

Final Assessment Report

International Development (BES, Minor, Option) Development Practice (MDP)

December 2024

Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the International Development (BES, Minor) Development Practice (MDP) delivered by the School of Environment, Enterprise and Development (SEED) were in good standing.

“The two programs reviewed are of excellent quality, and each offers an innovative approach to the field of international development that is unique within the Canadian postsecondary environment.”

A total of ten recommendations were provided by the reviewers, regarding co-op options, program and course marketing efforts, gender/indigeneity/decolonization, gender diversity, and a suggested name change for the undergraduate program; as well as suggested affiliations, course requirements, funding options, and math requirements for the graduate program. In response, the program created a plan outlining the specific actions proposed to address each recommendation as well as a timeline for implementation. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2030-2031.

Enrollment over the past three years

	BES	Minor	MDP
2024-2025 (CURRENT YR)	26	6	13
2023-2024 (LAST YR)	40	7	10
2022-2023 (THREE YRS)	39	7	13

*Based on Active Student extract from Quest on December 19, 2024.

Background

In accordance with the University of Waterloo’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the International Development (BES, Minor) Development Practice (MDP) delivered by the School of Environment, Enterprise and Development (SEED). A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs on November 9, 2023. The self-study (Volume I) presented the

program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data collected from a student survey, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program(s) were included in Volume II of the self-study.

From Volume III, two arm's-length external reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs: Associate Professor Simon Granovsky-Larsen, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Regina; and Professor Laura Macdonald, Department of Political Science and the Institute of Political Economy, Carleton University.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University on March 6-7, 2024. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, Professor/Associate Professor Dan Brown, Cheriton School of Computer Science, was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the Associate Vice-President, Faculty, Planning and Policy (on behalf of the Vice-President, Academic & Provost); Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs; Dean of the Faculty of Environment; Faculty Associate Deans of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies; Director of the School, as well as faculty members, staff and current undergraduate and graduate students. The Review Team also had an opportunity to visit Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) and meet with representatives from the BSIA and the library.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a report on their findings, with recommendations. Subsequently, the program responded to each recommendation and outlined a plan for implementation of the recommendations. Finally, the Dean responded to the external reviewers' recommendations, and endorsed the plans outlined by the program.

This final assessment report is based on information extracted, in many cases verbatim, from the self-study, the external reviewers' report, the program response and the Dean's response.

Program Characteristics

BES Honours in International Development (INDEV)

The undergraduate program has two specializations - a practice specialization and a research specialization. All students are admitted into the same program and are required to choose one of the specialization streams. The curriculum for the first three years is identical for both streams.

Practice specialization students are required to enroll in spring term of their third year (4A term) to take courses related to their field placement. The fall and winter terms of their fourth year are

spent in a field placement, which is unpaid, but for credit. Students participate in a final capstone program after the field placement. Students in the practice specialization take the equivalent of 30 required courses and 10 electives.

In the research specialization, enrolment in the Spring term of their third year (4A term) is not required, as the INDEV courses offered in the 4A term are placement related. In their fourth year, research specialization students are required to take four further courses (2.0 credits) of INDEV courses consisting of a seminar course on Contemporary Development Issues and a course of International Development Theory, and a 1.0 credit thesis/project course, intended to allow students to pursue a research paper in an area of interest. For the remaining 3.0 credits, students would be able to take electives of their own choosing. Students in the research stream would have 25 required courses and 15 electives. (At the University of Waterloo, a typical one semester course receives 0.5 credits.)

International Development Minor and Option

INDEV also offers an International Development Minor (eight required courses and two electives from a list of courses) and an International Development Option (six courses and one elective). The International Development Minor is open to all University of Waterloo undergraduate degree students. The requirements of the Minor are successful completion of the ten courses with a minimum overall cumulative average of 65% and the completion of the Community Service Experience.

The International Development Option is available to all undergraduate students in the Faculty of Environment, except for students in the International Development Honours plan. The requirements of the Option are six courses with a minimum overall cumulative average of 65% and the completion of a Community Service Experience. The International Development Minor and Option both require the completion of a pre-approved community service experience or educational seminar focused on community development issues of at least three weeks duration in Canada or internationally. Pre-approval is required by the International Development Field Placement Coordinator. This requirement must be organized by the student with support from the Field Placement Coordinator and is to be completed at the student's own expense. Co-op work terms that meet the above description will normally qualify for this requirement.

