

University of New England, Australia

A History of the Peace Studies Discipline

This report documents the history of Peace Studies at the University of New England (UNE), Australia. The growth and development of Peace Studies at UNE occurred in three stages: a formative stage, 1970s-1980s; a growth stage, 1990 – 2007; and its current stage, from 2008 onward. The information presented in this report is based on interviews conducted with people who were and are involved in teaching and research in Peace Studies at UNE.

Formative state, 1970s and 1980s

The history of Peace Studies at UNE dates back to the late 1970s. Credit for the initiation of Peace Studies at the UNE goes to Dr. Bernard Swan, a Geographer who had specialised in Geomorphology and Issues of Underdevelopment in South and Southeast Asia, but who later found himself drawn to the academic study of and teaching Peace. Bernard Swan, whose prior specialisations were in Geography (Universities of Ceylon, London and Sussex), joined the Department of Geography at the UNE in 1971. It was the period when the world's superpowers were engaged in escalating the Cold War, the nuclear arms race and nuclear deterrence, and intensifying brinkmanship, which earlier had led to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the imminent threat of nuclear war. Looming nuclear holocaust and the Vietnam War had witnessed the growth of the Peace Movement and much intellectual debate about peace. However, the response of academe was limited. In the words of Bernard Swan, "In the late 1970s it struck me as surprising that the subject of Peace was not examined as such in secular academic institutions."

Bernard Swan realised that academics and universities had an important role to play, seeking answers to the question, "What is Peace? What are its paths?" So he wrote a letter to the National Times of Australia (25 May 1980) entitled "Needed: the Academic Study of Peace", where he warned that:

...Academia, the world over, has this essential task ahead, a responsibility it must not shirk. If we continue, mesmerised by threat of doomsday, or ostrich-like assume that if problems are ignored long enough they will...disappear, we could expect to find ourselves one day hapless pawns in some hellish chess. Academia, please, no longer stand aloof.

His plea was well received by the media, the public and academics, who supported the idea of peace. Bernard Swan checked widely to ascertain which universities and academic communities within the British Commonwealth of Nations were conducting teaching and research on Peace. He found four: Bradford and Lancaster in the UK, Waterloo in Canada, and the Gandhian Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in Allahabad, India, were all engaged in peace related research and teaching in the late 1970s. But South of the Tropic of Cancer, none of the academic institutions had undertaken the study of peace as such. Of course, there were many centres for Strategic Studies, War Studies, International Studies, and so on, but the study of Peace was deemed to be too nebulous, too wide in its scope, and indeed too threatening to the National Interest for secular universities to undertake it. According to Bernard Swan, "As for the peace spoken of in religion, that was a pie in the sky."

Nonetheless, he decided otherwise and decided to face the challenges ahead. The first was to ascertain whether any of his colleagues within the Department of Geography would be

interested in getting involved in a programme of Peace Studies. The next was to decide on the content of such a programme. The third was to avoid asking for money in an environment where there was acute competition for limited financial resources. The fourth would be to get the go-ahead from the top decision-makers of the University who were committed to ensuring high standards of teaching and to preserving existing academic structures (Faculties, Departments and insistence on students satisfying prerequisites in order to follow particular courses): to obtain the approval of the Academic Advisory Committee which whetted applications to introduce new courses, and of the Academic Board on which sat the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

While many applauded the idea of Peace Studies, few could make a commitment to it. There was also the question of who could and would make a commitment to a course with the word 'peace' in it, as a course about peace was assumed to be likely to have leftist sympathies. Bernard Swan proceeded in the following way. He offered to put on a unit entitled "Geography of Peace and Conflict" in addition to his existing workload. After considerable debate, he received the green light from within the Department of Geography, but the Academic Advisory Committee and the Academic Board turned down his proposal.

Good news, however, was that within the Faculty of Arts, a Special Reading Course could be made available to fourth year students (postgraduates) reading for an Honours degree, without formal approval from the Academic Board. Bernard Swan quickly capitalised on this. As a result, in 1982 he offered the unit "Geography of Peace and Conflict" as a Special Reading Course in the Faculty of Arts. A condition imposed on him was that the course should be given no formal publicity: advertisement would only be by word of mouth. The condition did not preclude him starting the unit. This formally marked the beginnings of Peace Studies at the UNE in 1982.

