

Student Profiles Development Studies Graduate Conor Ashleigh



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Graduate Profile: Conor Ashleigh

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Development Studies in 2011, Conor has worked as a photographer and filmmaker documenting human stories. These stories include diverse examples of the human experience including homelessness; conflict and post-conflict; mass migration and international development.

During his studies, Conor worked in a Youth Homelessness Centre which nurtured his desire to take a leap of faith and become a photojournalist. Development Studies helped him think about his options and clarify how he wanted to pursue them in a career focused on humanitarian and development work.

“I was frustrated and hungry to get out and spend more time in the real world. For me, the value of Development Studies has increased over time. The overarching skill that I got from this degree is critical thinking. For my storytelling, morally and theoretically sound critical thinking is necessary.”

Following graduation, Conor started by capturing stories in Newcastle and working in partnership with mental health and social services for two years.

His passion led to international trips to places such as South Sudan and Sri Lanka which involved working with communities in conflict and post-conflict situations. In Conor's work, he has captured many stories of experiences of personal, political and economic change.



Now Conor works on long-term visual and multimedia social justice projects collaborating with non-government organisations (NGOs) and publications to produce photojournalistic content which has taken him to 50 countries around the world.

Through this lens, he continues to portray a number of longer term projects in East Timor, India and the Middle East. He notes that, “working with NGOs has been valuable and rewarding. It has given me the chance to work in the development space, telling the stories that publishers want to tell.”

Since 2013, Conor has been regularly taking assignments from the *New York Times* and his work has been featured in major publications including *Al Jazeera*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Big Issue*.

Conor divides his time in Australia and internationally. He still returns to Australia to work on range of projects.



Learning to investigate, ask questions and garner advice all help him to engage people and tell stories. As Conor says, “Development Studies taught me how to apply research skills in a real world context.”

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For more information visit: www.newcastle.edu.au/degrees/bachelor-of-development-studies

The sense of community amongst other students when he studied has encouraged him to stay in touch with other Development Studies graduates and the program. Conor has also worked with students in the degree by providing a placement opportunity to a student.

Conor recommends current students and graduates alike network with alumni to find out about potential career paths and contemporary work in Development Studies, including engagement with social media sources like the Development Studies Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Development-Studies-at-UON-835770753177619/>.



Conor recommends the Bachelor of Development Studies for people that are “interested in the world” and want to “work with people” to solve the many pressing problems facing people globally. If this is you – “go for it!”

You can find more of Conor’s work on his website <http://conorashleigh.com/>