Development Studies Association Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Audit. Stage 1 – Final report

Introduction

This study aimed to start assessing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the centres in charge of researching and teaching Development Studies (DS) in the UK. The work started on 20/03/2023.

The labour consisted of two main tasks. First, we needed to know which institutions worked on DS in the region. We then needed to identify a potential source of information about them.

Establishing a list of Development Studies researching and teaching institutions

The first step was to create a list of institutions working in Development studies. We explored a total of four data sources.

Members of the Development Studies Association.

The list of members of the Development Studies Association (2023) included 24 research centres in 24 universities. Five additional members were not higher education institutions (e.g., Oxfam, British Council, International Institute for Environment and Development) as well as three publishing members (e.g., Wiley, Taylor & Francis). All centres but the publishing ones were further subdivided into five categories based on the institution's size.

Universities offering Development Studies undergraduate programmes.

We used the Unistats database to identify all UG programmes that could be considered DS-heavy. This database is publically available and includes very useful information about the structure and content of the programme, its length, and student satisfaction rates (it could serve as a potential source of information for later studies).

We employed a systematic review approach to the database. We double-screened and assessed them based on their name and curriculum. A summary of the process is illustrated in Figure 1. We started by filtering those with “Development” in their course name. Of the 34510 courses, 539 mentioned “Development” in their title. During the second screening stage, the 539 courses were subdivided into three groups. The first group was of those clearly unrelated to Development Studies (e.g., Software development, Early child development, Sports development and coaching). The second grouped the programmes related to development, but it was unclear if they were proximal enough to be considered within the discipline (e.g., Community development). The third and last group included those programmes that appeared to have a considerable development studies component (e.g., Global development, International development). Several of these were joint programmes, where the Development studies

component had varying presence; in some, strong (e.g., Global Development and Sustainability); in others, not so much (e.g., Spanish and International Development, Sustainable Development and Archaeology).

In the second screening stage, we merged the second and third groups and conducted a more extensive analysis of each programme. We had two choices, either to include or exclude the joint programmes. Based on a rapid review of their curriculum, we chose to exclude them. In most cases, they seemed to provide minimal content or were a form of suffix applied to several courses in the university, probably in the hopes of stating that the entire institution was committed to development[1]. As a result of this screening process, we were left with 69 programmes taught in 23 universities.

