

## **Programme evaluation of the Bachelor's Programme in Development Studies (BIDS) - Statement from external expert group**

### **Assignment and external expert group**

The assignment of the external expert group (see composition below) have been to evaluate the Bachelor's Programme in Development Studies (BIDS). The evaluation is based on Lund University's eleven criteria for quality enhancement, with support from the Faculty of Social Sciences' instructions<sup>1</sup>. The assignment includes raising the strengths, challenges and development opportunities of the learning environment and the programme/programmes.

Prior to the evaluation, the expert group were given access to LU Box with a large number of documents from the department and the faculty, including the department's self-assessment and input of students.

On 25-26 May, a site visit was conducted (see the program in appendix). The site-visit was conducted online due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic.

The external expert group:

- Dr. Malin Nystrand, University of Gothenburg (chair of the expert group)
- Dr. Andrea J. Nightingale, University of Oslo
- Dr. Peter Kragelund, Roskilde University

### **The main strengths and challenges of the programme, and the external expert group's reflections and recommendations**

#### **Strengths and Challenges**

##### **Strengths**

The program has a number of strengths, most of which relate to the overall context of the program. It is one of very few Bachelor level development studies programs which is multidisciplinary in its conception and core. This means that students are provided with a diversity of perspectives and possibilities to shape their own

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<sup>1</sup> *Instructions and procedures for programme evaluations by external experts at the Faculty of Social Sciences (2019-09-19, reg. no STYR 2019/1232) and Instructions for external experts regarding programme evaluation at the Faculty of Social Sciences (2019-09-19, reg. no STYR 2019/1262)*

program. Students major in one of the participating subjects so they come away with a double specialisation which can be helpful for their careers and future learning. Lund University is a top university globally with a wide and strong pool of staff from different disciplines who contribute to, or can potentially contribute to, the program. The program has a steering committee where issues can be discussed and this body has regularly revisited the purpose and curriculum for the program. It has a scholarship program meaning that students from all over the world have access to this world class educational opportunity and application numbers are high: roughly 1000 per year for 80 places. This context means the program has a significant opportunity to bring in perspectives from both the Global South and the Global North. The curriculum has some shortcomings (see below), but what is on offer in the introductory courses is good, lacuna aside. The teaching staff is diverse and enthusiastic, bringing a high level of pedagogical dynamism and competence to the program.

### **Challenges**

The multidisciplinary strength of the program appears to be also its weakness: there is a lack of ownership structurally meaning that the recommendations of the internal evaluations have not been adequately put into practice. Our review shows that nearly all the problems in the program can be linked to these structural problems.

The main challenges identified are the following:

- An outdated curriculum, from both an academic and a societal relevance perspective, and overlap between courses
- High drop-out rate, in particular given the high number of applicants
- Inaction in relation to challenges already identified by students, previous programme reviews, teachers and internal reviewers

We see all these challenges as related to governance and structural problems, including:

- Lack of coordination among teachers and lack of teacher continuity
- Lack of institutionalised structures and procedures and thereby overreliance on individual initiatives and tacit knowledge
- Differing commitment to the programme from the four departments involved

These challenges will be explained and discussed in more detail in relation to the 11 criteria set up for the review.

We acknowledge that most of the challenges we identify have already been mentioned in the internal review and in the students' input to this review, and by and large our review confirms their assessment. We hope to contribute with recommendations on a way forward, which we sketch at the end of the report.

## Detailed evaluation based on the 11 criteria for programs at Lund University

### 1. That the actual study results correspond to learning outcomes and qualitative targets

The program as a whole lacks a set of clear indicators of ‘success’ making it difficult to assess whether the qualitative goals are achieved or not. We were given selected Bachelor theses and average grades, but it is difficult to know what to assess these against.

The study program is designed around a set of courses that are mainly concentrated in the first and third year of the program. As they stand, while they correspond to stated learning outcomes, they do not adequately fit the intention or qualitative targets of the program. These targets are contained within the program and individual course learning outcome goals. In particular we identified that the following learning outcome goals for the program are not adequately achieved:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in their main field of study
- demonstrate an ability to make assessments in their main field of study, taking into account relevant scientific, social and ethical aspects;
- demonstrate insight into the role of knowledge in society and into people’s responsibility for how knowledge is used;
- demonstrate an ability to identify their need of further knowledge and to upgrade their capabilities

There are several reasons for this:

