18	82%	42	72%	11	31%	1	5%	12	21%	35	97%	19	86%
Reflective learning	22	61%	16	73%	38	66%	12	33%	3	14%	15	26%	34	94%	19	86%
Sustainable practice	19	53%	15	68%	34	59%	13	36%	4	18%	17	29%	32	89%	19	86%
Verbal communication skills	18	50%	16	73%	34	59%	14	39%	3	14%	17	29%	32	89%	19	86%
Indigenous knowledge	13	36%	10	45%	23	40%	14	39%	8	36%	22	38%	27	75%	18	82%
Negotiation and mediation	7	19%	7	32%	14	24%	22	61%	8	36%	30	52%	29	81%	15	68%
Conflict management	4	11%	5	23%	9	16%	23	64%	7	32%	30	52%	27	75%	12	55%

Recent graduates ranked critical thinking most highly (100% did so), and then cross-cultural understanding and gender knowledge at 95% and 91% respectively. By contrast, current students ranked cross-cultural understanding, gender knowledge and written communication skills most highly (97% of students for all). When combined, cross-cultural understanding outranks all the others (97%), followed by gender knowledge (95%), then critical thinking and written communication (each 93%), as well as reflective learning (91%). Conflict management (67%), negotiations and mediation (76%) and indigenous knowledge (78%) rank last.

It is interesting that conflict management and negotiation/mediation was given a higher status among current students than recent graduates with 75% (vs. 55%) and 81% (vs. 68%) stating that they 'have gained' or 'wish to gain' this skill. A similar discrepancy also existed in the area of 'reflective practice', which 94% of all students noting that they have gained it or wish to do so, with only 86% of recent graduates doing the same, the latter being only half as likely to have gained it during their university studies.

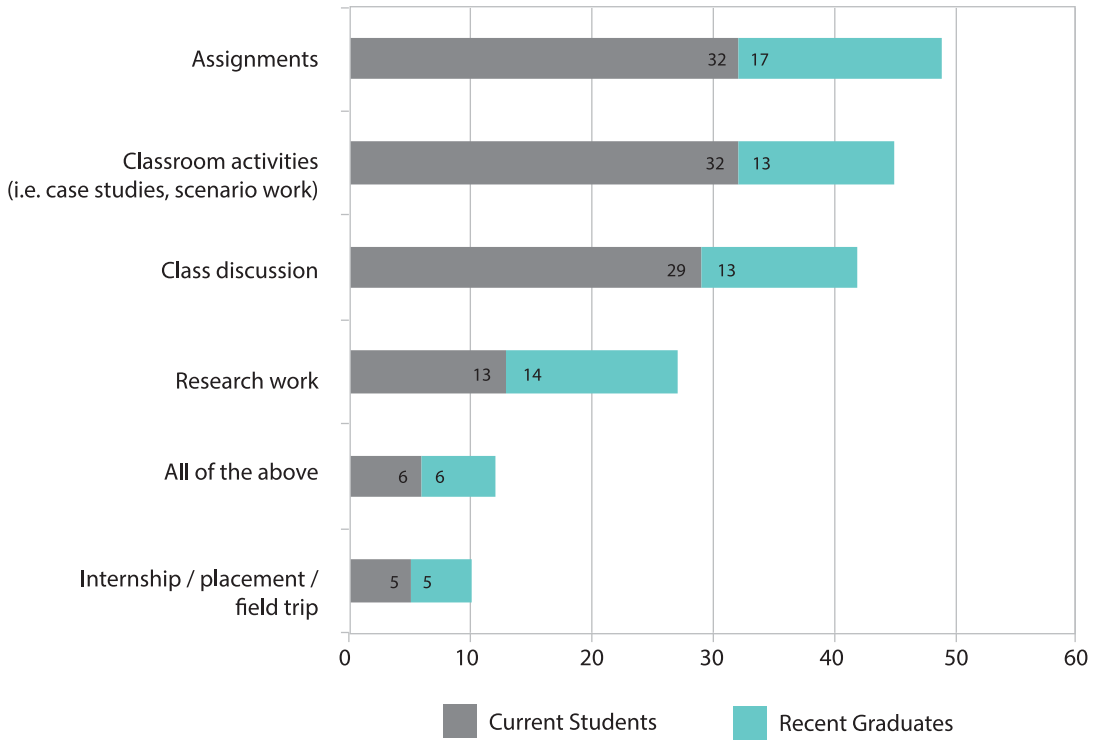
All lecturers and teachers agreed that both critical thinking and reflective thinking were skills that students needed to gain through their studies, showing the growing emphasis on the latter. This finding is in line with what has been commonly cited in the literature regarding the necessary skills in higher education teaching (see the previous section) and is required for course accreditation by the AQF. Another key skill, less valued by students, were written communication skills. The three skills that were seen as less relevant for a DS curricula was indigenous knowledge (67%), negotiation and mediation (67%) and conflict management (67%).

This analysis, however, would benefit from a follow up qualitative assessment as it is plausible that some of the "don't want" responses were due to students having these skills prior to undertaking their studies, especially as 34% of all students surveyed already had some experience working in the development sector prior to studying.

4.1.3 Learning methodologies

When asked how key skills discussed in the previous question were acquired, both groups indicated assignments first (89% for current students and 77% for recent graduates) followed by diverse classroom activities (89% of current students and 59% of recent graduates) and class discussions (81% for current students and 59% for recent graduates). Independent research was noted by 64% of recent graduates but only 36% of current students; the latter perhaps not having reached their thesis work yet. Internships/placements and field trips were reported by the least number of students in both groups (five for each); while another six in each group suggested their learning came from a combination of several activities.

Figure 5. Methodologies credited for 'skill' learning (N=58).