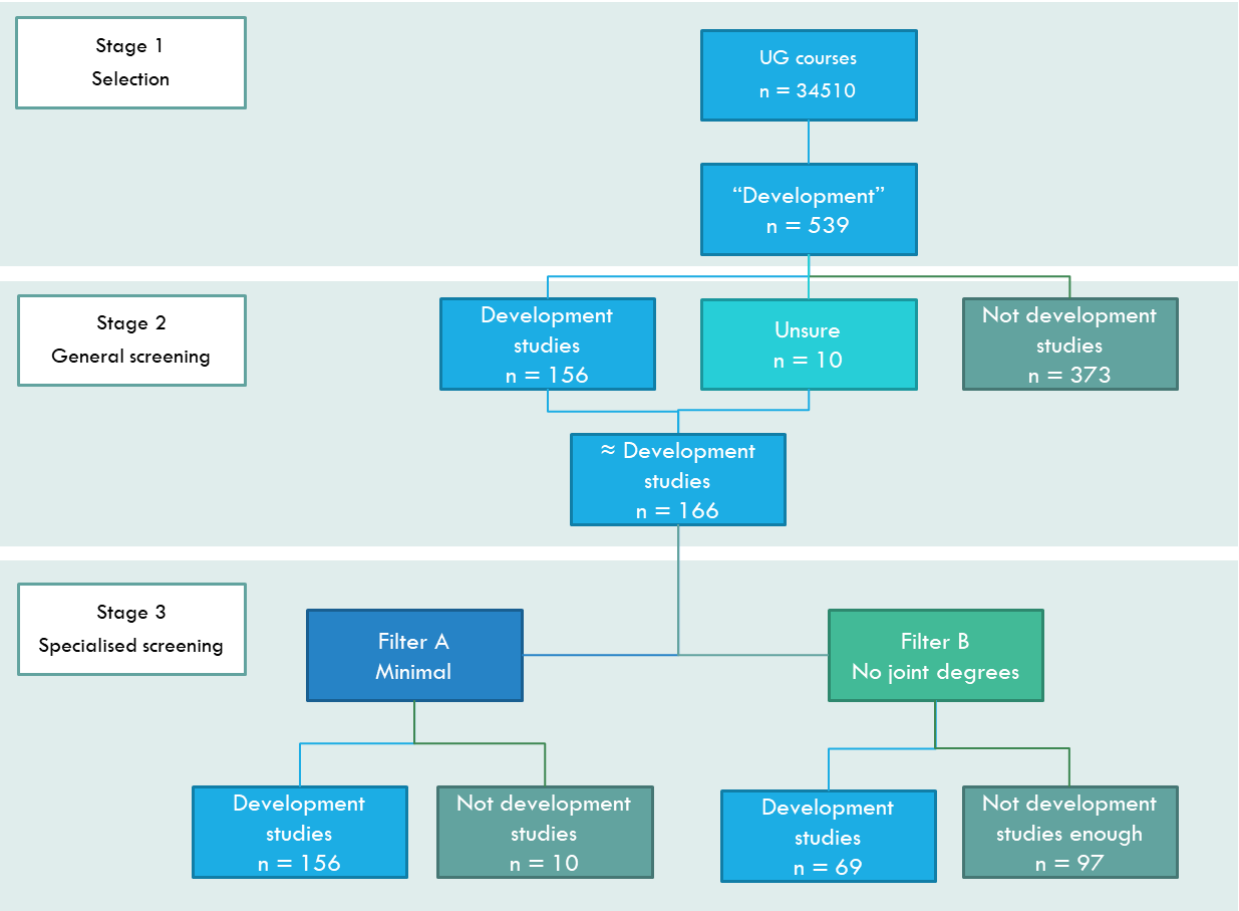

Figure 1. Summary of results of the Development Studies undergraduate programmes screening process

[1] The University of Warwick, for example, has twelve UG courses that end with "…. and global sustainable development". (E.g., Theatre and Performance Studies and Global Sustainable Development or Life Sciences and Global Sustainable Development).

Universities offering postgraduate Development Studies programmes.

A similar methodology was used for Postgraduate programmes (PG)[2]. However, since a centralised database was non-existent, we were forced to explore other options. We assessed online databases (e.g., Masters Compare, British Council) to evaluate their comprehensiveness and ease of access. Most provided similar, yet non-identical, information. Although the data was comparable, the format in which it was delivered was not. Since we had to construct a database hand scrapping data online[3], we selected UCAS, which provided information in the most accessible form.

Figure 2 provides a summary of the process. We searched all courses tagged as "Development Studies" on the webpage. This first selection provided us with 430 programmes that were then subdivided into the same three tiers used during the UG programme screening. Again, the second and third groups were merged for a more in-depth analysis.

As a result of this process, 169 courses were selected. They were taught at 51 universities.