- a.) The curriculum for the core courses is significantly out of date and all reading lists need a complete update. Despite program curriculum having been revised in 2017, attention is needed on the ‘new’ development challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century rather than the current focus on late 20<sup>th</sup> century challenges and ideas. See point (b) for specifics.
- b.) A revised curriculum needs to be more dynamic and updated regularly to keep pace with the rapidly changing world of development. Under point 5 we elaborate on some of the missing aspects of the curriculum that will help the program be more *relevant* for the field of development. Here we highlight parts of the curriculum that will make it more *intellectually* up to date:
  - I.) The field of development studies has changed significantly due to the shift from MDGs to SDGs which has de-centred the Global South as the locus of development and pointed attention to the multiple locations and scales of development. It has also given environment a more prominent role alongside economy and society. We do not see good coverage of environmental topics (see point 11) nor much recognition in the literatures we assessed of the significance of this change in the logic, location and emphasis of development (see also point 5).
  - II.) The world is characterised by more dynamic political economies in parts of the world that were considered ‘peripheral’ countries in the early 1990s: Brazil, China, India, South Africa, Middle Eastern oil countries, and others have become significant global economies, while

the ‘Asian Tigers’ Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore have had both major successes and major collapses during that time. The Arab Spring served to both unsettle autocratic regimes, and in places has led to long-term political and economic instability. The current COVID pandemic is likely to change this political economic landscape significantly and rapidly again. In the materials we were presented with, we see little evidence of these topics being central to the curriculum.

Within the BIDS 10-year review, the following is noted as requested by students: “sustainable development, health, conflict and the Middle East.”

- III.) While some of the lecturers address issues of gender, there is no central treatment of questions of gender and intersectionality within the set curriculum. (see also point 10) Yet, these issues are absolutely central to concerns within the development field today.
  - IV.) The curriculum needs to be decolonised. Set readings are authored almost exclusively by white, Western, men, yet well-established interventions by more diverse authors exist (for example Desai, V. and Potter, R., 2014, *The Companion to Development Studies*, London: Sage). At a more fundamental level, issues of anti-colonialism/decolonisation, what it means, how it relates to postcolonial criticisms of development, and what it means for development research and careers is entirely missing from curriculum materials we reviewed. This is a significant oversight given developments of the last 10-20 years and needs to be taken seriously as an urgent revision.
- c.) The multidisciplinary goals of the programme are achieved at some levels and not at others.

Specifically, the BIDS program as a whole is multidisciplinary. Each Department takes responsibility to coordinate one of the core courses in each year (1 and 3). Staff from all departments are expected to contribute to those courses. However, within this is unevenness in terms of disciplinary perspectives that are taught. It was mentioned that some Departments are working to deal with overlaps in what is taught at BIDS courses and what is taught in second year at their own departments, but there was no sense that teachers were coordinating across disciplines. As a consequence, multidisciplinary questions about specific development challenges are not addressed in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

In terms of the programs’ learning outcome goals, the current curriculum fails to provide an understanding in the main field of study, as elaborated by the points above. The program seems to lack sufficient treatment of ethics, particularly given the lack of emphasis on feminist and decolonial issues which are at the heart of ethical debates in development studies today. Also, by failing to expose students to the most recent thinking in the field, it does not well equip them to ‘identify need of further knowledge.’

## **2. That the programme focuses on students’/doctoral students’ learning**

The program is only partially focused on students’ learning. On the one hand, students are the centre of the program and significant energy by the course administrator and teachers is put into students’ needs. On the other hand, there is a recurring critique from students that the content of the BIDS courses is outdated

and their input is not actioned in this regard. This can be seen in course evaluations, internal reviews, and was repeated in the students' input to this external review. The students request a broader representativity and diversity in literature and perspective, in particular with regard to non-Western and feminist perspectives. They also request more inclusion of environmental and sustainability aspects in the courses. Both these points relate to the changes in the development field discussed above, namely a greater focus on sustainability and a more global view of the actors involved in 'development work'.

Teaching methods are concentrated on lectures, seminars and reading. While some innovative teaching methods are used, most courses are overly reliant on lectures and other passive learning techniques. Students mentioned that staff are enthusiastic but they want a broader diversity of teaching methods and more continuous evaluation. It is noted in the BIDS 10-year review that: "...students longed for more contact time, more stimulating and dialogical lecturing formats and a clearer understanding of how lectures relate to the course literature" (page 10).

