

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

This document provides a report on findings and a set of recommendations from the November 2023 program evaluation of the Global Development Studies (GDS) at the University of Victoria. The GDS program is a new interdisciplinary minor that was approved by the Senate in 2017 and formally launched in 2018. The program is led by a Director who is based in their home department, and is supported by faculty members (and the courses they offer) from a range of departments, including Anthropology, Economics, Geography, and Political Science in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and History, Pacific and Asian Studies, English, and Gender Studies in the Faculty of Humanities. The GDS program also has a Program Committee composed of representatives from different faculties, individuals from research units on campus, a staff member from Co-op and Careers, and an NGO representative.

## Overview of the Reviewers' Findings

The GDS minor started out strong in 2018 with a substantial cohort of students. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of international travel in 2020-2022 have had a negative impact on International Development Studies programs across Canada, especially given that the majority of these programs have historically relied on international placements, internships and other work-abroad programs in order for students to fulfill degree requirements. There is anecdotal evidence from some universities in Canada that registrations in International Development Studies are beginning to increase again as of 2023. For these reasons, the reviewers consider the GDS program to have been in place for too short a period of time (really only two years of implementation before the pandemic) to comprehensively determine its viability for the future. For these reasons and to support continuous improvements, we have a number of recommendations for the GDS minor.

## Recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: The Program Director should follow up on opportunities to showcase the program more, including its clear connections with broader institutional plans.
- Recommendation 2: Enhance the interdisciplinary components of the program.
- Recommendation 3: Ensure better collaboration and explore opportunities for campus-wide relevance, including a potential joint hire who provides dedicated time to the GDS minor.

- Recommendation 4: Explore a certificate option to open up the GDS program to professional programs (e.g. business, engineering), including an online offering for people in the workforce who may want to take a refresher or upgrade their knowledge of global development trends.
- Recommendation 5: Maintain the opening of GDS course offerings (GDS 201, GDS 202, GDS 301) to non-GDS students, except the capstone course, which is meant to facilitate the building of cohorts.
- Recommendation 6: Build more flexibility into the GDS minor, and simplify and propose different pathways or bundles of course offerings for students.
- Recommendation 7: Review the current process for advising and supporting students' progress/completion with the goal of streamlining the process.
- Recommendation 8: Create diverse experiential learning opportunities, including remote placements, as more organizations are open to remote work options in a post-COVID environment.
- Recommendation 9: Create a student society to enhance the student experience and help with (and possibly take ownership of) publicity/events, which will also encourage the building of cohorts and support recruitment and retention efforts.
- Recommendation 10: Provide adequate support for the Program Director in the form of at least two course releases for a three-year term.
- Recommendation 11: Enhance interaction between GDS Program Director and other Directors or Program Leads by, for example, having a seat at Chairs and Directors meetings.
- Recommendation 12: Enlarge the number of faculty associated with the GDS program (especially among the Program Committee) to effectively spread the administrative load and ensure sustained commitment to the core programming of the minor.