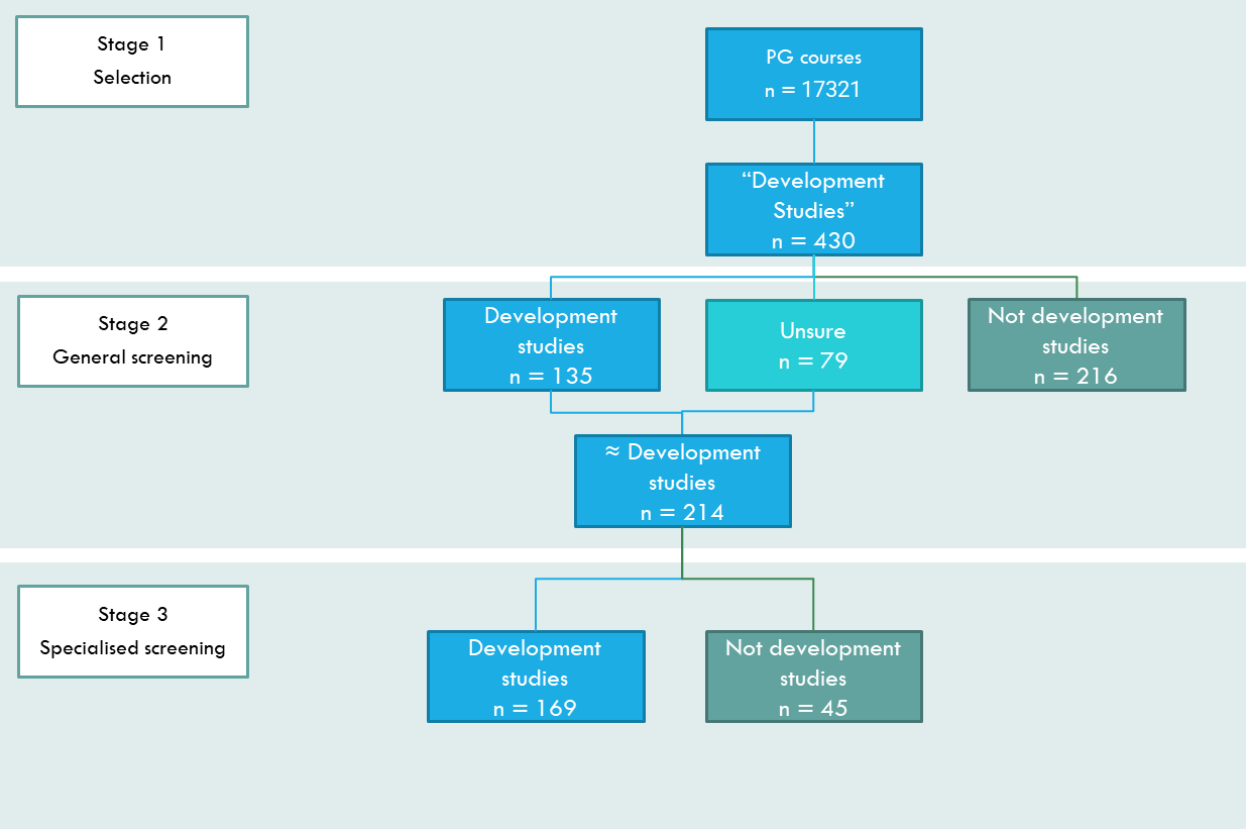

Figure 2. Summary of results of the Development Studies postgraduate programmes screening process

[2] We included PG programmes of different lengths and natures, from postgraduate certificates to doctorates.
[3] We discussed the idea of webscrapping automatically, but since the quantities of data were manageable, we considered that doing it by hand was more efficient.

Institutions participating in the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

The REF is a system for assessing the quality of research in HEIs. It provides results every few years; the most recent was published in 2021. It organises the quality evaluation in 34 discipline-based units of assessment (UOAs). A total of 157 UK HEIs submit information to the REF. We identified 21, including personnel in the "Anthropology and Development Studies" UoA.

Summary of findings

Different data sources provided somewhat different information. Based on the triangulation of all four sources, we identified 60 universities as either teaching or research centres of development studies. The following table summarises the results per data source.

Table 1. Programmes and Universities identified as DS teaching or Research centres, per data source

Units	DSA	UG	PG	REF	Overall
"Programmes"	-	69	169	-	-
Universities	24	23	51	21	60

It is essential to state that the degree of convergence of different sources was very diverse. In other words, some institutions appeared in all four sources, while others appeared only in one. For example, the University of Wolverhampton appears only in the DSA list of members but is absent of the rest of the sources. On the other hand, the University of Reading appears in all four data sources. Table 2 summarises the amount of institutions per number of sources in which it appeared. As can be seen, the number of institutions that appear in only one or two sources compose the majority of the sample. This hints at the importance of triangulating so many sources of information to establish the universe of institutions in which to work properly.

Table 2. Number of Universities per number of data sources in which it appears.

Data sources	Universities
One source	23
Two sources	22
Three sources	8
Four sources	7
Total	60

This selection of 60 universities probably includes more than those actually teaching and researching in Development Studies. In other words, it is a larger than needed selection. We considered that, at this stage, it was better to err on the side of over-inclusion than over-exclusion. The list of 60 institutions can be, at later stages, whittled down to a more precise universe.