In terms of assessment, there is some inconsistency. Some courses allow students to design their own essay questions and this is highly valued and produces good learning outcomes. Nevertheless, there is still an over emphasis on written assignments with inadequate feedback and fewer oral or group assignments. The interviewed students were concerned with the lack of feedback as they felt it left them without guidance on how to improve and learn. The introduction of a grading matrix, although commendable, seems not to have produced the intended effect since students complained that it was often filled out incompletely and the tick boxes did not always correspond to the final grade. There is also a need for more continuous assessment so that course grades are not dependent on one assignment.

Revisions to the curriculum mentioned above would significantly minimize the problems related to assessment and overall skills taught, and we believe this should take place by rethinking the content of the core courses. Of course, there is a lot of relevant and interesting content, but there is a strong bias towards traditional aid practices and a limited coverage of the current trends in development work as sketched above. The majority of the courses have literature lists dominated by course books that are over 10 years old. There is a certainly a place for older literature, in the form of classics in the field, with regard to historical perspectives and for theoretical contributions that stand the test of time. But when almost all course books are old it signals a need to update the literature lists, in particular in the courses focusing on development practice (UTVC22 and UTVC25).

A continuous critique from the students is that there is overlap between the BIDS courses. Our review supports this claim, in particular with regard to the two courses on development practice (UTVC22 and UTVC25) that repeat some of the exact same learning outcomes, and the two methods courses (UTVC24 and UTVC26). We recommend that only one methods course is taught in year 3, freeing up space to offer wider topics.

### **3. That the programme is based on a scientific and/or artistic foundation and proven experience**

The program is only partially based on a scientific foundation given our critique of the outdated curriculum above. While the foundation would have been excellent 15 years ago, it is surprising for a program established in 2009 and revised in 2017

that it has failed to centre the program around current development concerns, as discussed under point 1 above.

The expertise of the people involved in the program is appropriate and grounded in research. However, the kind of research topics that staff engaged based on the list of research grants received by staff are more limited than the disciplines and background of staff might suggest. There are many projects on civil society, welfare state (i.e. Sweden) and similar, while relatively fewer projects on some of the ‘new’ challenges of development, feminist, de and post- colonial, and environmental concerns that are where the much attention within development studies and practice is today. The BSc theses reflect the limited expertise, as they focus on similar topics: migration, welfare state, civil society questions. (See also point 4.)

**4. That teaching staff, including supervisors, have appropriate expertise in terms of subject, teaching and learning in higher education and subject teaching as well as other relevant expertise, and that teaching capacity is sufficient**

Overall, the BIDS programme is staffed by a good mix of experienced and less experienced course convenors and teachers from all four departments who appear to have deep knowledge of relevant subjects. The convenors and teachers come from a variety of backgrounds (including political science, human geography, business studies, sociology, and economic history) and cover a wide spectrum of subfields including (but not limited to) civil society, democratisation, institutional development, citizenship, property rights, agricultural transformation, structural transformation, inequality, gender, rural-urban linkages, and industrial development.

However, this deep knowledge of the staff is not always reflected in the curriculum, as discussed above. A number of reasons may explain this including unbalanced contributions from the four contributing departments. In 2019, for instance, only one course was convened by a member of faculty at Political Science – and in total only six members of faculty from that department contributed to the teaching at the BIDS programme. In contrast, two courses were convened by Economic History and Sociology staff members respectively, and 14 staff member from Economic History contributed to the teaching. Relatedly, there appears to be a lack of continuity especially among the “younger” staff members teaching at the BIDS programme. Finally, it is striking that only one full professor convened a course in 2019 at the entire BA programme. Likewise, it is surprising that one course is convened by a PhD student.

The folders containing research outputs for the course convenors, i.e. from 13 BIDS teachers (three from Human Geography, one from Sociology, six from Political Science and three from Economic History). Overall, the publications included in these folders show that of the staff members represented, they publish papers of high relevance for development studies and thereby actively contribute to the development of the field itself. The folders also disclose that only few of the teachers included here are (thus far) well cited, and publish in the highest ranking outlets within their field. This, however, is easily explained by the fact that most of the teachers are relatively young scholars.

## **5. That the programme is to be relevant for the students and doctoral students and meets the needs of society**

Relevance of the programme has been assessed in relation to students' expectations and their ability to get employment and/or continue with further studies, and an attempt has also been made to assess the programme's relevance in relation to the competence needed in organisations of relevance.

