

2.7 Variations on the MDP Curriculum

The MDP curriculum outlined in this report is not intended to be a “one-size-fits-all” degree program. Host institutions may develop specific variations of the curriculum to fit within the local context or the academic culture of participating universities. For example, academic institutions may modify the MDP curriculum to incorporate a regional focus, to include a discipline-based specialization, or to provide complementary skill training within a specialized program of study. Any variation, however, should be anchored in the core competencies outlined earlier in this report.

Regional Variations

Consultations with academic institutions from around the world have confirmed support for the creation of distinct, regionally-focused MDP “hub” programs. The function of the regional MDP hubs would be two-fold: they would be able to pool academic and financial resources to support the MDP program, and at the same time they would establish themselves as regional centers of expertise in sustainable development.

For instance, in Africa and in Southeast Asia, regional education centers could be formed to draw together academic and financial resources from throughout the region to ensure that the MDP students have access to the range of academic disciplines and educational activities that are central to the overarching goals of the MDP program.

In other cases, universities may draw upon region-specific knowledge to design their MDP curriculum. For example, the University of Central Asia plans to include a focus on mountain communities within the MDP curriculum to address the particular conditions and challenges to development faced by indigenous communities living in mountainous regions. Similarly, Mekelle University in Ethiopia plans to build an MDP curriculum with a particular focus on dry-land agriculture and development. Likewise, University of São Paulo in Brazil has expressed its interest in an MDP curriculum with a focus on sustainable development within the Amazon.

Specialized Programs

In addition to the regional variations on the MDP degree, some students may wish to pursue a specialization in a specific field. While the two-year program outlined in this report provides rigorous training for generalist sustainable development practitioners, students may also have the option of enrolling in an extended (i.e. 32-month) program that would allow deeper study of a chosen area.

Specialized programs may be based on concentrations in a particular field

of development (i.e. agriculture, economics, engineering, environment or health), or they may focus on a particular region. Students with a regional focus would be required, if possible, to spend their final semester enrolled at a partner MDP program within that region (e.g., students with the “Central Asia and Mountain Communities” concentration would complete one semester of study at the University of Central Asia, participating in classes and field experiences relevant to their specialization).

Condensed MDP Programs to Complement Specialized Degree Programs

An abbreviated version of the MDP curriculum may be offered to students pursuing specialized degrees in relevant development fields. Such programs would include core coursework in the MDP disciplines to complement Doctoral- and Master’s-level programs in fields such as public health, medicine, agriculture, economics, environmental science, and other core fields of sustainable development. By incorporating the “development practice” focus within a specialized degree program, students would have the opportunity to round out their skill set, enabling them to successfully work across disciplines to coordinate interventions.