The next undertaking was the introduction of a Bachelor of Peace Studies degree. Bernard Swan's idea here was to have a set of compulsory core courses, and in addition optional subsidiary courses drawn from several departments and faculties, from whose prerequisites (courses as laid down in the University Calendar) those reading for a BA in Peace Studies would be exempt. Contributors to the core of Peace Studies in its formative stage were Dr. Geoff Harris from the Faculty of Economics (he is currently a professor and head of the Peacebuilding Programme at Durban University of Technology), Dr. Toh Swee Hin (currently professor of Peace Studies at the UN Mandated University of Peace in Costa Rica) and Dr. Max Lawson (both were from the Faculty of Education). Geoff Harris offered a unit titled "Economics of Developing Countries". Toh Swee Hin taught a unit "Peace Education" and Max Lawson offered a unit "Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution". Later, other faculty members also contributed. For instance, Howard Brasted from the department of History (currently professor in the School of Humanities at UNE) offered a unit on Gandhi while Raja Jayaraman offered a unit on the "Sociology of Non-violence". Another unit, offered in History, was titled 'The Swinging Sixties'.

Thus, with the combined offerings of different departments, Peace Studies at UNE became highly interdisciplinary, straddling diverse departments and faculties. Thus commenced the opportunity for those who wished to read towards a Bachelor of Arts (BA) majoring in Peace Studies. This was from around the mid-1980s within the Faculty of Arts. The structure of the university at that time was based on departments. Therefore, different departments had to waive prerequisites for students who wanted to join BA with a Peace Studies major. This they graciously did.

The next step was to have Peace Studies available for students reading for higher degrees (Master of Letters, and doctoral degrees). Bernard Swan put this proposal before the Faculty of Arts in 1991, which accepted it. He then retired, but retained his commitment to offer the unit "Geographies of Peace" to M. Litt. students. The M. Litt. was a two year programme, consisting of a core course, supplementary courses in the first year, and a written thesis on a topic approved by an appointed supervisor in the second year and attendance at a residential school.

Though progress was made in establishing Peace Studies at UNE, in the mid 1980s it suffered a setback. For financial reasons the university asked the department of Geography to get rid of courses which were not part and parcel of essential teaching in geography. In response, the then Vice-Chancellor, in conjunction with the Head of Department of Geography, abolished the "Geography of Peace and Conflict" course. In the meantime, the Faculty of Arts was changing, in terms of its business model as well as its approach to the field of studies. While the Faculty was more interested in generating money and resources, it was also more interested to include subjects from the field of 'Liberal Studies'. As a consequence, the BA degree with a single major in Peace Studies was also dropped.

Growth stage, 1990 - 2007

In early 1991, Bernard Swan was preparing to retire (in stages). He went part-time, relinquishing his commitment to Geography but retaining his commitment to Peace Studies ("Geographies of Peace"). He approached Geoff Harris and asked him to coordinate Peace Studies units being offered as part of the Master of Letters (M.Litt.) degree.

Geoff Harris devised the plan of using beefed up versions of the BA in Peace Studies units, together with some new units, to make up an M.Litt. in Peace Studies. This did not require extra resources for the expertise and readings were almost ready from the units offered in BA in Peace Studies.

The new School of Arts approved the course so that the M.Litt. with a major in Peace Studies was launched in 1991. The degree consisted of four units of coursework each requiring essays totalling 7500 words, and another four units consisted of a dissertation of 20,000 words.

Many students commented that when they heard about the M. Litt. in Peace Studies, they realised that this was the degree for which they had been searching for a long time. The M. Litt. programme became highly popular among students for many reasons. First, students only spent time at UNE in Armidale twice during the course, first at the start of their coursework and finally for the dissertation. This provided working students flexibility in terms of their time management. Second, the programme was inter-disciplinary, focused on broader aspects of Peace Studies covering Peace Education, Nonviolence, Economic Dimensions of Peace and Conflict, Peacekeeping, and Conflict Resolution. The programme attracted students from a broad field including those from government, non-government organisation, medical and religious professions, humanitarian workers and those engaged with charities, the business sector and development. Geoff Harris recalled that a number of students chose dissertation topics that helped them "make sense" of what they had done earlier in their lives, for instance, time spent as an aid worker in contexts where conflict and violence were rife.