### *Relevance in relation to the students' expectations*

The drop-out rate of students is high. In the Review report 2021 it says that the retention rate is 50-60%, but looking further at the figures<sup>2</sup> gives a more complex picture. The big drop occurs after the first year, where about 30% of the students leave, whereas about 70% of the students remain active until the last semester. However, only about 50% of the students take the exam. Hence, 70% of the students actually finalise all courses, but then a rather large minority of them do not take the exam. The Executive Summary 2016-17 has flagged this problem but the picture remains the same up to now.

The Executive summary 2016-17 includes a comparison of throughput with two other Bachelor programmes at Lund university, in Criminology and Information Systems, where BIDS is actually better than or similar to the other programmes. This comparison is only done up to 2016, and according to the Executive Summary 2016-17 it has been halted because there is a discussion in the Steering committee about whether BIDS should be compared to other, more relevant, programmes. The main difference seems to be that BIDS is an international programme and there are no comparable programmes at LU. It should be fairly easy to get data on comparable programmes at other universities.

Other Nordic countries also offer multi/interdisciplinary international bachelor programs. Roskilde University in Denmark, for instance, offers three international interdisciplinary programs. The one that most easily compares to BIDS is the International Social Science Bachelor program. Dropout rates here are somewhat lower than BIDS. For students admitted in 2017 the first-year dropout rate was 11%; for 2018, it was 14%; and for 2019 it was 13%. Over the three years the total dropout rate for students admitted in 2017 was 23%.

The BIDS program is popular in the sense that it attracts many applications (about 1000 applications for 80 admissions), which means that it should be able to attract interested and devoted students. Hence, the high drop-out rate signals a discrepancy between the students' expectations and the delivery of the programme.

As has been noted elsewhere in this report the student evaluations contain a number of recurring issues that seem not to be addressed properly. It is clear in the course evaluations that some students become increasingly frustrated throughout the first year, in particular with the overlap between courses, and this can be seen as one explanation to why some students drop out (one student wrote this explicitly).

Stated differently, given the high application rate, the admission board can pick and choose between applicants. Why then do students drop out? Based on the BIDS yearly reports it seems that everybody is aware of this but no one is in charge of changing it. Normally this would lead to a re-evaluation of how the BIDS programme is presented to the students, and the site visit indicated that the program

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<sup>2</sup> Documents including throughput and retention include: Retention BIDS (in Statistics), Executive Summary 2016-17,

administrator is working on correcting web site information with this in mind. However, this is obviously not enough to address the problem.

#### *Students' employment and further studies*

The BIDS students have a lower degree of employment than the average among other Bachelor programmes at Lund<sup>3</sup> (20% compared to 67% one year after degree; 45% compared to 83% three years after degree).

A slightly higher share of the BIDS students go on to further studies (33% compared to 22% after one year; 11% compared to 3% after three years), but a higher portion also have no income (29% compared to 5% after one year; 17% compared to 5% after three years). There is also a higher proportion for which no information is available (18% compared to 4% after one year, and 27% compared to 7% after three years).

According to the Alumni report this sets the BIDS programme apart, but not when compared to other international programmes, yet these are at graduate level. BIDS does have a much higher proportion of international students than other Bachelor programmes, primarily from outside EU (39% compared to 4% in other Bachelor programmes). It is not clear if this means that international students have a lower degree of employment or if it just is more difficult to get information on them as alumni.

Clearly, employability is not high directly after this programme. That might not be a concern if the majority of students went for further studies, but the high figures on those without income is more concerning.

#### *What kind of jobs do the students get?*

The type of jobs the BIDS programme aims to prepare students for are to work within the 'development-related field' in 'various professions within government agencies, private firms and NGOs.'<sup>4</sup>

The Alumni report does not give a clear indication as to the type of employment students get, as the categories are too broad. Furthermore, information is missing on 30% of students one year after graduation and on 47% after three years.

It is reported in the programme reviews<sup>5</sup>, based on selected profiles in the BIDS Alumni webpage<sup>6</sup> that some students have succeeded to secure attractive jobs and internships in the PeaceCorps, Sida, UNDP, and some have progressed to master level studies at prestigious universities such as LSE, King's College and Central European University.

An alumni survey from 2016 includes answers from 23 BIDS students, who graduated 2012-2014, out of which only 13 have answered all questions, hence the data is very limited. Still a few things can be noted:

- The 13 students who have jobs three years after graduation are evenly spread in all sectors: the state, municipality, international organisation,

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<sup>3</sup> According to 'Statistisk rapport', based on students who finished in 2012-13

<sup>4</sup> Presentation of the Programme on LU's website:  
<https://www.keg.lu.se/en/education/academics/bachelors-programmes/bids-bachelors-development-studies?q=education/academics/bachelors-programmes/bids-bachelors-in-development-studies>

<sup>5</sup> Documents: BIDS 10-year Review, and Report for BIDS programme external review 2021.