Obtaining data about the selected universities

Once the institutions were identified, we were able to start to try to obtain data on their staff. The first step toward it was to identify potential sources and test their strengths and weaknesses. The following section lists the data sources explored so far.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Heidi Plus, the system used by HESA to display their statistics, has all the variables we require. When reporting information to the public, they hold a round and suppression policy[4], which might affect the data accuracy for small groups (such as those found in Development studies). Nevertheless, this does not apply to the raw data accessible to Gold Users. We obtained the aforementioned certification, and we explored the existing dashboard. Although most information is, in fact, available, we run into two problems.

The cost centre, the variable used to identify the thematic expertise of the university staff (e.g., 107. Anthropology and Development Studies), presents three critical issues. The first one is that, as its name clearly implies, it merges two disciplines, Antropology and Development studies. The inclusion of another field will negatively affect the specificity of our findings.

A second and even more concerning issue is the fact that staff dedicated to DS can be included in several other cost centres, depending on their expertise or "location" within the university (e.g., Economics, Politics and International Studies or Social work and Social Policy). This is related to the way in which the university organises its human and financial resources. We found that some universities with DSA-registered research centres, such as the University of Bath, do not report anyone working on the topic. The extent of these practices is considerable. Of the 60 previously identified universities, only 20 had personnel ascribed to the Anthropology and Development studies CC. This is bound to create a substantial decrease in the validity of our measurements.

The third problem we identified has to do with missing data. Information on race is missing in many cases, especially for those with atypical contracts. 32% of Academic Atypical cases reported a "not known" race, compared to 9% of non-atypical. Considering that one of the hypotheses is that BAME faculty are more likely to be hired under those contracts, this condition has the potential to heavily impact the quality of the analysis.

Even though the reliability and validity of the measures are heavily compromised, we would still like to present some of the obtained results. However, these should be used primarily as examples of what could be obtained if the data quality were acceptable, more than to make any specific decisions. Figure 3 shows the number of Full-time equivalents (FTE) academics ascribed to the Anthropology and Development Studies cost centre for 2021/2022 by ethnicity (detailed 6-way).

[4] For anonymity purposes, all numbers are rounded down or up to multiples of five and any number bellow 2.5 is rounded to 0. This implies that, if a institution has 9 people (7 women and 2 men), they will appear as 5 people (5 women and 0 men).