One recent graduate also credited side-events such as seminars for their learning, while current students pointed to readings, work and life experience as well as peer-learning. One student summarised their out of the classroom learning:

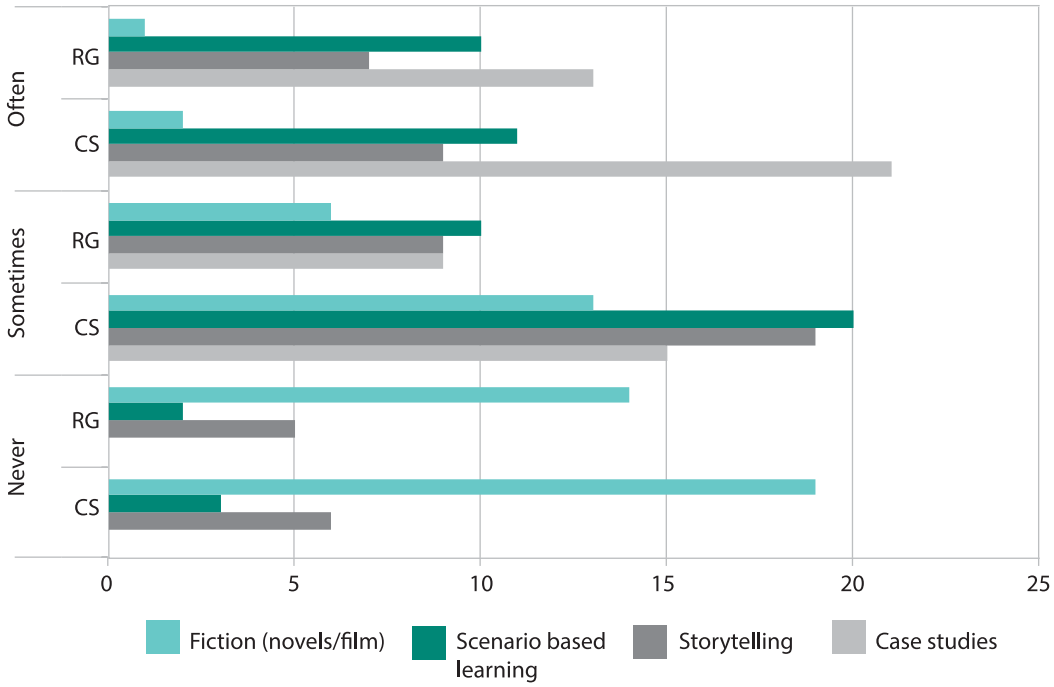
> Through informal engagement with Indigenous communities and elders - beyond simply "going and doing the job" we spend a lot of time building positive relationships (for creation of trust) through socialising and cultural experiences. I found this useful as it was not a case of "I'm doing this because I want something from you," but rather in an endeavour to create genuine relationships and understanding. (Current domestic student, La Trobe University)

The above shows that 'traditional' methods of learning still dominate in DS curricula, with work-integrated learning lagging behind. Thus, future research following up what type of classroom activities were considered most useful for students to learn would be beneficial.

A further question focused specifically on which student-led and participatory learning styles students had been experienced in the classroom. The use of case studies was the most common, with 100% of current and former students having used case studies at least 'sometimes'; with 58% of current students and 59% of recent graduates reporting it to be used often. This was followed by scenario-based learning, which 78% of current students and 73% of recent graduates having experiences at least 'sometimes', though a minority had encountered it frequently (25% of current students and 32% of recent graduates). Storytelling was experienced by 78% of current students (but only 25% did so often) and 73% of recent graduates (32% often).

The use of fiction (novels/film) was the least commonly selected option — although the percentage of those who have experienced it as a learning style is still significant for current students (58%), but less so for recent graduates (32%). A minority, however, reported that this was encountered often (only 2 current students and 1 recent graduate). One recent graduate also noted the use of student-led seminars and one current student the use of reflective journals.

Figure 6. Student-led and participatory learning methodologies experiences (N=58)



4.1.4 Inclusion of diverse voices

Recent students were also asked how well they felt reflections/perspectives from the Global South/developing countries had been incorporated into their studies. A minority (39%) felt this had been done well while 58% noted there had only been some inclusion, and 3% experiencing very little inclusion of such perspectives. Only one current student from Flinders University noted that "This was a consistent focus throughout my program and an important one." This suggests that universities need to ensure more diverse perspectives in their current DS curriculum.

An additional comment highlighted the need for materials to be updated:

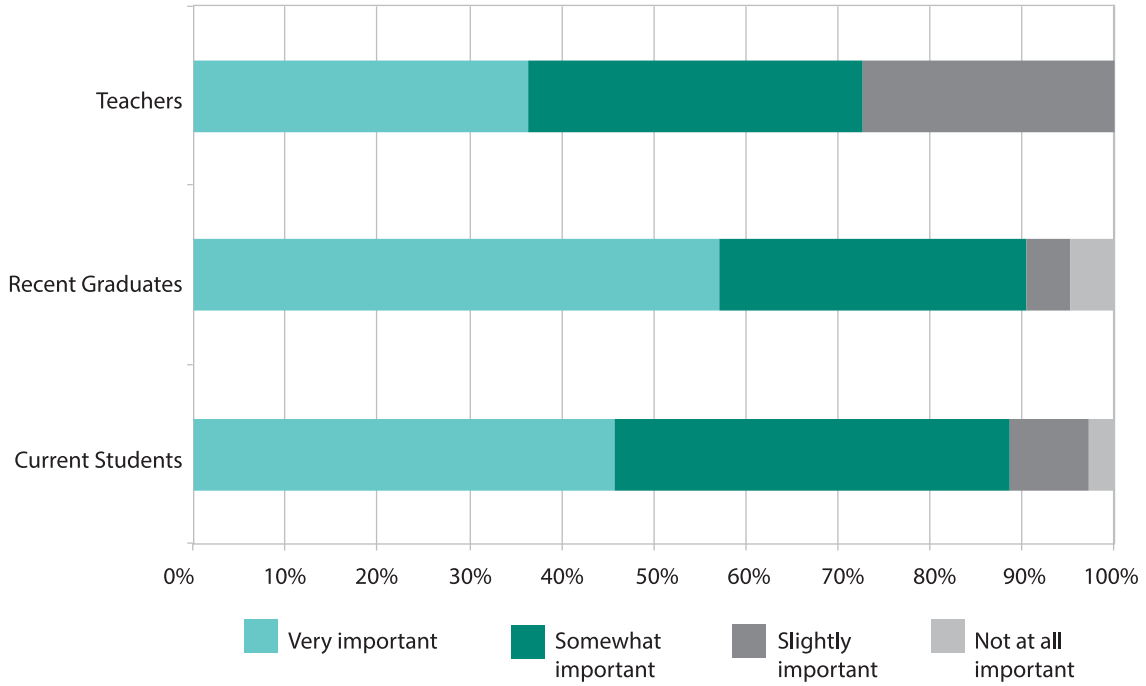
> Examples and stories from global south (are) 20+ years old — peoples' experience of poverty has changed significantly in the past 20 years and course materials need to be updated. (Current student, Flinders University)

Future analysis could address this issue in greater detail, incorporating the perspective of teachers on this matter.