As Peace Studies was becoming increasingly popular, there were other important developments in terms of the programme's growth. Firstly, the Centre for Peace Studies was officially formed in 1995. It was a virtual centre, which started coordinating teaching and research in Peace Studies. Secondly, the first cohort of PhD students was admitted in 1993. The first batch of

PhD students in Peace Studies included four students, Julienne Kaman, Kate Dewes, Rebecca Spence and Mark Lawrence. All of them graduated in 1996 under the supervision of Geoff Harris.

A focus of the Centre in the late 1990s was how countries recover from armed conflict, and two major publications appeared in 1999. One was *Recovery from Armed Conflict in Developing Countries* (Routledge: London), edited by Geoff Harris and including significant contributions from Neryl Lewis (now a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Rebecca Spence. Another was *Building Peace in Bougainville*, edited by Geoff Harris, Naihuwo Ahai and Rebecca Spence, which was an outcome from a conference on Bougainville organised by the Centre for Peace Studies. Similarly, Geoff Harris edited the volume titled *Achieving Security in Sub-Saharan Africa: Cost effective alternatives to the military* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies). In 2005, Helen Ware published a volume titled *The No-Nonsense Guide to Conflict and Peace* (New Internationalist, reprinted in 2006 by Oxford) in which she contributed as an editor and a chief contributor. Bert Jenkins co-edited (with H. Hakema and P. Ninnes) a book titled *NGOS and Post-Conflict Recovery: The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Bougainville* (Asia Pacific Press 2006).

The Centre for Peace Studies was running with very limited resources while its activities were supported by staff from other departments who worked on peace teaching and supervision almost voluntarily as an addition - on top of their usual workload. Some part-time staff were occasionally added who were paid by using a share of the fees paid by foreign PhD students in Peace Studies (the fees paid by foreign PhD students were the only university funds provided to Peace Studies at that time). According to Geoff Harris, the weakness of this arrangement was evident when staff retired or moved elsewhere, when replacements were hard to find. Although more than 100 students completed the M. Litt. with a Peace Studies major between 1991 and 1999, the programme was finding it hard to survive. A major challenge in this regard, according to Geoff Harris, was that:

the bureaucracy of a changing Faculty of Arts, were not able to appreciate the benefits of 10-12 graduates per annum at virtually no cost to the Faculty and who were distressed by the fact that students entered the M. Litt in Peace Studies without a first degree in the discipline (because there were [and are still] no such degrees in Australia).

A frequently mentioned concern about Peace Studies during the 1990s was that it depended too much on an individual. As Geoff Harris states, he was frequently asked questions such as "What would happen if you [Geoff] fell under a bus?" There was no offer to provide any administrative or other support, so the concern rang a bit hollow. Geoff Harris recalled this experience:

Apart from being very careful in the vicinity of buses, I didn't see there was much alternative than to continue doing the administrative work largely on my own and am pleased to report that around a hundred students completed Master's degrees in Peace Studies during the 1990s. A parallel argument expressed concern about the sustainability of the programme if I was to leave; in the event, I took a long time to leave and when I did, the way opened for an expansion of the programme.

A new Dean in the Faculty of Arts was appointed in 1999. One of the first actions of the dean was to terminate the M.Litt. in Peace Studies on grounds that it did not fit nicely into any of the existing Faculty's disciplinary combinations of permissible courses. However, the dean was happy to support the move of the programme to another Faculty if one was willing to take it on. Geoff Harris discussed with the Dean of Education about a possibility to move M.Litt. in

Peace Studies to the Faculty of Education. Considering the number of students enrolled in the M. Litt., the Dean agreed to take on the programme. The Faculty of Education agreed to take over the programme one day after the Faculty of Arts had rejected it. Thus the M. Litt. in Peace Studies moved to the Faculty of Education in 1997. Dr. Rebecca Spence was appointed as a part time (50%) lecturer in Peace Studies to oversee and contribute to teaching and administration of the M.Litt. She brought an extraordinary amount of expertise, having grown up in Northern Ireland and worked in South Africa during the Apartheid regime; she would later work extensively across the Asia Pacific region with organisations such as AusAid. Bernard Swan meanwhile provided the unit on “Geography of Peace and Conflict” as part of the M. Litt. in Peace Studies course until he retired, and supervised Rev. Mark Lawrence through his doctoral studies until he obtained his PhD in 1999.