<sup>6</sup> The webpage referred to is: [www.bidsalumni.se](http://www.bidsalumni.se), but it can no longer be accessed (as per 18 April 2021)

private business and NGO and 10 of the 13 have jobs that require higher education.

- Only 5 of them think that the knowledge and skills they acquired during the education is of use in their current work. On the other hand most of the 23 students think they learned things that are generally valued, such as assessing knowledge scientifically, follow the knowledge development within their profession, make written presentations, take responsibility for their own knowledge development, use social science methods within the profession, etc

In sum, little is known about what the BIDS students work with after they graduate but what is known suggests they work in a wide range of public and private sectors. This highlights the need to reflect on what ‘development-related’ work is today and how it relates to the BIDS programme content.

#### *The changing meaning of ‘development-related work’*

In the last 10-15 years the ‘development-field’ as a professional sector has changed quite a lot. From being focused primarily on aid organisations, either international, bilateral or within the NGO sector, the understanding of where ‘development’ takes place has been broadened significantly, as discussed in section 1 above. Here we focus on those changes that are most relevant for the employability of students of ‘Development Studies’.

- The move from the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) to the SDGs (Sustainability Development Goals) meant a shift in thinking about where development takes place, highlighting the interdependency of the world (see also point 1). What this means for BIDS students is that they should be prepared to work with global development not just within aid organisations that focus on ‘developing countries’, but also within municipalities, private firms, and all types of organisations in Sweden and similar countries, since they are all seen to contribute to global sustainable development.
- The increasing level of education in (previously) aid-dependent countries means that ‘experts’ from aid-giving countries are less needed for programme design, implementation and evaluation within the aid sector. The type of foreign experts still needed are those that are experienced and/or have specialised knowledge, not young, newly graduated persons who lack contextual knowledge (to put it bluntly). This means that one traditional career path for students from programmes like BIDS has been severely diminished, unless the students are themselves from aid-receiving countries, which some of them are. But even in those cases a Master degree is often required.
- Aid-receiving countries have become less dependent on ‘the West’, both economically and politically, for many reasons. The extent to which there is a real shift in power can be debated, but the discursive dominance of Europe and North America is not as self-evident as it used to be. Although the ‘Western’ supported aid sector is rather slow in taking these changes into account in development policy and practice, it will eventually influence the way also traditional development work is conducted, and the BIDS students need to be aware of the current trends in this regard.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and related practices/discourses have become mainstream in the global private sector. Private firms often venture

into activities that have been the turf of aid organisations and governments without knowing what they are doing, and there is a great need for learning from traditional aid in this regard and adjusting this knowledge to the role of private companies. For BIDS students to be able to contribute in this field they need to get exposed to CSR, both in a practical and critical way, during their education.

In sum, this discussion highlights that the content of the BIDS curriculum needs to be updated to remain relevant for students, in addition to being outdated from an intellectual point of view as discussed under point 1. This can be a challenge, if the teachers themselves are not following the fast changes in the sector, but it is needed for the programme to remain relevant to society and the students.

#### **6. That the students and doctoral students have an influence on planning, implementation and follow up of the programme**

The BIDS programme has established formal structures to ensure that students can influence the development of the programme. All courses are evaluated on a regular basis and the programme coordinator, assisted by the administrator, publishes the main findings and suggests ways to improve each course. However, outside of the 2014 evaluation, the number of respondents on course evaluations has been very low – sometimes between 20% and 25% of the students which makes it difficult to determine what to change and how. It is therefore of utmost importance that initiatives are set in motion to increase the response rate.

Despite of this gap, the quality assurance system seems to work as expected. In 2014, for instance, two courses received very low scores in the evaluation (2,5 and 2,6 out of a total of 5, respectively) and the steering committee decided to assign a new course convenor, which improved evaluations noticeably (3,6 in 2015).

Students also have a voice in the Steering Committee. However, students (in general) feel that their feedback in relation to the content of specific courses, repetition during the first year, and insufficient feedback on written assignments etc. is not addressed properly. Further, they are not informed about what changes are made in order to accommodate their critique. This feeling appears to be supported by the minutes from the steering committee meetings that reveal the same issues are discussed every year. A simple way to minimise this challenge is to ensure that all minutes include action points (including deadlines, and names of responsible persons) and that the steering committee develops an annual cycle of work.

