



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



Graduate profile: Jessica Richardson

Since completing a Bachelor of Development Studies in 2014, Jessica has gone on to work in the field of community development and humanitarian services.

Jessica currently works at the Vanuatu Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee as a Disability Inclusion Officer which she began in April 2017. This job combines Jessica's passion for sport and working with young people with her expertise in community development. Jessica is supporting people with disabilities both at a club level and individually to develop further inclusion of disability sports, especially of women. Jessica's is working to promote and use sport to build the capacity and inclusivity of sports organisations and stakeholders that are working with disability in VAN2017 Pacific Games.

“For me Development Studies was a game changer. It allowed me to see the challenges faced by many communities across the world, but also provided me with the skills to find sustainable solutions to these challenges. At first I found the course content broad and overwhelming and kept trying to work out the right answer for “what is Development Studies?”, but this ended up being the best part. I was provided with an opportunity to build a knowledge base that covered all aspects of community development, from environmental sustainability to economic equality to social justice. This depth of knowledge has greatly assisted in my further studies and employment, and influenced my world-view”.

After completing Development Studies, Jessica went on to build on her knowledge and follow her passion for national and international community development by completing a Masters in International Public Health.

“Towards the end of my degree an Alumni came to present on his work in the field of community development. In discussing my goals with him, to work both in Australia and overseas, he recommended I further my studies through a post graduate degree, as organisations in the international field would be looking for applicants with these qualifications. I applied for a Master in International Public Health at the University of Sydney. This allowed me to boost the knowledge I had gained through Development Studies and apply it to health, a key interest of mine”.



Jessica Richardson as featured on UON website celebrating role as Disability Inclusion Officer.



After completing her Master's degree Jessica took a gap year and backpacked her way through Europe. "Travelling was a great experience and apart from being a wonderful adventure it also allowed me to improve my cross-cultural communication skills and life skills. If you are concerned about not starting work straight away, but you really want to travel then why not combine the two and do a long term volunteer placement overseas with an organisation like AVID or the Red Cross".

Following her return from Europe, Jessica set out to get her first position in the field of community development. "I applied, applied and applied again. I can't stress enough how important it is to open up options for yourself as a new graduate in the job market. I applied for various jobs in both the fields of community development and health promotion, and not just in Newcastle, but from Darwin to Tasmania. In our field of study it is important to be open to opportunities wherever they may lead you. I made sure my cover letter, resume and selection criteria emphasised the experiences I had gained through my work placements in both my undergrad and post graduate degrees. I needed to do this because I had relatively little experience in the field, which is of course what employers are looking for".

Jessica worked as a Settlement Officer with the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services in Canberra. As an officer in the Humanitarian Settlement Services section, she welcomed newly arrived migrants and refugees and assisted them through their settlement journey for their first six to twelve months.

Jessica attributes her career success to undertaking the Development Studies degree. "During my studies, I was fortunate to undertake a placement at Wunan, an Indigenous community development organisation in Kununurra, Western Australia. This two-week placement gave me first-hand experience in engaging hard-to-reach communities, facilitating their participation in community development and capacity building activities."

CONTACT

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

"I assisted the Parent and Community Engagement (PaCE) program coordinator to support parents in becoming actively engaged with Kununurra District High School. The program helped parents to develop partnerships with the school by providing a 'Parent Room' on campus, a place for parents and teachers to build relationships so that parents felt empowered to make informed decisions relating to their child's education. This placement sparked my passion for social justice."

"Take the opportunity to further your studies through work placements and volunteering. This not only provides a way for you to put the learning of the classroom into practice but allows you to build relevant experiences for your resume when you look to enter the job market. Employers are looking for on the job experience and this is a great way to show your passion for community development".

Jessica highly recommends the Bachelor of Development Studies to future students. "If you are passionate about being a change maker and you seek environmental sustainability and social justice then this is the program for you!"



Associate Professor Kathy Mee (Program Convenor) and Jessica at graduation.