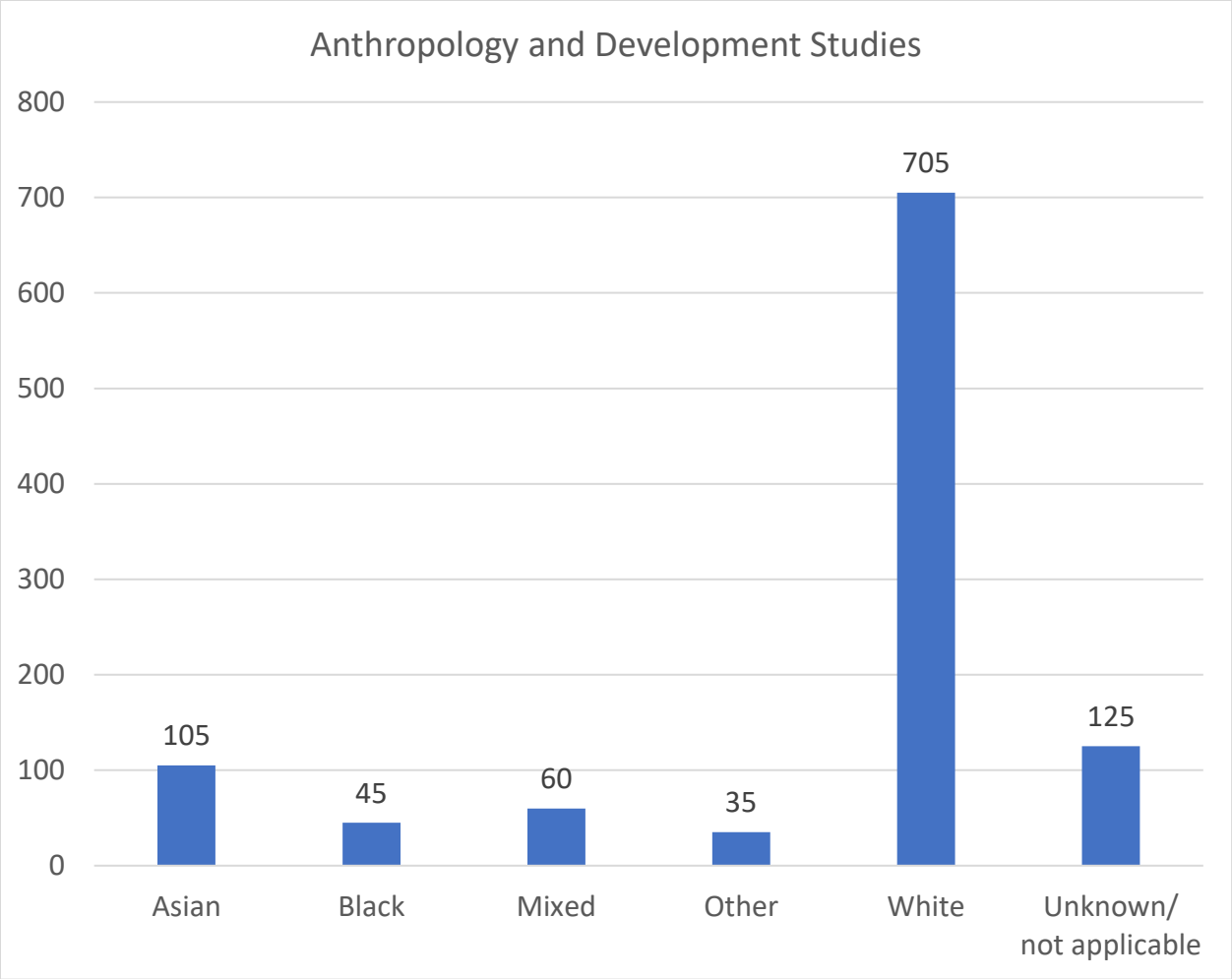

Figure 3. Full-time equivalent academics ascribed to the Anthropology and Development Studies cost centre for 2021/2022 by ethnicity (detailed 6-way)[5]

To properly understand this information, we should explain what exactly FTEs are. FTEs are the way in which this and other systems handle the presence of part-time contracts. Someone under a full-time contract is 1 FTE (35 hours per week). People in part-time contracts are a fraction of an FTE. For example, someone hired to work 17.5 hours a week is 0.5 FTE. The interpretation of these values has its own problems. For instance, if a university has two black individuals working 10 hours per week each (0.33 FTE), that university would show to have 0.66 black FTE. This system, albeit functional, can be somewhat confusing, especially when analysing small groups.

We should also highlight that this graph summarises the results of only 20 of the 60 universities considered within the universe of Development Studies Institutions. The remaining 40 did not have anyone ascribed to the selected cost centre.

[5] The numbers are ronded to multiples of five to comply with HESA's round up and suppression strategy.

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

A second source of information was that of the REF. Although slightly less current than those from HESA, the data was still recent enough for the purposes of the study. Nevertheless, REF data also proved to be plagued with validity issues, most of which were shared with HESA.

Like the cost centre used by the Higher education statistic agency, the unit of analysis (UoA) used by REF presented the same two issues. It merges Anthropology with Development Studies, and not everybody working on the topic will be adscribed to the correct UoA. The data coverage from this source is also lacking. Since submitting information for REF is voluntary, only 21 of the 60 universities have any information in their system.

There are two additional issues exclusive to REF. The first one is that, unlike HESA, REF does not have readily available data to share. It would need to be required from the organisation in charge of it. The last element to consider is, again, the missing values. Participation in the submission is voluntary; not everyone in the university has to do it. Furthermore, even for those who chose to submit information about their research output, disclosing their race was also voluntary. The combination of these two conditions can potentially produce a considerable amount of missing data.

In summary, REF data was also found to be inadequate. A different source was required.

Freedom of information requests (FOIs)

Freedom of information requests can be sent to universities and other public institutions under the Freedom of Information Act. We considered this method to have the potential to generate the required data. After discussing the technique with researchers experienced in its use, we drafted a request pilot.