4.1.5 Importance of specialisation

The importance of specialisation or follow particular themes during DS degrees was the subject of another question posed to both student groups, as well as teachers. Although all respondents agreed that specialisation was either somewhat important or very important (86% of both current students and recent graduates and 73% of teachers), it was only recent graduates who judged it by majority as very important (55%), while current students and teachers both were nearly equally divided between judging it either very or only somewhat important. It is important to note that not all universities offer a specialised postgraduate degree.

Figure 7. Importance of Specialisation during DS Degree (N=58)



There was some disagreement between students and teachers as to the importance of specialisations. One teacher felt specialisation only mattered for students working on a thesis, while another argued that "few employers care that much about specificity of what students' study".[25] Students in contrast wondered if a specialisation would have given them better opportunities:

> I did not specialise, but for finding a job later on, I think it would be good to have a key focus area. (Recent graduate, Murdoch University)

> I have dabbled in a number of themes but can't say I specialise in one particular area. This is a problem when trying to find a job. (Current student, La Trobe University)

The following specialisations were noted by students either as primary focus or linked to others:

- Post-conflict state building / peace-building / security (5 current students)
- Gender (4 current students, 1 recent graduate)
- Refugees / humanitarian issues / disaster management (2 current student, 2 recent graduates)
- Indigenous knowledge (3 students, one with focus on education)
- Sustainable development / environment (3 students, one with focus on fashion production)
- Urban development (1 student)
- Community-development (1 student, focus on broadcasting)
- Health/education (1 recent graduate)
- Corruption (1 recent graduate)

When teachers were asked which key topics/areas they felt should be incorporated into a postgraduate DS degree, the top ones (with eight mentions each) were gender, indigenous and migration studies, followed by sustainability, human rights and development theories (seven mentions each). Human security and peace/conflict studies ranked last (six and five mentions respectively). Other topics raised included:

- Work-related training and development practice (2 mentions).
- Thinking political about development
- Post-colonial and decolonial/subaltern studies
- Climate adaptation and mitigation
- Historical grounding

Some students chose the universities based on what they can specialised on:

> My interests were already heading towards a specialisation in conflict and security - however I undertook the MID in order to expand my knowledge, particularly regarding different perspectives to the issues (conflicts and state failure) I had examined in my undergraduate degree. (Current student, La Trobe University)

Qualitative analysis of the perceived benefit of specialisation would be a useful addition to this study, as well as surveying employers as to how much specialisations matter when hiring.

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25 Anecdotal evidence from steering group members advising this report suggested that most students do not choose specialisation even if offered the option, as it gave them greater flexibility in future employment.

4.1.6 Importance of practical experience

All three groups were asked about the importance of practical experience in DS. Of recent graduates 59% reported undertaking such practical experience, though not always organised by the university or as a part of the degree. Such experience ranged from overseas field experiences arranged via the university or by students personally, university-organised field trips, internships (again either part of study or independently sought-out) and overseas fellowships.

In contrast, only 15% of current students reported having had a practical experience; and again not all were directly linked to the DS course. Some had gained it during their undergraduate degree, volunteering, working in the industry, field trips arranged by the university or during previous degrees. Again, frequently, these experiences were not part of the DS course but arranged by the student directly.

In both student groups those that had worked in the sector before studies were the ones that felt such experiences were not necessary due to their work experience.

The benefit of such experiences cannot be understated, both to enrich learning (putting theory into practice), but also helping with future employment (especially through network building).

> Extremely valuable, cannot replicate real-world situations in class room. As development practitioners we should experience the landscapes we are working in and contribute to local change as well as learning. (Recent graduate, James Cook University, Master of Development Practice)

> Gave me on the job work experience and the opportunity to apply my skills to the workforce. Also, good networking opportunity (Recent graduate, Monash University)

> They were valuable as they took the concepts and academic ideas/research that we were doing and applied them to a 'real world' context. During my undergraduate studies I volunteered part time across a variety of projects. I found that many ideas or "solutions" that we explored in class, while certainly providing useful foundations for our work, were almost idealistic in what they aimed to achieve, as well as the way we aimed to achieve them. Practical experience contributed to learning 'people skills' essential for development work.
> (Current student, La Trobe University)

> Excellent, helps with potential employment and keeping learning applicable/relevant.
> (Current student, ANU)

> Learnt what jobs I would and would not like to do in the future. Provided opportunities for networking (at the second internship). Improved my resume (when entry-level jobs require 3+ years industry experience, internships are, for the most part, my only option for gaining industry experience). (Current student, La Trobe University)

> I got a better understanding of some of the roles in this field and what they entail, as well as doing background research and drafting a section of a report for an aid project. I am doing my second practicum topic and think it would have been good to do another. I think it would be good to have some kind of 'applied'/workplace element associated with each course.
> (Current student, Flinders University)

> I absorbed new and real experience about the development study from field trips.
> (Current student, James Cook University)

The survey of teachers in the field reiterated this positive outlook of practical experience, with 83% of all respondents finding practical experience very important and 17% somewhat important. As one teacher noted: "Internships, first and foremost because they help get people jobs." (Teacher, ANU)

In addition to a majority of positive feedback, there were some cautionary voices pointing to the need for quality practical experiences, ideally organised through the university setting. This supports findings from studies who found students gain more from internships that are guided through preparation and reflection. (Darnell, 2011)

> At my first internship, I felt like I was being used as free labour. Beside a few small research projects, I did menial tasks such as filing, photocopying etc. This organisation has a constant flow of interns, so I did not feel valued and there was very little chance of future employment. (Current student, La Trobe University)