Master of Development Practice (MDP)

The Master of Development Practice is a professional Master's program focused on students and early career professionals that want to pursue a career in international development. The

program occurs over four terms. Terms one and two are all course work (described in section 5.5.1). The third term is a required field placement. In the fourth term, the students return to campus for final term of courses. With the onset of the pandemic, the program was delivered remotely and has remained in a remote delivery mode (in part due to continuing difficulties for international students to attain visas) until the Fall of 2023.

Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses based on Self-Study

INDEV – Undergraduate

Strengths

- The core differentiator of the program is the eight-month field placement. This opportunity when undertaken by students is consistently described as transformational. The immersive nature of the placement and the supports students receive through WUSC and through program faculty and staff provide an intensive, practical and authentic opportunity for students to engage in development work. No other program in Canada has this opportunity. The School has strengthened the alternatives to the placement through the research stream and capstone opportunities.
- The location of the program in the Faculty of Environment, which provides comprehensive programming in sustainability from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. Students are often able to combine their INDEV degree with complementary specializations, such as environmental assessment, business and geography.
- The program also benefits from core faculty members that have considerable depth of experience in development practice and field research. The faculty have strong networks that they can draw on to enhance learning activities through guest lectures and extracurricular programming.
- The supportive student culture within the program. This culture is a product of the program's small size, so cuts both ways. The strong sense of belonging is facilitated by the program's relationship with United College that provides a sense of place. The students are also well supported by dedicated program staff.

Challenges

- Current enrolment levels are very small. The low enrolment affects program viability in the long run, but also places more immediate pressure on the delivery of key

elements of the program, such as the field placement and research stream. The School has struggled to understand the reasoning behind the drop in enrolment over the past seven years, and we suspect that enrolment is affected by a number of factors:

- Waterloo undergraduate education is strongly identified with cooperative education, but this program does not have a co-op stream
- Field placement is a significant commitment that may dissuade some students from applying
- Student concerns perception of the post-graduate employment opportunities in Canada for international development
- Declining student interest (at UG level) in the field
- Recruitment and marketing of program ineffective.
- Lower than average retention rates. We note here that the individual courses are generally rated highly by students and students who complete the program are very happy with the experience that they have. Nonetheless, the retention issues suggest that the program structure and content is not enabling many students to get the experience that they desire leading them to switch programs.
- The field placement itself may be a detractor to some, as it is a significant commitment, requiring students to be abroad for the entirety of their fourth year. There are also concerns that the field placement places a high financial burden on students, who must pay program fees to WUSC and pay for travel to their placement site (and living costs during the placement), in addition to tuition (as the field placement is also a for-credit course). The number of students participating in the field placement are very limited.
- There are challenges in providing consistent academic administration support given the large number of programs relative to faculty members.

Weaknesses

- The program curriculum addresses issues of gender and indigeneity as part of a broader overview, but does not have dedicated courses exploring issues, which are central to development theory and practice.
- The program does very little service teaching, yet many of the topics addressed in the program are highly salient to current debates on global challenges that are important to a variety of programs in the University.

MDP – Graduate

Strengths

- The breadth of its programming and practice orientation. Students receive a comprehensive education in areas relating to the identified pillars of sustainable development, with a strong, integrated focus on the practice of development. The focus on practice, includes skills development, but building problem solving skills that address the complex and systems-driven nature of development practice.
- The association of the MDP program with the Global MDP network is a considerable strength for the program. First, it creates a broader international platform that is able to promote the MDP as a recognized graduate degree for development practitioners globally, which contributes to the broad currency of the degree and will appreciate over time as the network matures and as global alumni take positions in development organization world-wide. In addition, the network significantly enlarges the learning community for our students and our faculty, through Global MDP meetings and strong connections to other development associations, particularly the Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- The experiential learning opportunities within this program set it apart from other Canadian programs and are viewed very positively by our students. These opportunities include the field placement as well as the research field trip to the Caribbean and opportunities to attend Global MDP and SDSN meetings. These connections allow students to gain critical practice insights, but also to develop their own professional network. The program provides funding to support these activities, although the level of funding is not sufficient to totally offset these costs.
- Enrolment in the program fluctuates and has been affected (positively) by the pandemic. The program attracts mostly international students, which the School sees as a strength since it tends to bring students with diverse backgrounds together.