#### **7. That an appropriate study and learning environment is available to all and includes a well-functioning support system**

Because of the ongoing pandemic we could not conduct a physical site visit and therefore cannot assess the physical study environment. We have been informed that the students normally are housed on the premises of the Human Geography department, which seems to have all relevant facilities. There were no complains about the physical environment from the students and we therefore assume that this works well.

However, student evaluations and the self-assessment report indicate that support for students does not always meet the ideal. For example, there appears to be room for improvement with regard to information the students receive on important aspects of the programme. The interviewed students complained that they did not

receive enough information before they were to choose courses for the second year, and thereby their major subject, which caused worry and confusion. Students from all cohorts had the same experience, hence this seems to be one of those recurring problems that is not resolved, even when known.

The interviews revealed that there has been a rather high staff turnover on the positions as programme administrator and programme coordinator, which in combination with a lack of written procedures and clearly defined roles (see below) has contributed to a less well-functioning administrative and leadership support system during certain periods. This is likely to have affected the support to the students.

### **8. That there is continuous follow up and development of the programme**

Continuous follow-up and development of a programme requires a solid governance structure and buy-in and resources from the contributing Departments/Schools. Essentially, this entails a clear division of labour between heads of departments of the four respective departments; between the directors of studies and the programme coordinator for BIDS; between the programme coordinator and the programme administrator; and between the BIDS steering committee and other governing bodies at the departments. Moreover, it requires clear (and attractive) incentive structures to staff these very important positions of trust with the most competent and skilled personnel.

BIDS has existed for more than a decade and has mostly performed well. It has attracted good students – from Sweden and internationally; evaluations of courses have been mostly positive. To the evaluation team, however this is not because of a clear and supporting governance structure, but despite of it. Stated differently, the BIDS programme is too dependent on individual persons putting in dedicated time and effort to run the programme.

The governance structure of the BIDS programme is complex. It cuts across two schools and four departments and interest in the programme for the Heads of Departments seems to be inversely proportional with the attractiveness of the other bachelor programmes offered in their department, i.e. only when applications for other programmes drop, BIDS becomes (really) interesting. In the long run this may affect the quality of BIDS negatively as Heads of Department may be less willing to appoint staff that match the core needs of the programme (see point 4 above). Likewise, the demanding but important task of making tacit policies (selection of programme coordinator, quality assurance, division of labour between study directors and programme coordinator etc.) explicit is easily postponed as the Heads of Department's interest in the programme varies at different points in time. It is therefore important to make the aim of the programme clear and explicitly state success criteria. Only then can real commitment be built.

The role of the programme coordinator is of utmost importance for a well-functioning programme. The programme coordinator acts as a “mini director of study”. Under normal circumstances it is relatively easy to get faculty members to teach the courses at BIDS, as it is perceived to be an attractive programme, but despite of this (some) teachers change frequently. Researchers who get external funding and get allocated to other duties means the programme coordinator has to recruit new teachers. During the interviews, we heard that replacements are assigned just before the course begins (some a week before). This makes the coordination and quality assurance task of the programme coordinator very difficult. It is therefore important to make the division of labour between the

directors of study and the programme coordinator clear and agree on an annual cycle of work that facilitates less turnover of teaching staff and earlier assignment of (new) teaching staff to BIDS. Earlier evaluations as well as several interviewees pointed to mismatch between the 30% buyout the programme coordinator gets for taking up the responsibility and the real workload. Hence, a concurrent professionalization of this position (including description of tasks, competencies, and support structure) and an enlargement of the buyout would improve the programme markedly.

The role of the programme administrator is equally important for BIDS. In most cases, the programme administrator is the first line of contact for the students but the role and responsibilities of the programme administrator is also unclear. The division of labour between the programme administrator and the programme coordinator is blurred and there is no governance structure that aids regular communication between the two. It is therefore important that the four responsible departments begin a process of describing the roles/tasks of the administrator (and the division of labour between the administrator and the coordinator); support a process of making tacit knowledge explicit; and build institutional structures that backs this function.