> I organised an international placement myself and despite 5 weeks in situ the main reason for my coming did not happen, due to organisational politics and realities in the field. I did learn new things and it was interesting on multiple other levels, but could have been much better. (Current student, ANU)

4.2. Discussion and concluding remarks

Given the small sampling of individuals surveyed, the results discussed above clearly cannot be generalised to represent the majority of opinions on DS courses. It was reassuring to see that often opinions converged across the three different survey groups (current students, recent graduates and teachers). Thus, we believe that the findings provide a number of starting points to explore in depth in future research and contribute to the framing of the recommendations. The overarching themes emerging from the survey are summarised below:

- Students generally came to DS courses from all backgrounds, and with varying levels of experience in the development sphere; a significant number had prior experience in the development sector who signed up for courses either to build up crucial skills or to specialise in a theme.
- Most students (past and present) of DS courses indicated that employment in the field was the strongest motivating factor in signing up for such a course, many seeing practical experience (internships/ placements/ field trips/work experience, etc.) during the course of study as very important in this regard.
- Most of those surveyed stressed the importance of specialisation in the course of a DS degree, although there was disagreement between students and teachers if this would indeed make a difference in the employment sector. Of specialisations sought out, three were most frequently mentioned (gender, indigenous knowledge, peacebuilding/humanitarianism).
- A majority of respondents felt that DS courses had given them skills in critical thinking, reflective learning, communication and cross-cultural understanding. However, others felt the courses could do more in imparting skills such as conflict management and negotiation/mediation.
- Learning methodologies still seemed to centre strongly on assignments, classroom activities and class discussions for imparting skills to students. Work-integrated learning opportunities were far less frequently reported, with only ten students (5 current and 5 recent graduates) having participated in an internship as part of their DS course. Those that had gained practical experience by and large felt it enhanced their learning and future job prospects.
- Of student-led and participatory learning styles, case studies were the most frequently reported, followed by storytelling and scenario-based learning, with more creatives methods (film, novel) being encountered less.

There was space for improvement in the area of integrating diverse voices/perspectives (especially the Global South/developing countries) into the DS curricula, with only 39% students reporting that this had been done well while 58% reported only "some inclusion", and 3% "very little".

The survey raised a couple of interesting discussions within the project steering group, in particular around the conflict between specialisation and generalist courses. For those who are coming back to study after experience in the sector, or for those interesting in studying development after completing other degrees (such as engineering), they are more interested in being able to specialise. For those who are new to development or are unsure of what path they will follow, they want a more general introduction, and more general knowledge to serve them in the future. Universities need to cater to both and allow for flexibility in degree structures, however, for even those with a career path in mind, it is still important to ensure that they have the foundations. Further surveying and analysis of this conflict, and how best to accommodate the needs of different students, needs to be carried out across Australian universities, and this is part of the recommendations outlined in the next section.

Section 5. Final Remarks and Preliminary Recommendations

Development entails solving complex problems in a complex world, with no one way of doing it. Increasingly, development interventions need to be context-specific and allow for a certain level of flexibility and adaptability. It follows then that teaching DS comes with inherent challenges, and the need to remain relevant and current with emerging issues and trends and current themes are more now important than ever.

DS departments in Australian universities need to find a fine balance between imparting a strong theoretical grounding, critical thinking capability with practical skills. The preliminary recommendations from this report aim to provide a starting point for future efforts at improving DS courses. Apart from periodic changes to curricula, this will involve greater collaboration and cooperation among universities that offer such courses, and between universities and other actors in the development field. In this era of fluidity and uncertainty — as well as real-world funding cuts for development interventions — it is important to build partnerships and share experiences and resources with other stakeholders working and studying development. For Australian universities, such collaboration could be instrumental in ensuring the practical application of DS degrees and effectively responding to the changing nature of the field.

One key outcome of the JCU symposium discussions (see Appendix A) was the expressed desire for regular collaboration and engagement on DS. The attendees all desired increased opportunities for development faculty members to share skills and/or specialised knowledge. The literature consistently acknowledges the changing nature of DS, further supporting the need for ongoing collaborations and discussion between universities, and also with development organisations. The RDI Network is committed to encouraging and enabling opportunities for further engagement and is already supporting a second symposium to occur in 2018 at Murdoch University.

The following preliminary recommendations have been developed on the basis of the literature review, the perspectives sourced from the survey and the symposium, as described in this report. These recommendations are preliminary as they are meant to contribute to a constructive dialogue on the improvement of postgraduate DS degrees across Australia. Further in-depth discussion involving both Australian-based scholars and practitioners working in NGOs would be a valuable addition to this conversation. While the recommendations are predominantly addressed to universities, some may rely on the involvement of other relevant actors, such as NGOs, for their implementation. The RDI Network, in particular, is exploring options for supporting some of the following recommendations.

As the debate around pedagogies to teach DS in Australian is in its infancy, these recommendations are only a first step, and certainly require a long-term commitment, as outlined in the discussion below, but the JCU symposium illustrated the willingness of Australian academics to contribute to improving DS and related curricula.

KEY PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Understand the needs of different students
2. Increase engagement between universities and development professionals
3. Enable further flexibility
4. Use a mixed-method approach to teaching and learning
5. Build key skills and competencies

5.1. Recommendation 1: Understand the needs of students

Regular assessment of courses is required every five years as part of the AQF processes, but further qualitative research is needed to understand why students opt for DS at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Australia, and what they aim to get out of their degree, and this information needs to be shared across universities. The preliminary research so far conducted through the RDI Network's survey analysis provided a diverse mix of responses, with a focus on both employability and research interests. Therefore, this report recommends:

a) In addition to questionnaires or surveys, assessment be carried out using qualitative methodologies such as focus group discussions, particularly at Masters program level.

b) Course assessment and further qualitative research is carried out, at both the beginning and end of students' studies, to determine the needs and expectations of students, and how these evolved throughout their studies.[26]

c) There be regular assessment of course relevance to ensure that postgraduate DS degrees are evolving with the industry of international development, both within individual universities and on a sector-wide scale.[27] Assessment may include the following areas:

   – Understanding of key themes and case studies;

   – Reassessment of chosen texts included, to ensure a combination of peer-reviewed papers and policy reports; and

   – Evaluation of the reasons students chose to study with a particular university to assess the perceived 'comparative advantages' of individual courses and what areas universities can aim to improve.

d) Greater use of reflective assessment pieces, as a form of qualitative evaluation and to increase students' involvement in the learning process. These would also add valuable insights into the expectations of students and their learning experience.

