

DSA Annual General Meeting Draft minutes: 28 June 2024

1. Welcome and Apologies (UK): Thanks were given by Uma Kambhampati (UK):

- To NomadIT for the exceptional work done throughout the year, particularly in organising the conference. Winfred Nyokabi, it was noted, was particularly integral to the latter and DSA is extremely grateful to Rohan Jackson, and to the whole NomadIT team, together with conference volunteers, for their hard work.
- To Michael Jennings, the conference convenor, for his leadership on the conference programme and on the conference's scientific committee.
- To the conference sponsors – SOAS (who provided discounted rates and funding towards attendance of some gS scholars), ODS, JDS, and JID, who sponsored keynote talks, and to DSA's publishing partner, OUP.
- To the executive committee, Shailaja Fennell, Rowena Harding, and Jonathan Fisher.
- To outgoing Council members Naila Kabeer and Ingrid Kvangraven, who have completed their terms on Council.

No apologies from Council were received.

Approval of Minutes from AGM 2023 (UK)

2. Approval of Minutes from AGM 2023 (UK): Minutes of AGM 2023 (hybrid, in Reading) were approved. These have been available online on the DSA [Governance webpage](#).

3. Treasurer's Report (SF): Shailaja Fennell presented the budget and offered thanks to NomadIT for their support in managing the Association's accounts.

Overall, DSA accounts and reserves are healthy, with a net income (as of FY end 31/01/24) of £2,103 and total funds carried forward of £136,243. DSA2024 was more expensive than DSA2023, though the Association is grateful for the discounted rates and gS bursaries SOAS provided. Future conferences are likely to be similar or more expensive given the cost of living crisis and rising costs across the board, and DSA will need to consider the implications of this. It was noted that over 60% of DSA members are based in the gS and that the Association strives to do even more to be inclusive of gS members with regard to finances. 44 bursaries were funded for gS-based members this year but with 400 applications, the Association welcomes ideas and initiatives which allow for further expansion of this.

The accounts were approved as presented, along with the appointment of Sterling Partners to prepare accounts for next year.

4. President's Report (UK): Uma Kambhampati presented her report (see documents in DSA website).

Objective 1: Advance Connections to Deepen Understanding of Development

Study Groups have been more active this year but could be even more active. It was emphasised that funding available is available from DSA to support activities for those groups who have not yet taken advantage of this opportunity.

One DSA webinar has been held so far this year – on Decolonising Development Studies and the African Charter on Transformative Research Collaborations. This webinar was convened by Eyob Gebremariam, though DSA webinars do not have to be convened by Council members only. DSA members were encouraged to contact Rowena Harding if they had any ideas for a webinar, though to please consider the lead-in time and effort required to bring successful webinars to fruition.

A joint DSA-EADI event (workshop) to mark the 50th anniversary of EADI was held earlier in the week on the theme of “Unity in Diversity: The Future of Development Studies” at King’s College London.

DSA2025 conference will be held at the University of Bath.

Objective 2: Raise Profile of the UK Development Studies Community and Provide a Platform for its Collective Voice

It was noted that a draft DSA Freedom of Academic Expression statement had been signed-off by Council. This will go live on the DSA website on 11/07/24 at 0900.

DSA continues to publish blogs on the website but would welcome more proposals and submissions for blogs from members.

Following the EDI audit, DSA put an application for funding into the Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS) to continue the work around career progression. DSA have secured a small amount of funding from AcSS to this end. Heads of Centre will be contacted for their engagement on this work and a report will be presented on it at DSA2025 AGM.

Objective 3: Build the Institutional Strength of DSA

It was emphasised that institutional members are key to the work DSA does, not only in relation to conferences but in regular engagement and exchange with the Association. Members were asked to continue encouraging their institutions to engage with DSA on relevant issues.

It was noted that there has been a more limited engagement with DSA and its events from scholars of development economics. Members were asked to encourage any development economists they know who are interested to consider setting up a DSA Study Group.

Objective 4: Nurture the Future of Development Studies Through Support to Students, ECRs, and HE Teachers.