In the meantime, the M. Litt. degree was changed into a Master of Professional Studies. Geoff Harris left UNE as he had been offered a chair in Economics at the then University of Natal in South Africa for which he departed in August 1999. Rebecca Spence then took on the position of Coordinator of Peace Studies.

In 1993, Bert Jenkins, a lecturer in the department of Ecosystems Management, began supervising M.Litt. students in Peace Studies in their thesis components whenever there was environmentally-related peace project. He also allowed interested M.Litt. students to take a unit he was teaching on 'Resource Management in Developing Countries' in 1995. In 1996, Bert Jenkins moved to the department of Geography where he developed the unit for Peace Studies in "Environment, Development and Peace", which he was teaching till 1997 until he departed UNE to lecture at the University of Newcastle. His further involvement in Peace Studies resumed in 2002 when he was given the opportunity to teach in Peace Studies for the second half of the year when he was asked to replace Rebecca Spence while she was on maternity leave. Later Bert Jenkins got a full-time position as Senior Lecturer in Peace Studies, starting from January 2003. His background is in horticulture, environmental studies and development studies with significant experience working in the government and non-government sectors. His teaching covered the Introduction to Peace Studies, Environmental Security, and Conflict Transformation.

Between 2003 and 2007, Peace Studies was a sub-discipline in Professional Studies along with Aboriginal Studies and Intercultural Studies, with Bert Jenkins the Coordinator of Professional Studies in 2006 and 2007. During this time, the main degrees were Master of Professional Studies, Master of Professional Studies (Honours), Bachelor of Professional Studies - all of which had specialisations in Peace Studies, and also the BA and MA with majors in Peace Studies. During this period Peace Studies was a highly popular course with numbers of students growing significantly both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The degrees attracted police and military personnel, aid workers and bureaucrats, clergy, development practitioners and non-government organisation workers from Pacific Island countries like Fiji, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and also Australia. Given the growing success and popularity of Peace Studies among people with diverse backgrounds in the ‘Peace and Development’ arena, a new position for Professor in Inter-Agency Leadership was created and Helen Ware was appointed to this position in 2002.

This experience suggests that we just have to persist in the absence of certainty, funding and permanent posts. As Geoff Harris said, “A love for peace can overcome a wide range of impediments”.

Current period, 2008 to present

In 2007, UNE went through restructuring of its Faculties and Schools. As a result, in January 2008, Peace Studies was convinced to move from the School of Professional Development and Leadership in the Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies to the School of Humanities in the Faculty of Arts and Science where it was allowed to be a small discipline in its own right. However, this was followed by a few structural changes in the Peace Studies programme. First, the Centre for Peace Studies was dissolved. Second, the degrees in Professional Studies were discontinued in 2009, although there were still a few part time students finishing these degrees for several years afterwards. The main degrees in the programme were now the BA and MA with majors in Peace Studies, and the Bachelor of International Studies with a Major in Peace and Development.

Despite these changes, the Peace Studies programme diversified on many counts: expertise and specialisation of faculty members increased while there was diversity of PhD students. Similarly the programme's outreach and visibility thorough academic and extracurricular activities also increased as discussed below.

Helen Ware joined the discipline in 2006 as a Professor in Peace Studies (part-time) which added to the existing expertise in Peace Studies. Having a diverse academic background of being an historian, a sociologist, a demographer, a human rights advocate, an aid bureaucrat and a diplomat (Australian High Commissioner to Zambia and Malawi and Australian Ambassador to Angola), she became the chair of the Peace Studies programme at UNE. Her teaching areas included Peacebuilding (including issues related to infrastructures for peace and attacks upon neo-liberalism), Post-Conflict Justice, and Australia's Treatment of Refugees. She also supervised many PhD Students form Africa and Asia Pacific. Her research interests include African development, hybridity (forms of government which mix Western models with non-Western traditions), the roles of governments and governance in maintaining peace, transitional justice (especially the impact of the International Criminal Court, and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions) and trends and differentials in Aboriginal mortality and morbidity (especially in urban areas and New South Wales).