We selected three institutions (the University of Bath, University of Reading and University of Edinburgh). We sent letters to each of them, stating the research aims and goals and asking them to provide an anonymised list of individuals who, during the periods 2018/2019 and 2021/2022, researched in DS or taught the core modules of a DS course. We asked for the following variables:

- Cost centre
- Department
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Full-time equivalent
- Position
- Main occupation
- Spine point

Each letter included a personalised section in which we listed the name of the DS research centre and the UG and PG courses we had identified in the previous version (See Appendix 1). We attached a Excel spreadsheet that would serve as a template for organising the shared information (See Appendix 2). Since we were piloting the request and expecting anonymity to be a concern for those answering, we included two template alternatives. The first one required individual information on both gender and race (which allowed us to analyse the dynamic between these two variables), and the second one asked for individual gender and ethnicity as well, but it did so in two independent databases (See appendix 2). An example

might help to clarify this. Using the first template, we could determine how many Asian women worked in the HEI. With the second template, we could only determine how many Asian people were working at the university and how many women were working at the university, but we were unable to measure the intersection of these two variables.

We sent the requests and waited. After a month had passed (the expected time of response), we received three rejections. Their answers had common reasons for why they were unable to provide the requested information. The first reason was data privacy. Even though we offered different alternatives with different levels of aggregated data, Human Resources offices would not provide the information due to privacy concerns. Their main issues were with contract and salary information. The second issue was that of data availability. Their systems did not have the information readily available. Human resources does not know who belongs to which research centre or who teaches which course. They would need to reconstruct that information, which implies additional costs they are not compelled to cover.

It seemed, then, that FOIs were also incapable of generating the data we required.

Direct surveys

The final attempt at collecting the information consisted of two direct surveys:

1. **Heads of Centre (HoC) survey:** A survey aimed at the HoCs where they are expected to provide information about the staffed members of the centre they lead. The response was returned in an Excel template (See Appendix 3).
2. **Staff survey:** An online survey that the HoCs distributed to the members of the centre and the people teaching DS in selected UG and PG programmes (See Appendix 4).

We identified four institutions to pilot such surveys (London School of Economics and Political Science, University of Bath, University of Edinburgh and University of Manchester). All of these institutions were DSA members; however, they varied in size, location, and how their organisations were structured (some had all DS programmes centred in one department, while others did not). We chose only DSA members because, at this stage, we were interested in ensuring a response that would provide enough information for a future, wider-encompassing data collection. Considering that all DSA members were aware and in favour of the initiative, we thought it best to focus on them.

In a similar fashion to that of the FOIs, we sent letters to the HoCs, informing them of our goals and instructing them in the operation of the surveys. Appendix 5 shows an example of the request. All requests were sent on 29/06/2023, and no reminder was delivered. We were interested in assessing the “natural” response of institutions. Initially, we proposed a response time of three weeks; however, since most HEI were on summer vacations, we prolonged that time to six weeks. Table 3 summarises the responses provided by the participants of the pilot.

In general, three out of four universities responded, be it both surveys or at least one of them. The University of Manchester did not provide any information. Considering the timing of the request, it was probably lost among end-of-term tasks. The University of Bath was the only one that asked for clarification and later stated that it would not be able to provide an answer to the HoC survey based on data privacy concerns. Still, they did forward the Staff survey, and even followed up on their completition.

Table 3. Results from Direct Surveys.

University	Centre	Email confirmation	Preliminary query	HoC Survey answered	Staff survey answered (first case)	Members in HoC Survey	Staff survey respondents	Survey response rate
London School of Economics and Political Science	Department of International Development	No	No	03/07/2023	29/06/2023	35	4	11%
University of Bath	Centre of Development Studies	No	Yes	No	20/07/2023	40[6]	11	28%
University of Edinburgh	Global Development Academy & Centre African Studies	No	No	07/09/2023	26/07/2023	25	3	12%
University of Manchester	Global Development Institute	No	No	No	No	-	0	-

[6] Bath did not provide a HoC survey response. This number is an approximation based on a Centre member.