Challenges

- The program structure, which includes 9 required courses and 3 electives, is very intensive for the students, and students have indicated that the workload burden in the first two academic terms is difficult to manage. We note that requiring students to take 12 courses, plus participate in a required field placement, is significantly out of line with the program requirements of other Faculty of Environment professional

(non-thesis) master's programs, although the program is shorter than many other programs in the Global MDP network.

- The School would like to see more of a balance between domestic students and international students. It should also be noted that the predominance of international students has affected the field placement preferences of students. As many international students would prefer Canadian work experience, to the current focus on field placements outside of Canada.

Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

"The curriculum for each program is up to date, prepares students well through courses that layer core knowledge well across program years, and aligns clearly with priorities at the University of Waterloo. Most core faculty members in both programs are accomplished scholars with active and well-funded research programs, and they are well placed to teach courses that draw on their expertise. The low proportion of courses taught by non-permanent faculty members are delivered by highly qualified sessional instructors. Students in both programs reported high levels of satisfaction, and records of post-graduate hiring show that students move on to a wide range of professional careers."

Program Response to External Reviewers' Recommendations

INDEV – Undergraduate

1. **Co-op Options:** Provide coop option by providing 4-month field placement requirement instead of 8- month requirement (although you might want to retain the 8-month requirement as an option for students who are interested in doing this).

Program Response

The existing 8-month field placement is run in partnership with World University Services Canada and reflects some of their programming needs. The opportunities with WUSC are becoming less certain due to funding constraints in Ottawa. The University offers some limited international opportunities through the Global Experience Certificate. Through its partnership with United College, the program has examined the potential for co-op-type opportunities in the international development field. We think it is feasible to explore the development of experiential / work-integrated learning opportunities that match the needs of the future program structure.

Proposed Action: Include an examination of work-integrated learning opportunities as part of the INDEV Future Directions Report.

Dean's Response

I support the program's approach to this. It is not feasible at this time to consider building a new co-op stream for a program that struggled to recruit more than 10 new students per year, has relatively high attrition, and which has paused admissions to new students.

- 2. Marketing Efforts:** Provide support for marketing efforts that are explicitly tailored to the nature of the program (preferably through the provision of in-house capacity); This effort should include the creative use of social media (current students could contribute to this); field placements are an ideal tool for marketing.

Program Response

As noted above, we agree that marketing the INDEV program offerings will be a key ingredient to its future success. Marketing efforts will need to be tailored to the ultimate program structure. Typically, MUR markets direct entry programs, but consideration ought to be given to generating profile to alternative structures, if that route is adopted. However, this program could be perceived to have negligible returns, with a second try to invest in the program and change the structure there might be valuable returns.

Proposed Action: Consider and address program recruitment strategies suited to program structure as part of INDEV Future Directions Report.

Dean's Response

The faculty's Undergraduate Recruitment Coordinator and MUR embedded specialists, along with the communications and ambassador teams, did everything they could to market the program until it closed to new admissions. With finite resources, it was not feasible to continue to devote disproportionate efforts and resources for negligible returns.

- 3. Gender and Indigeneity/Decolonization:** Review the curriculum and include Gender and Indigeneity/Decolonization course offerings and revise course titles which are currently unappealing.

Program Response

We agree with this observation and recommendation. Gender and Indigeneity are key aspects of development. At present, they are addressed as part of existing courses but are not given separate treatment as standalone course offerings. Given the lack of specific expertise on these topics in our department but much greater expertise elsewhere in the University, we propose to identify suitable courses in other departments and initiate discussions with those departments to determine the feasibility of making those course offerings available to INDEV students.

Proposed Action: Identify suitable courses in other departments and initiate discussions with those departments to determine the feasibility of making those course offerings available to INDEV students.