5.2. Recommendation 2: Increase engagement between universities and development professionals

Given that most respondents indicated the importance of employability after acquiring a degree, employers' opinions would also be invaluable in the design of DS courses — specifically in terms of essential skills sought in the development sector. Therefore, this report recommends:

a) Insights from development organisations and international development professionals should be sought periodically so that courses can be better tailored to equip students with skills that fit employers' needs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some courses already incorporate industry voices in the form of guest lectures from international development practitioners. However, this practice could be expanded to more universities, and to a deeper level of engagement.

b) Universities running Master DS programs — if not already doing so — should consider establishing advisory committees, which involve academics from other universities, and a combination of industry stakeholders (including government agencies, private sector, NGOs and community organisations), to ensure that curricula are topical, and aligned with industry needs and evolving development practice.

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26 It must be noted that individual courses or units do survey students and conduct end of semester evaluations. This recommendation suggests doing a 'before course' and an 'after course' survey, with a comparative analysis examining if student expectations have been met, or even changed during the duration of a course.

27 Beyond the assessment of courses required by the AQF framework.

5.3. Recommendation 3: Enable further flexibility

To add to the complexity of teaching DS, there are differences in terms of what students are seeking from such courses. Mid-career students aim at building certain skill sets or seek specialisation, while others look for a mix of theoretical grounding and practical experience to help them in future employment. For DS courses, flexibility is an important response to such student diversity. Therefore, this report recommends:

a) Further research be conducted on the value of specialisation in postgraduate DS degrees. This could contribute to the discussion on how to deal with the complexity of the field. A better understanding of the courses available in Australian universities also has the potential to allow students to match their interests with the most suitable university.

b) Universities further explore the options for self-designed degree courses in DS, which allow the diverse student body to tailor coursework to their individual needs and requirements. A number of international DS courses, including the UK's Institute of Development Studies (https://www.ids.ac.uk/), allow students greater flexibility in designing their degree program, albeit after undertaking core coursework.

c) The potential for a greater variety of dual degrees and cross-institutional enrolments requires further assessment, with the aim to share the strengths of different universities, and different departments within the same university. Anecdotal evidence from the steering group guiding this report suggested that some universities in Australia offered the option of dual degrees, but there were few takers because of the cost. However, if that is the case, this certainly necessitates further analysis to examine ways to make dual degrees more feasible in Australia.

5.4. Recommendation 4: Use a mixed-method approach to teaching and learning

The diversity of experience and skills within and across cohorts, especially in postgraduate degrees, is often perceived as a challenge for teachers of DS. Many students tend to be mid-career professionals, with prior work experience in the development sector and a certain level of inherent skills, while others have next to no experience and limited skills.[28] Universities should, therefore, ensure that students have a range of opportunities throughout their studies by providing a multi-faceted approach to teaching. Incorporation of different teaching methods has the potential to improve student learning and address the disparity in experience and skill levels. Therefore, this report recommends:

a) A mixed-method approach should be incorporated into courses, including a variety of participatory approaches drawing from student-led teaching methods. Some of these include scenario-based learning, the development and use of case studies, storytelling, and analysis of different narratives and discourses. This is recommended as a means of drawing on the existing diversity and experience of the cohort.

b) Universities should further experiment with different participatory approaches and gauge what works best with what type of student.

c) DS teaching should include diverse literature. The need to include different voices, especially those from developing countries, was one of the many gaps discussed at the JCU Symposium (see Appendix A), and mentioned by survey respondents. Although there is limited research in this area, the incorporation of storytelling in teaching and the use of fiction have been mentioned by lecturers and in the literature, as two successful methods of strengthening students' engagement.

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28 To assist such students, some universities have additional courses or units, such as Murdoch University's dedicated Learning Skills Unit for international students, to help them transition to university life in Australia. The Murdoch University unit includes elements of written and verbal communication skills, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving capability.

d) Students need to be further encouraged to question their own positionality through these learning methods, including through reflective thinking, and assessments.

e) Ensure the availability of opportunities to gain some ethical and well-managed work experience during or immediately following a DS degree. Of the current students recently surveyed by this report, there were varying levels of work experience prior to studying, but practical experience was consistently cited as important in the survey, it is also commonly referred to in the literature. However, authors raised ethical concerns associated with placing students in volunteering or internship positions (see Section 3). Universities need to work with the development sector to design appropriate work experience opportunities, as certain universities are already developing.[29]

f) As an alternative to practical work experience placements, universities need to explore different teaching approaches that can build similar skills.

5.5. Recommendation 5: Build key skills and competencies

The literature review and survey highlighted a number of core skills and competencies particular to DS courses. Several of these skills were also deemed essential in discussions at the JCU Symposium (see Appendix A). Universities need to explore ways to build up these skills, using a combination of traditional teaching, reflective learning and research methods, as well as participatory methods discussed in the previous recommendation.

a) The literature review and survey emphasise critical and reflective thinking as skills that need to be built, which ties in with AQF specifications (see Section 3). While most universities attempt to impart these competencies to students, more research is needed to understand the best ways of incorporating them into teaching. The literature suggests a mix of case study work, reflective essays, group exercises, classroom discussions, and real-world scenario-based activities.

b) DS courses need to expand their application of adaptive learning practice. Recent graduates surveyed for this report suggested that practical, work-related skills such as: monitoring and evaluating development initiatives, impact assessment, theory of change development, data collection and analysis, could be incorporated into coursework.

c) Findings from the survey specifically indicated that students hoped DS degrees built negotiation skills. Universities need to further experiment with a host of options to impart these skills, including conflict resolution exercises, simulations and problem-based exercises, or even games.

d) Students also look to DS degrees as a means of developing crucial research skills — for further studies, as a job skill, or to develop a greater understanding of certain themes or topics in development. While practical skills training and experience are increasingly perceived as crucial in DS courses, in-depth research — and the skills needed to conduct it — should not be overlooked in course curricula.