When analysing the gathered information, we can arrive at a few interesting points. The first is that response times and rates between institutions will vary considerably. The second one is the relatively low response rate for the Staff survey. Assuming that the information provided by the HoC constitutes the universe of DS staff in the institution, just a little more than 10% of potential respondents answered our Staff survey. It is important, then, that we determine if the composition of the Staff respondents follows the same distribution as that of the HoC survey. This will determine if the sample we obtain through this medium could be considered "representative" of the universe. Regretfully, we only have information from both surveys in two out of four universities (LSE and the University of Edinburgh). The Staff survey respondents from these universities only add up to seven people. Concluding anything from such a small number could be risky, but we could still use them as a reference point.

Figure 4 shows the composition of respondents in each survey. Both surveys provide five alternatives of race; however, we had to combine all BAME alternatives (Black, Asian, Mixed and Other) to obtain numbers large enough for descriptive analysis. BAME people are 43% of the Staff survey respondents while only representing 25% of the population (assuming that the information provided by the HoCs accurately represents population composition). This implies that if we rely exclusively on staff respondents, there would be a risk of overestimating the number of BAME people in the universe. In other words, the fact that people of colour are more likely to answer a survey about race has the potential to artificially inflate the presence of people of colour in the sector. There is a considerable risk in exclusively relying on this source of information.

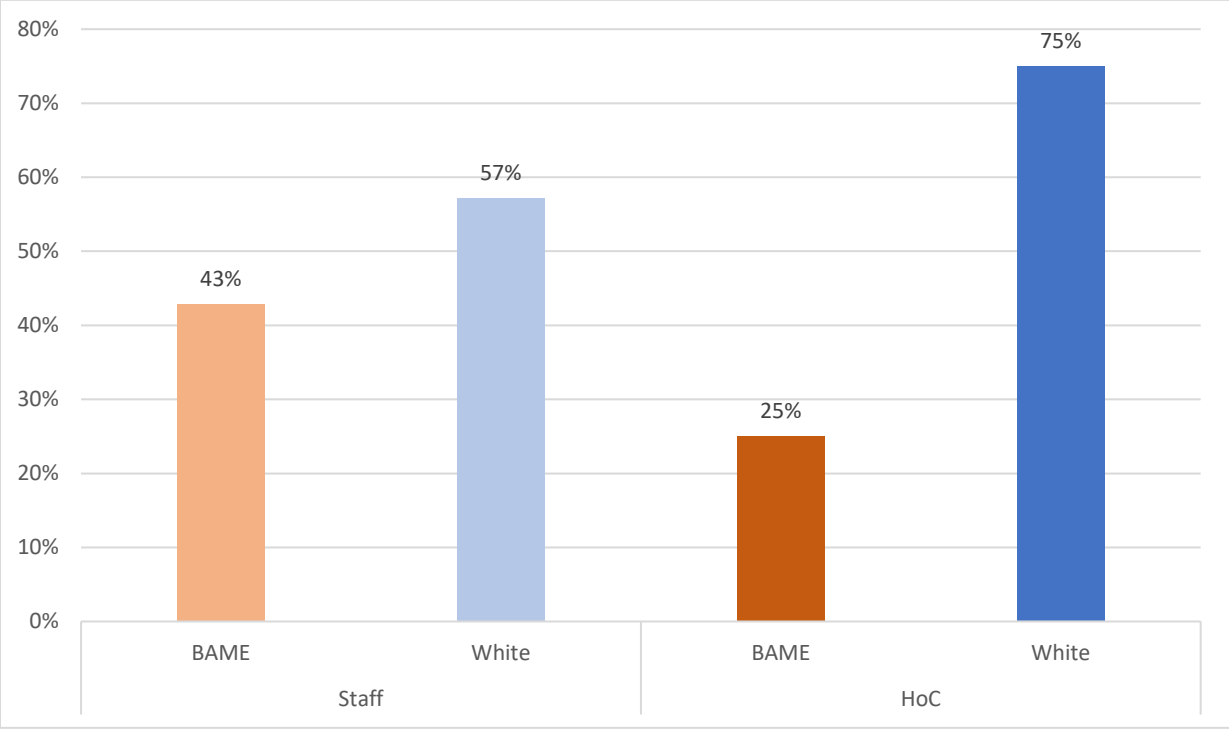

Figure 4. Comparison of the racial composition of the samples by source

A similar analysis could be conducted by Position, but there are seven alternatives for those answers, and they cannot be easily merged together. Because of this, we chose not to analyse them at the moment. See Table 4 for more information on the composition of both samples by Race and Position.

