



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Student Profiles

Development Studies

Graduate

Emilie Wiggers

Graduate Profile: Emilie Wiggers

Emilie completed a Bachelor of Development Studies in 2011. She started the degree with a keen interest in social justice which has echoed through her career.

During her degree, Emilie went overseas to Gothenburg, Sweden with the iLead program which broadened her world view. With only a few courses to complete in her final semester, she commenced a part-time job as Homework Centre Coordinator at Northern Settlement Services (NSS) in Newcastle, where she had previously been a volunteer. Emilie reflects “it was the perfect situation” to build her career and work in a relevant field while studying. After graduation, Emilie converted to full-time work with NSS.

Continuing in a similar line of community work, Emilie worked casually as a Community Liaison Officer with the Department of Education & Training over 2 years to start an ESL Homework Centre with a local primary school.

Emilie then went on to work as a Community Support Worker at the not-for-profit social enterprise, New Horizons. Emilie’s focus here was on assisting people with mental health conditions using a community-based outreach program.

Emilie is currently employed as a Community Development Officer at Lake Macquarie City Council, where she is responsible for accounting for the needs of local residents, developing relevant services and assisting to build the capacity of community based organisations.

These jobs have all relied on the interpersonal and analytical skills that Emilie acquired while studying. Emilie notes, “*Development Studies teaches you a way to think... it helps in exercises of empathy, to break down barriers and concentrate on developing relationships with people. There are a lot of interpersonal skills that you can shape and build on, in whichever career path you choose.*”



Figure 1 Emilie celebrating a Homework Centre graduate and his accomplishments

Emilie considers that the most valuable skill she learnt through the degree was to think analytically, by “... looking at all the layers that make up a community to build a bigger picture so when you are in the workforce and you are learning about the more intricate details, you can figure out how it fits within the larger puzzle.”



Figure 2 Welcome Refugees BBQ Event

Emilie is currently participating in Smart Seeds, a global innovation program for young professionals. The 12 week program involves working in multi-disciplinary teams to generate fresh ideas to tackle complex infrastructure challenges facing their city. She reflects that to be a competitive applicant, it's good to upskill after graduation.

Emilie's advice to current undergraduate students is to take on as many volunteering opportunities as you can. *“Networking is important and volunteering also gives you an idea of what kind of area you would like to move into with your work”.*

Emilie also recommends *“letting go of the pressure that you need a certain skillset or capability level to be eligible for certain positions... It's more about if you can make someone laugh or connect with them through stories and humour through*

the recruitment process. People care about the personality of who they are going to work with just as much as how you tick the boxes of education and experience.”

Emilie's last advice for students studying Development Studies is to connect with other students around you.

“Attend the pizza get-togethers, the little parties, support each other, share your thoughts and be vulnerable. The people in Development Studies have a heart for people and the environment; it's amazing being surrounded, making friends and getting support from like-minded people.”



Figure 3 Emilie in Sweden on exchange

While Emilie loves what she is doing now, in the future, Emilie would love to work for Oxfam or in another non-government realm, working to alleviate poverty.

CONTACT

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