29 Macquarie University provides a key example of how practical experience can occur through their Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) Program which provides students with a practical learning experience during their studies with local, regional or international partners.

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Woolcock, M. (2007). Higher Education, Policy Schools, and Development Studies: What Should Masters Degree Students Be Taught? *Journal of International Development*, 19, pp 55–73.

APPENDIX A. Summary of proceedings at JCU symposium

In June 2017, James Cook University (JCU) hosted a symposium entitled Rethinking Development Pedagogy and Practice: New Visions for Global Development. This event aimed to open a dialogue to better understand the challenges future students will be confronted with and the knowledge and competencies they will need to navigate the field. The symposium also aimed to instigate a discussion on the key challenges and opportunities for teaching in this sector. The event welcomed participants primarily from universities across Australia to participate in this dialogue through diverse presentations, followed by roundtable discussions. This symposium was the first of its kind in Australia, and through the support of the RDI Network, is aiming to become an annual event. Observations from this symposium are discussed under key themes outlined via the subheadings below.30

Key skills

The key skills required for DS students were a focus of the roundtable discussion on day one of this event. The responses to this question were diverse as is suggested in the literature, highlighting one of the main complexities of teaching DS. Responses were inclusive of both tangible and intangible skills, theoretical and historical backgrounds of the DS field of study, and the need to understand the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Responses reflected the need for both practical and academic skills, and certain knowledge and reflective capabilities. Findings from this discussion are displayed in the table below (Table 4). The majority of skills have been presented under the heading 'key skills'. Those specific to the field have been separated from this list; however, a number of these crossover.

Table 4. Skills outlined in JCU symposium discussions

Key Skills	Practical Field-Related Skills
• Critical thinking • Cultural competence and place sensitively • Understanding different perspectives • Research • Ethical practice • Theoretical and historical background • Positionality • Listening and hearing • Inclusivity • Knowledge of hierarchies and power • Critical reading • Environmental and social justice • Reflective thinking	• M&E • Grant writing • Communications and media training • Impact assessment • Project design and management

30 You can also read the article by the main organiser Kearrin Sims (JCU) on the RDI Network website; https://rdinetwork.org.au/news/new-visions-international-development-education/

The challenge of assessing core skills was also discussed by Dr Susan Engel from the University of Wollongong (UOW), presenting Core Skills for Development Studies. Engel assessed 10 Australian DS Masters courses and compiled a list of what core skills should be included in these degrees.

These were:

- Development theories
- Key practices of development
- Participatory development/power and development
- Gender and development
- Indigenous knowledge
- Environmental sustainability
- Research skills
- Research or capstone project

Discussion around skills in DS studies often encompasses particular areas of knowledge, such as indigenous affairs, gender, or environmental awareness. This may be linked to the interrelated nature of DS as a discipline, and potentially highlights some of the cross-cutting themes which should occur throughout the teaching of DS.

Collaboration and participation

The need for collaboration both between universities and more broadly with development organisations was commonly suggested throughout the course of this event. Many presentations made reference to this idea and it was highlighted in the closing keynote presentation by Dr Philippa Smales (RDI Network). In her presentation, *Redesigning Pedagogies around Networks of Practitioners* Dr Sheila Scopis outlined her plan to bring practitioners into the classroom to work with students. Dr Susanne Schmeidl discussed the value of her collaboration with development practitioners when designing DS curricula. The roundtable discussions also echoed this sentiment, emphasising the need for collaboration between academics for resource and information sharing to ensure best practice is maintained when teaching DS. This was specifically noted in reference to the potential sharing of case studies through the RDI Network.

Teaching methods and styles

The usefulness of practical experience was discussed in a number of the presentations. In her presentation titled *Getting Real: Bringing Praxis-experience into the Development Studies Curriculum* Dr Susanne Schmeidl outlined how praxis-oriented teaching can be effectively brought into the DS curriculum. Schmeidl outlines the practice-oriented courses 'Development in Practice' offered at UNSW Sydney and some of the methods through which these are taught. There is a focus on the practice-oriented, interdisciplinary group which is suggested as a means of mimicking team environments students may be expected to work in once employed. Schmeidl also outlines a number of additional teaching/learning tools. Some of these include simulations, case studies, shared research, and problem-based learning. These types of teaching tools were also referred to during the roundtable discussions, where case studies were a key focus. They were suggested as a valuable teaching tool, however, there was a concern about the availability of quality case study resources. Contributions from DS teaching staff shared through an online portal was suggested as a potential response to this.

Macquarie University's Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program was presented as a method of bringing practical experience into student learning. This program was co-created with partnerships in international communities and, more recently, with Indigenous communities in Australia. This program has a strong focus on rethinking ways of learning and understanding how knowledge is shared. In the presentation, they discussed moving away from western dominated conceptualisations and practices through reciprocal partnerships. This presentation tied in with ideas of critical reflection and understanding positionality. Professor Petra Tschakert provided insight into methods for creating space for emotions in student learning and the benefits these have of allowing students to better grasp their own positionality. Petra encouraged the inclusion of this through readings, class discussion, assessment and participatory teaching methods.

Dr Ann El Khoury's presentation *'Storying' Development Transformation in a Climate-Changed Global South* illustrates the use of literature, specifically science fiction novels, to teach development knowledge. This is suggested as a means of exploring multidimensional issues and incorporating hegemonic perspectives into student learning. In addition to this, fiction has the potential to personalise issues and prevent 'single story-ism'. El Khoury also suggested novels as a means of increasing diversity in the literature through the inclusion of views from the Global South.

Concluding remarks

As illustrated in observations above, many of the presentations and the discussions that took place at the JCU symposium incorporated methods of participatory approaches to teaching DS. Reflective and critical thinking underpinned a number of these, highlighting the value of this skill in DS teaching and learning. This was reiterated in the survey findings, which illustrated that 100% of current students and recent graduates surveyed had used case studies during their degrees at least "some of the time". The inclusion of voices from developing countries contexts was also assessed through the surveys and indicated that there is space for improvement in this area. Critical reflection, positionality, community engagement, and moving away from traditional teaching methods were also key focus points in this dialogue.