Bert Jenkins became Convenor of the discipline of Peace Studies in the School of Humanities in 2008. Bert's academic interests are interdisciplinary with a strong focus on peace education in Bougainville, where issues in peace, the environment and development coincide. He also has expertise in civil society agency within the environmental sector. Thus, with his focus on environmental issues, in the mid 2000s Peace Studies began to incorporate the topic of Environmental Peace. In 2010 in collaboration with another faculty member, Marty Branagan, Bert Jenkins designed a new Master of Environmental Advocacy (MEA) degree, to address growing concerns about global warming and destructive mining practices that exacerbated the effects of climate change. The creation by Marty Branagan of a special collection for Peace Studies in Dixson Library - "Armidale Environment Centre Archives" - along with hundreds of books and documentaries ordered for the library by staff and postgraduates has added to the resources available for research in Peace Studies.

Marty Branagan had been involved in Peace Studies as a casual academic since 2003. He completed a PhD supervised by Rebecca Spence and Bob Boughton in 2005. In 2010 he became a part-time faculty member, and became the Convenor of Peace Studies in August 2015. Since 2010, he has been teaching into the MEA course within Peace Studies, which in 2014 changed into a Master of Arts (MA) with an Environmental Advocacy major. Similarly, Rebecca Spence continued her dedicated engagement with Peace Studies as a part-time lecturer

and supervising Masters by Research and PhD students before moving to work elsewhere in the university.

In the Humanities, the main focus of Peace Studies has been in association with the Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of International Studies (BIS), the Bachelor Social Science and the M. Phil. with majors in Peace Studies. It was in the Humanities era that Peace Studies grew its PhD program and this is still strong today. With students coming from Africa, Asia (including the Arab States, South Asia and South East Asia), Europe, the Pacific Island countries, the USA and Australia, Peace Studies continues to attract exceptional numbers of PhD students in the new School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

The topics covered by current and past PhD students in Peace Studies are diverse, including Peace Education; Peacekeeping; Regional peace and security architecture; Religion, identity and conflict; Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); Security governance and peacebuilding; Civil society and peacebuilding; Natural resource and conflict; Revolution and regime change; Gender and peacebuilding; Governance and peace; Conflict and displacement; Transitional justice, reconciliation and peacebuilding; War, conflict and refugees; Human rights; Civil-military relations; Environmental security and peace; Non-violence; Arts, culture and peace; Infrastructures for peace; and Statebuilding. Vanessa Bible (completed 2015) and Johanna Garnett (2016) were both awarded the Chancellor's Doctoral Medal for their theses.

Various publications and activities further increased visibility of the discipline. In 2013, Bert Jenkins co-authored (with K. Jenkins, K. and L. Cornish) the book *A Peace Education Curriculum for Bougainville* (Open Knowledge Network, University for Peace Press, Costa Rica). In 2014, Marty Branagan published a book *Global Warming, Militarism and Non-Violence: The Art of Active Resistance* (London: Palgrave MacMillan 2013).

With regard to academic activities, in May 2012, an international Peace Studies conference, titled "Cultivating Peace" was organised by PhD students, led by DB Subedi. About 30 scholars from Asia, Africa, Australia and the Pacific region presented their papers. Selected papers from the conference culminated into a volume *Cultivating Peace: Contexts, Practices and Multidimensional Models*, edited by Peace Studies faculty members and published by Cambridge Scholars Publications in June 2014. In 2013, another conference titled "Mining in Sustainable World" was organised by Marty Branagan, other UNE academics, and Peace Studies PhD students Johanna Garnett and Vanessa Bible, to help address the rise in mining-related conflict. Selected papers presented in the conference were published in a special edition of the *International Journal of Rural Law and Policy*. In August 2015, another Peace Studies Conference titled "Questioning 'peace formation' and 'peace infrastructure'" was organised by a recent PhD graduate, Paddy Tobias and others. A total of 35 papers were presented in the conference. Selected papers from the conference were published in a special issue of *Peace and Conflict Review*.