Dean's Response

The University of Waterloo offers stand-alone courses and programs in Gender and Social Justice (GSJ) and Indigenous Studies. As noted by the program, content of this nature is already built into International Development courses; adding stand-alone courses is not sensible within Environment considering their availability to students. The Faculty is currently building further indigenous content into core Environment courses as well as offering more co-curricular activities focused on indigenization, reconciliation and decolonization with the help of our recently appointed Manager, Environment Indigenous Initiatives.

4. **Gender Diversity:** Prioritize gender diversity through targeted hiring and, in the short term, cross-appointments of existing faculty at Waterloo

Program Response

Male professors have primarily taught the course offerings in the INDEV program in recent years. As of September 2024, however, the department has 21.5 faculty (excluding the Dean, who is unavailable for teaching), of which 8.5 identify as female (40%). Any new hiring process accounts for the University's equity and diversity objectives. Cross-appointments are not necessarily a practical pathway to address gender equity concerns, as cross-appointments may not result in in-classroom opportunities. The subject matter exposure to gender issues is discussed in Recommendation 3 above.

Proposed Action: Review the gender diversity of instructors in INDEV courses and the courses proposed to be included in the INDEV minor to ensure we convey gender diversity and do not provide the impression that International Development is a male-dominated field.

Dean's Response

As noted by the program, cross-appointments do not result in additional teaching appointments. Given the ongoing hiring freeze coupled with extremely low enrollments in the INDEV plan, there are no opportunities for targeted hires at this time.

5. **Name Change:** Consider changing name of program to "Sustainable Development" to better reflect the program's location in this Faculty and highlight the uniqueness of program offerings.

Program Response

Consideration of the appropriate way to identify programming in this area is an important aspect of the future direction of the program structure. Framing the program offerings with reference to sustainability is one potential avenue, but it will depend on the substantive orientation of the programming. The School is also considering identifying program objectives and course offerings in the social pillar of sustainability, including climate and environmental justice.

Proposed Action: Address the appropriate program name as part of INDEV Future Directions Report.

Dean's Response

I can see the appeal of the "Sustainable Development" label; however, in a faculty with multiple programs focused on various aspects of sustainable development, assigning this name to an international development plan would result in less distinction among our programs.

6. **Course Marketing:** Do more work to market courses to students in other programs to improve enrolment and address resource constraints.

Program Response

Generating student awareness and interest in any new program structure, particularly for non-direct entry options (minors, options, specializations), will be necessary for future success. The modalities of internal program/course marketing are unclear to us at this stage. Still, we think we could explore strategies with administrators and academic support units with some experience with these types of communications. The current effort by the Faculty to offer international field courses will provide international opportunities to students which would be credit for specializations.

Proposed Action: Identify University personnel with experience in internal program/course marketing, seek input into future program structures, and incorporate findings into the InDev Future Directions Report.

Dean's Response

I agree that there is no forum for promotion of elective course offerings to the undergraduate students generally. While interdivisional teaching is appealing and would result in some resources under an activity-based budget model, there are hundreds of elective courses across the University and building a significant, sustained interest in this field in the face of declining interest in the INDEV program may not be feasible.

MDP – Graduate

7. **Affiliation:** Affiliate the program with Balsillie School of International Affairs (either through a relocation or by allowing MDP course offering options through Balsillie), as discussed during our visit.

Program Response

The School has held some preliminary discussions with the leadership team at the BSIA to explore the feasibility of closer coordination with the programs and opportunities currently available through the BSIA. It will continue these conversations to assess whether and how to structure future collaborations.

Proposed Action: Meet with BSIA leadership team to explore program collaboration opportunities for inclusion in future program restructuring.

Dean's Response

I support the program's approach to this recommendation.

8. **Course Requirements:** Reduce number of courses required to fulfil degree requirements from the current 12 to 6 to 8 courses, with 3 to 4 required courses and 3 to 4 electives.

Program Response

We agree with this recommendation and plan to bring a restructured program with fewer course requirements and greater program flexibility (electives).

Proposed Action: Bring forward a restructured program with fewer course requirements and greater program flexibility (electives).

Dean's Response

I support this approach and note that the program has already begun to decrease the number of required courses and share courses with other units within the Faculty.