Likewise, a well-defined and well-functioning Steering Committee is important for the quality of the programme. The BIDS Steering Committee meets approximately six times a year to discuss issues of planning, progression, coordination, and coherence. Based on the minutes from the steering committee it is hard to establish whether or to what extent the issues that the students bring to the fore are actually dealt with, like the issues related to lack of coordination among teachers in year 1 . that leads to excessive repetition. The members of the steering committee acknowledge this problem but it is unclear what is done to minimise it – especially as the problem persists over many years. Likewise, several Steering Committee meetings focus on the challenges related to diversity in teacher teams, which (potentially) make courses unclear to students, and other challenges related to double-booking of rooms. Again, it is unclear how these issues are dealt with. In November 2019, the Steering Committee agreed to produce a Programme Handbook that outlines the structure of the programme and thereby minimises challenges related to lack of coordination and coherence. This handbook was never produced (partly due to Covid-19) and hence it is unclear whether or to what extent it would have solved the problems. It is worth noting that the Handbook is also mentioned in the 2018-review. To sum up, it is vital that the Steering Committee steps up, gets better support from the Departments, and decides how it will move forward in a way that ensures that decisions made by the committee are in fact implemented.

### **9. That internationalisation and an international perspective is promoted in the programme**

The BIDS programme has a clear international profile, in both its content and student composition.

The student composition is clearly more international and diverse than other Bachelor programmes at LU. According to statistics made available to us, the programme has more international students than other Bachelor programmes at LU (39% compared to 4% in 2009-2010; above 50% international students since 2015). This is not surprising, given that this is the only Bachelor programme given in English. More than half of these are from outside the Nordic countries and EU, which gives a truly international profile to the student group. Furthermore, out of

the Swedish students, a higher proportion have a foreign background than in other Bachelor programmes (26% compared to 15%).

The content of the courses is international since the topic is international, but students have posed critique against a ‘Western-dominating’ perspective, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

All BIDS-specific courses during the first and third years are taught in English, and during the second year, when the students are taking discipline specific courses, a selection of English courses are available in each discipline (plus a number of Swedish courses). There is less choice for the international students than for the Swedish students, as most courses at LU at Bachelor level are taught in Swedish. With regard to the departments included in the programme, Political Science and Sociology offer courses specifically for the BIDS students for the second year, while Human Geography and Economic History invite the BIDS students to choose between a range of courses at the department. The students can also select courses in other disciplines, but these have to be approved by the programme coordinator, and it seemed unclear to the students interviewed on what grounds courses were accepted or rejected. Some of the interviewed students complained that they could not take Economics as an elective course, since all Economics courses at LU were offered in Swedish. The point here is that the international students have a limited range of courses to choose from in the second year, which might explain some of the drop-out and also why so many students go abroad during this year.

The programme includes many activities and opportunities aimed at facilitating internationalisation and international contacts for the students. During the second year the students can take advantage of LU’s international mobility agreements with universities abroad. 30-40 students, i.e. half the student group, take this opportunity to study abroad. Many of them study in Europe, through the Erasmus programme, but the majority of the exchange programmes are with other parts of the world, including Asia, Africa, South America, Australia, and the US. This seems like a good internationalisation opportunity, that is apparently popular with the students. In the third year, internship, field work as well as MFS grants for doing the thesis abroad are offered. Internship and field work are offered in the form of a course organised at each of the participating departments. It seems like the students are required to arrange for their internship with an organisation themselves, which might be difficult as the internships are not timed well to fit with meaningful opportunities within development agencies, as noted in the internal review. The field work seems to be connected to the thesis and is linked to the opportunity to apply for an MFS grant (Sida grant for students to do field work for thesis abroad). According to the internal review there has been a decreasing interest in the MFS grants, possibly because of a centralised administration of the grants.

Lund University has a broad range of services for internationalisation, including marketing of LU internationally, support to international students once they have arrived and international cooperation, for example in the form of mobility programme.<sup>7</sup> The services offered seem relevant and since we have not seen any critique from students on this part of LUs service, we do not see any reason to question its quality.

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<sup>7</sup> See document ‘Internationalisering vid Lunds universitet’.

### **10. That gender equality and equal opportunities perspectives are integrated in the programme**

Lund University has a Policy for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity. It states that gender and intersectional perspectives should be integrated into teaching and includes rules on discrimination and for equal representation in both leadership and among students and teachers.

The majority of the students are women (70%), which is similar to other Bachelor programmes at Lund (and at other universities in Sweden). Leadership in the programme, i.e. programme coordinator and steering committee, are all male, and the teaching staff is also predominantly male. This gender imbalance is acknowledged in the internal review and it is noted that the staff and leadership of the programme has changed over the course of the programme and that it has not always been this male dominated.