In 2009, Marty Branagan organised the first Nonviolence Film Festival, which grew out of his unit on "Active Resistance: Contemporary Nonviolence". Since then, the Nonviolence Film Festival has become a regular annual activity of the Peace Studies programme, exploring nonviolent methods of resistance, protest and conflict transformation. Dozens of films, primarily documentaries from around the world about significant nonviolent movements, have been shown, attended by hundreds of viewers both from the university community and outside.

In 2015, the Nonviolence Film Festival moved to the Oorala Centre where Aboriginal people were also actively involved.

In February 2009, Marty organised a summer course titled “Nonviolence Social Change in the Contemporary World”. In 2011, he organised an “Open Space Environmental Forum”, in 2013 a “Coal Seam Gas Forum” featuring MP Tony Windsor, and co-organised with the Asia Pacific Centre, Japanese and the Peace Boat organisation a 2021 online seminar “Nuclear Weapons after the Ban: Remembering Nagasaki” with attendees from Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Afghanistan and China. In 2020 Peace Studies staff and students organised the conference *Rethinking Peace, Conflict and Governance* (12-15 February, UNE’s Parramatta Campus). To celebrate the 40 year anniversary of Peace Studies, they are currently organising a conference titled “Environmental and Sustainable Peace, Social Justice and Creative Activism” (1-5 December 2022), featuring Nobel Peace Prize winner Gem Romuld from the International Campaign To Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and the Costa Rican Ambassador Vargas Araya.

These conferences, forums and extra-curricular activities have not only contributed to the visibility of Peace Studies programme at UNE but also have helped in providing leadership opportunities for higher degree research students. At the same time, these have also made significant contribution in diversifying the focus of Peace Studies research and academic engagements.

The Peace Studies programme has also recognised by the public. With the generous support of Boomsma family, the Dirk Boomsma Bursaries are available to cover fees for domestic students or full fees for international students to study a Peace Studies unit. To apply for the Bursaries, students must be enrolled in undergraduate or post-graduate degrees at UNE and must demonstrate a strong commitment and passion for Peace Studies.

In last three decades, the nature of conflict and security (local, regional and international) has drastically changed. The 1990s experienced a decline in inter-state wars but an upsurge in intra-state war and violence, while the new millennium has experienced conflict and security threats emerging from identity and ethnic conflict, religious and sectarian violence, extremism and terrorism, and the dangerous nexus between conflict, security and development. Global warming and the biodiversity extinction crisis – resulting from a profound lack of environmental peace - are also fundamentally changing our world, as are nonviolent movements for peace, social justice and environmental sustainability. The shift in the dynamics and patterns of conflict has simultaneously called for a rethinking and defining of how peace can be achieved in the contemporary world. In this context, current and past PhD students opine that being Australia's one of the oldest institutions specialising in peace-related teaching and research, Peace Studies at UNE has an opportunity to place itself as one of the leading Peace Studies institutions in the Asia-Pacific. It would require defining the institution's niche in Peace Studies (as opposed to Peace and Conflict studies) and also to incorporate new areas of teaching and research that would attract students, practitioners and civil society workers engaged in the fields of peace, social justice, environmentalism, conflict and security in the region. This means that, in addition to a current focus on training students in teaching and research, programmes and curricula aiming to strengthen the practice of building peace could attract practitioners and practitioners-to-be of peacebuilding and conflict transformation from Australia and beyond. Units such as those on environmental peace and nonviolent action have already shown that students appreciate empowering, solutions-oriented units rooted in real world experience; these are “an absolutely crucial part of the ecology of social change” (UOW Professor Brian Martin).

One former PHD student, John Ahere, who graduated in 2020, writes: “I currently work in North Darfur with an organisation called Nonviolent Peaceforce, which aims to protect these vulnerable groups. I am in charge of implementation of a civilian protection program and work closely with communities and duty bearers to enhance local capacities and mechanisms for civilian-led protection from violence,” he says. John believes that courses like UNE’s peace studies program have an important role to play in creating a better world:

UNE’s Peace Studies program is essential, in order to continue to produce the graduates that the current world needs the most. At the moment, there are too few of us (peacebuilders) in a world that is not at peace.