9. **Funding Options:** Explore options for funding MDP students, for example, through RAships funded through faculty research grants.

Program Response

While recognizing that student support is of high importance, the modalities of that support need to be explored. RAships are difficult to use as an institutionalized form of student support because they depend on faculty research grants, and are often prioritized for students in research programs, where research training and opportunities are central to the

program objectives. There may be other opportunities to explore through external supports/advancement.

Proposed Action: Review current student funding approaches and explore alternative sources of student support.

Dean's Response

While faculty are free to provide RA positions to course-based/professional master's students, it is, as noted by the program, more common to provide these positions to students in research programs which carry a minimum funding guarantee.

10. Math Requirements: Review math requirements in core courses.

Program Response

We agree that course requirements (whether quantitative or otherwise) must be matched to the program's entry requirements to ensure we are not imposing unrealistic expectations or demands on students. In light of the response to recommendation 2, which will involve a comprehensive review of required courses and curriculum elements, we will consider the appropriate quantitative skills to achieve the program learning objectives and associated training

Proposed Action: Review the appropriate quantitative skills to achieve the program learning objectives and associated training/curriculum requirements.

Dean's Response

I agree with the program response to this recommendation.

Recommendations Not Selected for Implementation

Recommendation 4:

Cross-appointments are not necessarily a practical pathway to address gender equity concerns, as cross-appointments may not result in in-classroom opportunities. The subject matter exposure to gender issues is discussed in the response to Recommendation 3. Given the ongoing hiring freeze coupled with extremely low enrollments in the INDEV plan, there are no opportunities for targeted hires at this time.

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
INDEV – Undergraduate Program				
1.	Co-op Options: Consider offering a 4-month field placement option instead of existing 8-month requirement	Include an examination of work-integrated learning opportunities as part of the INDEV Future Directions Report	Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies	September 2026
2.	Marketing Efforts: Provide support for marketing efforts that are explicitly tailored to the nature of the program	Consider and address program recruitment strategies suited to program structure as part of INDEV Future Directions Report.	Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies	September 2026
3.	Gender and Indigeneity/Decolonization: Review the curriculum and include Gender and Indigeneity/Decolonization course offerings. and revise course titles that sounds unappealing	Identify suitable courses in other departments and initiate discussions with those departments to determine the feasibility of making those course offerings available to INDEV students.	Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies	March 2026
4.	Gender Diversity: Prioritize gender diversity through targeted hiring and, in the short term, cross-appointments of existing faculty at Waterloo	No action proposed.	N/A	N/A

5.	Name Change: Change name of program to “Sustainable Development” to better reflect the program’s location in this Faculty.	Address the appropriate program name as part of InDev Future Directions Report.	Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies	March 2026
6.	Course Marketing: More efforts on marketing courses to students in other programs to improve enrolment.	Identify University personnel with experience in internal program/course marketing, seek input into future program structures, and incorporate findings into the InDev Future Directions Report.	Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies	March 2026
MDP – Graduate Program				
7.	Affiliation: Affiliate the program with Balsillie School of International Affairs.	Meet with BSIA leadership team to explore program collaboration opportunities for inclusion in future program restructuring.	Associate Director, Graduate Studies	September 2026
8.	Course Requirements: Reduce required courses from 12 to 6 -8, with 3-4 required and 3-4 elective courses.	Bring forward a restructured program with fewer course requirements and greater program flexibility (electives).	Associate Director, Graduate Studies	September 2026
9.	Funding Options: Explore options for funding of MDP students	Review current student funding approaches and explore alternative sources of student support.	Associate Director, Graduate Studies	September 2026
10.	Math Requirements: Review math requirements in core courses	Review the appropriate quantitative skills to achieve the program learning objectives and associated training/curriculum requirements.	Associate Director, Graduate Studies	September 2026

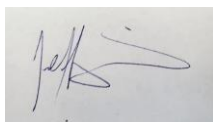
The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review

2030-2031

Date

Signatures of Approval



April 21, 2025

Chair/Director

Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (*For AFIW programs only*)

Date



May 07, 2025

Faculty Dean

Date

Note: AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.



February 14, 2025

Associate Vice-President, Academic
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

Date



On Behalf of the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