According to the student evaluations and the student review, students complain about lack of diversity in literature and perspectives in the courses with regard to gender and post-colonial perspectives. There are also positive student comments in evaluations about sections on gender and feminist approaches in some courses and acknowledgement of a broad diversity of the teaching staff. In our own review of course content we have noted that gender and post-colonial perspectives are missing in most courses, except for one section on ‘gender and development’ in UTVC23.

Gender and other social differentiations are central to the development field today, hence we see a lack of these perspectives not only as a matter of keeping in line with the policy of LU, but also as keeping up with the field (see point 1). Attention to gender has been ‘mainstreamed’ for at least 20 years and there is increasing recognition of how other forms of social difference such as race, caste, age and ability all contribute to creating social exclusions and vulnerabilities.

### **11. That subject-relevant perspectives on sustainable development are promoted in the programme**

The student review as well as some student evaluations point to a lack of sufficient attention to sustainability issues in the programme in general, while acknowledging that it is included in some of course in the second year. Our own review of course content, both for the BIDS courses and the second year course at the specific departments, supports this assessment and we agree that sustainability and environmental aspects are not given adequate attention in the programme. We regard this as a major omission given the centrality of sustainability in contemporary development discourses and theories, as already discussed in section 1.

## **Summarised views and recommendations**

Our main views and recommendations can be grouped into two main points:

1. Need for structural change and institutionalisation of the programme
2. Need for rebranding and vision for the program, including revision of curriculum

### **Structural change and institutionalisation of the programme**

The program at present lacks a clear institutional grounding. Because it is split across two Faculties and four Departments it is not really ‘owned’ by any current institutional body and thus lacks both power to enact change (i.e. the Steering Committee does not hold that mandate) and oversight. Clearer line management for all committees and persons in the program are needed, in particular so that if a job is not being done properly, mechanisms are in place to help adjust at program level. The whole structure is currently too personalised: whether it works or not is dependent on individuals and their commitment. There is a need for institutional accountability mechanisms to help ensure smooth running and to help individuals to do their jobs properly. This can include a clearer mandate for the Steering Committee, role of Department Heads and Director of Studies in relation to the program, as well as a regular teacher meeting (currently there is none). It seems that in particular communication across these groups is inadequate (ie. Teachers and Steering Committee, Students and Teachers).

The overall impression we gained, particularly from the site visit, was the lack of procedure and institutionalisation of the program. Many processes are tacit, dependent on the individuals in particular roles, or are unclear. We thus recommend that an attempt to institutionalise the program takes place both in terms of putting more program procedures into writing and in terms of institutional structures for communication among program staff:

1. Job descriptions and clarification of roles need to be written for the Steering Committee, Program Coordinator and the Administrator. Right now it is not clear who is responsible for what, nor who oversees their work. When people leave their positions, a lot of institutional knowledge is lost. Writing job descriptions can be an excellent way to help form a stronger institutional structure.
2. Course coordinators need an institutionalised context where they can meet and discuss the focus and potential overlaps with courses. Regular teacher meetings needs to be institutionalised.
3. There is a need for an institutional mechanism to ensure good communication between Directors of Study (DoS), the Steering Committee and the Program Coordinator. Right now Departments (heads and DoS) are consulted on an as needed basis. But there needs to be at least an annual joint meeting to ensure shared goals.

### **Vision for the program and revision of the curriculum**

The program needs to revise its mandate, goals and thus vision. The original motivations and purpose for the program sit uneasily with both with the evolution of the course and with changes in the development field. Within this task is the need to rethink the content of the program and its structure, along with criteria for success. Questions including, ‘why have this program?’ and ‘what counts as success for the program’ need to be thought through at a strategic level. This also includes defining what ‘development’ is taken to mean in the BIDS programme, as pointed out in the internal review.

We believe the program is important and has great potential to meet the needs of top students from around the world but to continue to do that at the level desired, these questions can help frame a revisioning and rebranding of the program. This vision needs to be shared by Departments and the main actors within BIDS itself.

Appendix: programme for site visit

**BIDS review 2021 - detailed schedule**

**May 25**

**10:00 – 10:45: meeting with Catia and Ellen (internal reviewers)**

*10:45 – 11:00: break*

**11:00 – 12:00: meeting with departmental representative (HoDs and DoS)**

*12:00 – 13:00: lunch*

**13:00 – 14:00: meeting with BIDS steering group**

**May 26**

**10:00 – 11:00: meeting with teachers**

*11:00 – 11:15: break*

**11:15 – 12:15: meeting with students**

*12:15 – 13:15: lunch*

**13:15 – 14:15: meeting with Madeleine (programme administrator)**