The award of PhD and Masters prizes is key to what DSA does and winners will be congratulated later in the AGM (see Item 5). The DSA prize committee were thanked for their work in this area, particularly considering the significant time commitment involved.

DSA Council Student Representatives Zechariahs Benapugha Owutuamor and Sheila Ronoh were commended for re-energizing the student group.

Objective 5: Promote Greater EDI within the Development Studies Community.

Beyond the AcSS EDI project mentioned above, the successful South-South mentoring pilot project launched in 2022 was highlighted. Council are now considering the sustainability of this project beyond the pilot phase, and possible funding availability. It was also noted that 44 scholars based in the Global South had been funded to attend conference this year, partly by DSA, partly by sponsors (see Item 1).

It was noted that the DSA Decolonising Development Directory had now been launched and members were asked to please promote this initiative in their networks.

Membership

Membership continues to grow, with a large proportion (60%) in the form of (fee-waivered) Global South membership. Individual membership has increased, as has student membership, the latter partly through the very active work of DSA Council Student Representatives Zechariahs Benapugha Owutuamor and Sheila Ronoh. Institutional membership has also increased but some members have downgraded their membership this year owing to financial pressures.

The running of hybrid conferences since 2023 has led to increased participation, with SOAS being one of the biggest DSA conferences in recent years as a result. Hybrid conferences are more labour intensive, but do improve accessibility and reach.

Open Letter to President and DSA Council

An open letter entitled “Let’s talk about Palestine, DSA?” and addressed to the DSA President and Council (dated 25/06/24 and signed by a number of DSA members) was acknowledged by the President.

It was recognised and acknowledged that some members are concerned at what they perceive as DSA being silent on the on-going conflict and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Uma Kambhampati noted that she and Council were grateful to the original signatories for the specific advice offered and that she had met with them during conference and agreed a way forward. It was acknowledged that not all members would necessarily agree with DSA’s evolving approach and actions.

It was noted that DSA is a members’ organisation and that if members are not silent then DSA is not silent. Members are encouraged to work with DSA to raise awareness of the issue, for example, through convening webinars or proposing blog posts for the website. It was also highlighted that Council had discussed its approach to the evolving Gaza crisis in depth at every Council meeting since October 2023. It had resolved that it would be presumptuous to speak on behalf of all members on this issue and that it was not in favour of issuing a statement since developing one which sought to represent all members’ views would result in a bland and, ultimately, unhelpful contribution that made little difference. Council had resolved that DSA could make the most difference by amplifying the work and voices of its members through webinars, blogs, etc, and standing up for free academic expression, as it has in developing a Freedom of Academic Expression public statement and in writing to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology and Chief Executive of UKRI to protest the former’s criticism of comments made by two members of the UKRI EDI Advisory Board over comments in relation to the Gaza crisis and the ultimate suspension of the UKRI EDI Board.

Questions were then invited from members.

A number of members responded to the President's comments reported above on DSA's response to the Gaza crisis. These were framed as comments or suggestions:

Comment: Thank you for acknowledging the open letter and the issues it raises. Feel that there is room for further exploration of some areas, including the silencing effect of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. DSA could be of more help to its members in this area.

Comment: DSA is not a campaigning organisation and its actions on Gaza should play to its strengths, particularly showing solidarity with Palestinian organisations, scholars, and educators. Heads of Centre could potentially share more work being done by colleagues in this area for amplification by DSA.

Comment: The tension between academic freedom and the silencing effect of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism is a relevant issue for DSA, in terms of saying that DSA stands for certain values around observing international humanitarian law and we can see that these things are being violated. There should be a focus on the principles we are already espousing.

Comment: One member highlighted the link between the decolonisation work DSA is doing and issues pertaining to the Gaza crisis.

Comment: One member noted that the Canadian Political Science Association had moved keynote addresses for their congress off McGill University campus in response (inter alia) to McGill's treatment of encampments.

Comment: DSA's lobbying of the Secretary of State and UKRI Chief Executive, while appreciated, focused on the issue of academic freedom rather than Gaza.