Table 4. Comparison of the composition of the samples by race and position, by source

Position	Staff survey			HoC survey		
	BAME	White	Total	BAME	White	Total
Research/Teaching fellow	1		1	2	8	10
	14%		14%	3%	13%	17%
Lecturer	1	2	3	6	5	11
	14%	29%	43%	10%	8%	18%
Senior Lecturer	1		1	2	7	9
	14%		14%	3%	12%	15%
Reader				0	1	1
					2%	2%
Associate Professor				4	7	11
				7%	12%	18%
Professor		2	2	1	17	18
		29%	29%	2%	28%	30%
Total	3	4	7	15	45	60
	43%	57%	100%	25%	75%	100%

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on our numerous attempts at collecting information, we can conclude the following:

1. We have identified a total of 60 HEIs that are currently teaching or researching in Development Studies. Future data collection efforts should consider these institutions as a potential universe. This universe could be sampled in different ways, depending on the goal of the study in question. If the DSA is interested in learning about the state of the sector, we would advise including some non-members of the DSA (if not all) in the final sample. The reason for this is that there may be hidden variables that affect the interest or possibility of a HEI to join the DSA, variables that might also generate a difference in their racial composition.
2. We identified three secondary data sources to assess the racial characteristics of the staff working in DS: HESA, REF and FOI requests. Although HESA and REF provided some data, it was plagued by issues that rendered it invalid. There are two leading causes for this:
    a. The CC and UoA "Anthropology and Development studies", by mixing the two disciplines, can create considerable confusion when interpreting the data.
    b. Both CCs nor UoA are related to where the staff is administratively located in the university system rather than their actual occupation. This is particularly problematic in DS, given its transdisciplinary nature.
3. FOIs were not a suitable source of information either. The HR systems in the university were unable to share data due to:

    a. Privacy violations concerns
    b. Non-existence of such data in the university's systems.
4. Primary data collection through direct surveys has proven to be the most suitable strategy to gather the information of interest. Both Staff and HoCs surveys provided useable information.
5. Nevertheless, the response rate of the Staff survey was low. Additionally, since the respondents are more likely to be people of colour, not because they are a larger percentage of the population, but because they are more interested in the topic, it has the potential to portray an artificially more diverse picture.
6. The pilot has shown the need to make some changes in the strategy to get more responses. We suggest the following:
    a. Send the survey at a more appropriate time. Neither at the beginning nor at the end of term, when staff are more likely to be busy with their current responsibilities. This will generate a better spontaneous response.
    b. Follow up on the original request. We propose two reminders, one week and two weeks after the first email. Close the data collection one month after it was opened.
    c. The alternative of offering additional compensation (e.g., gift card draw) should be considered if the budget allows.
7. We advise maintaining both sources of information. Each has different biases; the data triangulation between the Staff and HoC survey is more likely to produce more accurate results.
8. The HoC survey is likely to be used as is. However, some improvements to the Staff survey could be made. We suggest the following:
    a. Change the Race question from five to nineteen alternatives, as present in the 2021 census. This will provide much more precise information.
    b. Considering how short the survey is, a couple of additional questions could be included to collect more information on the topic. A few of the following ones could be added to the instrument:
        i. Demographic
            1. Age
            2. Area of interest (Create a closed list of DS topics).
        ii. Evaluation
            1. Personal assessment of racial equality and inclusion in the discipline (Rank from 1-10).
            2. Personal assessment of racial equality in the institution (Rank from 1-10).
        iii. Lived experience
            1. Main issues faced by people of colour in the sector (Create a series of frequently encountered problems in the industry and have the respondents rank them in order of importance or frequency, depending on the interest).
            2. Indirect experiences of discrimination (Likert scale of frequency).
            3. Direct experiences of discrimination (Likert scale of frequency).