It is evident that many DS teachers are interested in improving teaching methods and stepping away from traditional teaching methods and ways of knowing. These discussions are invaluable to the improvement of teaching. There is a clear interest in further developing and improving DS teaching in Australian universities, evidenced from the valuable discussions which took place at the JCU symposium and the interest in a follow-up event to occur in 2018.

APPENDIX B. Selected annotated bibliography

Rashid and Flanagan (2011). *International Development: Linking Academia with Development Aid and Effectiveness.*

This publication was particularly valuable to the literature review as it includes contributions from academics currently teaching DS in Australian universities. The contributions in this book touch on several pedagogical themes in DS, such as exploring practice-based learning, the role of teachers as the 'expert', and teaching human security in DS. Nadeem Malik details DS as a discipline and contributes to the discussion on the interdisciplinary nature of DS. John Makuwira's chapter includes reflections on personal experiences teaching DS at RMIT University and provides a valuable dialogue on the role of teachers and pedagogical approaches used to teach DS in higher education.

Currie-Alder, B. (2016). *The state of development studies: origins, evolution and prospects. Canadian Journal of Development Studies,* 37(1), pp 5-26.

Morrison, D. R. (2004). Teaching and Studying Development: Making It Work. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies,* 25(1), pp 187-200.

Bruce Currie-Alder (2016) and David Morrison (2004) focus their writing on the Canadian context and provide valuable insight into content, skills and learning methods relevant to DS. Currie-Alder's article is used to outline changes in DS and some of the necessary skills and career incentives for students. Morrison's analysis in the article "Teaching and Studying Development: Making It Work" is used throughout this review, with specific attention given to sections assessing the teaching of DS and the challenges faced by teachers at a postgraduate level (pp 197-199).

Woolcock, M. (2007). Higher Education, Policy Schools, and Development Studies: What Should Masters Degree Students Be Taught? *Journal of International Development,* 19, pp 55-73.

Woolcock comments directly on what should be taught in a DS Masters degree in this article, suggesting that the focus should lie in the key skills students should obtain. Although not specific to students studying in Australia, Woolcock's perspective incorporates ideas he believes contribute to both successful employment opportunities and better-prepared students for work in the development sector. Despite his succinct evaluation of the necessary skillsets, this assessment does not incorporate reflections from students or those hiring recent graduates and does not evaluate methods on incorporating these skills in postgraduate degrees.

Stackpool-Moore, L., Taylor, P., Pettit, J., & Millican, J. (2006). Currents of Change: Exploring relationships between teaching, learning and development. *Conversations from the Learning and Teaching for Transformation workshop* (pp. 1-43). London: Institute of Development Studies.

This publication was produced following a workshop hosted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom (UK). It considers questions about the curriculum and methods of teaching/learning in DS. Although it does not prescribe a specific set of answers, it does refer to the need for more innovative means of teaching and moves past traditional forms of education (pp 21-22). This is evidenced by reflections of academics from both undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

Beckmann, E. A. (2010). Learners on the move: mobile modalities in development studies. *Distance Education*, 31(2), pp 159-173.

This article recognises the importance of understanding student motivations for studying at a postgraduate level, observing that students "generally have strong incentives to learn about ideas and processes they can apply immediately and directly to help them achieve development outcomes more effectively" (pp 160.)

Child, K., & Manion, C. (2004). A Survey of Upper-Year Students in International Development Studies. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 25(1), pp 167-186.

This article in the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* provides a key study that is commonly cited to understand DS student perspectives (pp 168). Despite the recognised importance of this research, it has not been conducted in an Australian context. The Canadian study is also subject to a number of limitations which will be further addressed below. It looks at students from six Canadian universities and was conducted with both undergraduate and graduate students (2004, p. 168). The study's purpose was to "provide a 'snapshot' of the opinions and perceptions of upper-year students who are currently enrolled" in a development studies program in Canada" (pp 168). This is currently the only published source that directly analyses what students specifically want from their studies.

One of the key focus areas for the Child and Manion study was to understand why students choose to pursue DS. Following this line of inquiry, they provided eight options and requested students select a single answer. This is problematic for a number of reasons:

- It loses complexity and takes away from the interrelated decision making that students often undertake;
- It may not provide an accurate enough option causing students to then take a 'best of the worst' approach to answering the question; and
- Finally, many of the answers provided were either too vague or too closely linked to another option.

This study showed that 57% of undergraduate students surveyed pointed to "humanitarian reasons (i.e., concern for social justice; to help others" as their decision to enrol in a DS course (pp 171). This option can be seen as very closely linked to a number of other choices depending on individual student perspectives, such as:

- Anticipated employment opportunities in the field of development
- Desire to participate in development initiatives in home country

The key reason identified by 30% of the graduate students for studying DS was because they "enjoy overseas travel and intercultural experiences" (pp 171). Graduate students were also shown to have a strong interest in development theory and knowledge-based learning (pp 185). However, this study did not separate the needs of international/ domestic/experienced students at a postgraduate level. Understanding the diversity of the student cohort is vital to understanding student needs, and therefore, the content and structure of the degrees. Due to the level of diversity in both students and their goals, the needs of students will often vary dramatically. The challenge for DS courses is providing a comprehensive course that can successfully address all of these whilst maintaining academic integrity. Although the study by Child and Manion has provided some interesting preliminary results, understanding the shortcomings of this survey can contribute to creating guidelines for further research in Australia.

Two additional currently unpublished studies on development studies in Australian universities

Richards, J. and Kilby, P. (2015). Mapping Development Studies in Australian Universities. Unpublished Report submitted to ACFID and RDI Network. ACFID/ANU: Canberra.

UNSW Sydney (2017). Mapping Development Studies in Australian Universities. Focus: Undergraduate Degree Content. Unpublished internal report prepared by the Development Studies Stream, School of Social Sciences, UNSW Sydney.