However, while Peace Studies is being diversified and remains popular, especially amongst higher degree research students, the programme has faced many challenges stemming from reduced funding to the university sector, a doubling of fees for many students in the humanities, arts and social sciences, and consequent cuts of some units and degree offerings. Frequent restructures and changes at UNE, the COVID-19 pandemic, and management problems, such as the resignation of the Vice-Chancellor in 2022, have also presented problems, including an ongoing staffing shortfall and inadequate marketing of the discipline. However, Peace Studies at UNE, despite starting out of uncertainty and lack of institutional support and resources, has led to many satisfied graduates and erudite publications. While these quantitative measures of success are important, we will conclude this history with some qualitative measures – comments from Peace Studies students – because teaching students to think, and encouraging them to think broadly, creatively and compassionately, is surely the primary aim of universities.

Peace Studies is the most exciting, progressive, and transformative subject offered at UNE.

I love ♥ studying [Peace Studies](#) at UNE. We are so lucky to have access to a diverse range of subjects that explore global issues including human rights, the Climate Emergency, the refugee crisis, and mental health. I am particularly thankful for the academic staff who relate the material to real-world issues and inspire us to use what we learn to change the world for the better.

This unit really opened my eyes in so many ways and gave me a real sense of empowerment when so many things these days can make us feel quite powerless....

The most engaging and valuable units I have studied.

The most exciting, progressive, and transformative subject offered at UNE

Thanks for another excellent unit. How great it is to be able to get credit for a university level unit that teaches you to understand how to stand up and change the system rather than training you to become just another cog in that system.

The most fascinating and relevant material I have experienced at university so far.

Taught me so much and really changed the way I think and the choices I make fascinating and important.

I began studying history and switched to international studies due to a deep desire to make a change to this world, upon discovering peace studies I feel I have found a field I feel truly connected to morally, intellectually and maybe even spiritually. I think non-violence goes hand in hand with creating a more peaceful world. I believe that history, the social sciences, peace and environmental studies are THE most important areas of study in our world today because they teach people to think! In my opinion, we need more peacekeepers, philosophers and activists to repair the broken world we live in.

A very profound effect on my overall understanding and perspectives of the global community, and indeed shifted my worldview imperative. I knew immediately that I wanted to delve deeper into the concepts that affect global peace, not just from a western or anthropocentric view.

Thank you for a wonderful trimester I'm looking forward to using my newfound knowledge to make a difference, and using the environmental project to do so.

It was a journey of enlightenment and critical thinking. I now feel a heightened sense of responsibility for initiating change at a personal level, despite previously feeling powerless toward the bigger picture.

Very inspirational and enlightening.

Helped me to learn the power of nonviolence and how important it is to act, even in the smallest of ways, it gave me a bit of hope actually!

Very stimulating Unit; excellent resources recommended. A very timely Unit for this day and age when we face many world and life challenges. I would highly recommend this Unit to all age groups.

Lots of stimulating and engaging ideas.

Peace studies have enabled me to SEE the issues in our world that are acts of violence in a multitude of ways. I have begun to change my attitude and the way i communicate - even towards my neighbours or friends. I realise that if I have become 'aware' through studying Peace that other people could also become aware. Peace education could be the answer to a better society or world or relationship or government.. the list of possibilities is vast. I wanted to say thankyou for the enlightenment. I am treading more softly and appreciating how lucky I am.

Thanks for a stimulating, thought-provoking and down to earth unit.

To be truthful, it wasn't until I started Peace Studies at this uni did I really stop to realise that there were different and better ways to achieve peace. Now I've found this out I don't want to stop learning about peace because I really believe it's the key to our harmony and survival and I'm ever so grateful to be learning a different life pathway.

In my quest for this knowledge I tried many other subjects but have always come back to Peace studies because ultimately it asks the questions that resonate with me and encourages me to look in various places to find the answers that I am looking for.

I remember during my first Peace studies Unit that our teacher made a point of emphasising cooperation over competition among the students in our class which has stuck like glue with me ever since.

This experience has completely changed the way in which I live, and for that I am very thankful.

Such an interesting, provoking, eye-opening course.

Have not only changed the course of study, but all aspects of my life. This unit was another one that was fully engaging and relevant to daily living as it is now. A life that we could fully participate in and use the course information to make changes in our community.

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