On the latter comment, the President agreed with this assessment – that the key issue for DSA here was one of academic freedom.

With regard to the other comments, the President thanked members for their contributions and reassured them that these would inform continued Council discussions on the matter. Council has agreed that DSA will convene a discussion at the next Heads of Centre meeting regarding institutional responses to the Gaza crisis and whether there is more that can be done as a collective, particularly with regard to building and amplifying links with Palestinian scholars, educators, and students. Council had discussed the point around the IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism but come to the view that lobbying institutions on this matter is beyond the Council's resource capacity in terms of adding constructively to discussion on the issue.

Question: On the more limited engagement of development economists, could this perhaps be reframed as development and economy to make it more welcoming to a wider group of scholars?

The President confirmed that Development Economics is a key discipline when talking about development and DSA has had less engagement from scholars with this focus in recent years than previously. Ideas to address this, and outreach by members, very welcome.

5. PGT and PGR Prizes (UK and IR)

The Masters' dissertation prize was won by Anna Palma-Garcia from IDS for her MA thesis entitled "Co-Constructing Notions of Inclusion with Deaf Women in Colombia through Cooperative Inquiry". Mengjun Huang (ODID)'s MSc dissertation entitled "Pursuing "Freedom" in

Beijing's Urban Waste Economy: Desire, Becoming, and Loss of Rural Migrant Waste Workers in China" was Highly Commended by the DSA Prizes Committee. Both Anna Palma-Garcia (in-person) and Mengjun Huang (online) presented at conference.

The PhD thesis prize was won by Francesca Chiu from UEA for her PhD entitled "Transforming the Outskirts: Planning, Property and People in Urban Myanmar". Anna Colom Miras (Open University)'s PhD thesis entitled "Citizenship Capabilities and Instant Messaging in Western Kenya: An Intersectional Approach" was Highly Commended by the DSA Prizes Committee. Francesca Chiu presented in-person at conference. Unfortunately, the only panel where Anna Colom Miras's work would have fitted was full at the time her PhD was Highly Commended by the Committee.

Indrajit Roy announced that the Dudley Seers Prize – a cash prize awarded annually for the best article published in the Journal of Development Studies – was awarded jointly this year to the following articles:

- "Why Communities Participate in Malaria Elimination Projects: Case Studies from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia" by Yoriko Masunaga, Joan Muela Ribera, Thuan Thu Nguyen, Daniel H de Vries, and Koen Peeters Grietens (Vol 59, Issue 11, 2023). The jury commended the nuanced way in which the article analyses the different motivations communities have for participation in malaria prevention efforts and its combining of interviews with ethnographic work.
- "Impact of Air Pollution on Mental Health in India" by Uttara Balakrishnan and Magda Tsaneva (Vol 59, Issue 1, 2023). The jury was particularly impressed by the range and diversity of ways in which the authors addressed the central enquiry.
- "Too Close to Home: Photoelicitation with African Diasporic Communities, Ethical (Un) Preparedness, and the Importance of Critical Reflexivity in International Development Research" by Edward Ademolu (Volume 59, Issue 12, 2023) was Highly Commended by the Dudley Seers Prize Committee.

6. Nominations and Council Elections

The following nominations were received: Michael Jennings (2nd term), Indrajit Roy (2nd term).

3 new council members were also nominated: Claire Mcloughlin, Ibrahim Natil, Kamna Patel.

All 5 candidates were approved and unanimously voted onto Council, combining in-person and online votes.

7. Any Other Business

UK thanked Rohan Jackson for his tireless work for, and many contributions to, the Association, and presented him with a gift from DSA on the occasion of his retirement. UK wished him a happy retirement and noted that he will be sorely missed.

At the request of one member, Anna Palma-Garcia (DSA Masters Dissertation Prize Winner, 2024) led the AGM in speaking "open hearts and minds" in sign language, drawing on her research interactions with Deaf women in Colombia.

8. DSA2025 Conference will be held in June 2025 at the University of Bath – theme currently under discussion and TBC. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!