The main focus of this report was to examine ways in which DS courses in Australia could be improved, both in terms of course content and delivery. Although comparing and contrasting course content across Australian universities was beyond the scope of this report, it did draw on findings from two separate studies. The first was an earlier study submitted to the RDI Network on mapping postgraduate DS courses in Australia (Richards and Kilby, 2015), while the second is an ongoing effort by UNSW Sydney to map out (primarily undergraduate) courses across the country's universities. The study by UNSW Sydney gives some information on the 38 (out of 4o) Australian universities which deliver Development Studies as part of their program (undergraduate, postgraduate or both), it then uses the example of five of those universities to outline the composition of the courses the different universities offer.

The Richards and Kilby study (2015) examined postgraduate programs at the Masters level in 40 different universities across Australia to map out institutions that offered an education in development studies. This was done by searching through university handbooks and websites for courses around topics such as economics, health, humanitarian action, anthropology, law, security, gender, environment, development, organisational development, public policy and politics and international relations. The large list of programs was refined based on a mandatory international or global component, to eventually compile a list of 19 DS programs at 17 different universities, and a secondary list of 22 related programs at 17 universities.

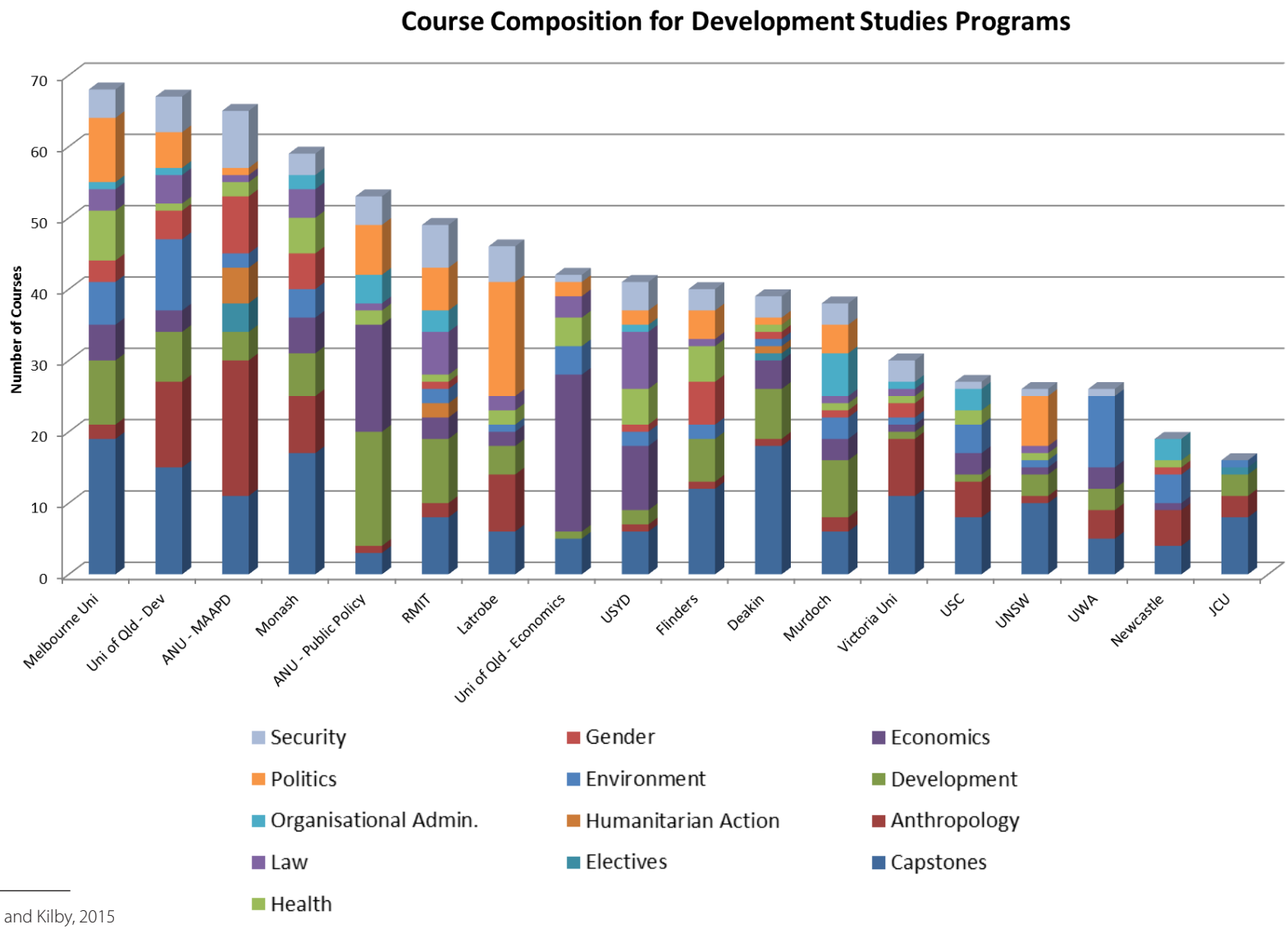
The study then compared and contrasted universities based on the themes in development that the courses covered (see Figure 8 below).

The study concluded by reporting that Australian universities offer a wide range of courses within development studies, with specialisations and capstone experiences such as individual projects or internships available at most places. However, based on their analysis, the authors surmised that students could select which DS degree and university worked best for them — based on what topics were favoured in different universities, and thereby what career options were available at the end of a course.[31]

This report also drew on emerging findings from a study conducted by the School of Social Sciences at UNSW Sydney on undergraduate DS degrees across Australian universities. This study examined course content in 38 of the country's universities, all of which offered DS as an option. However, it focused its analysis on DS courses in five universities: UNSW Sydney, ANU, The University of Melbourne, Victoria University and the University of Adelaide. The study suggests that at least three of the universities approached undergraduate DS courses from a multidisciplinary lens, offering relevant courses in academic departments such as Anthropology, Environmental Science, Social Research, International Relations, Sociology, and Geography.

31 For example, students who wanted careers in government or multilateral organisations could consider universities such as ANU, the University of Sydney or the University of Queensland — given their programs that had a policy or economic focus. Alternatively, students who wanted to ultimately work around issues of women's or children's rights could consider universities such as The University of Melbourne or ANU, both of which offer programs with a strong gender component.

Figure 8: Analysis of Development Studies Offerings 2015[32]



32 Richards and Kilby, 2015

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