



Centre for Research
on Evaluation,
Science and Technology

EVALUATOR COMPETENCIES: CHALLENGES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES



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The nature of teaching in higher education has traditionally allowed independence. University professors typically have autonomy in what they teach and how they teach the classes they are assigned.

Yet if accreditation or certification is to become reality, we must come to a consensus on what evaluators should know, understand, and be able to do if they are to be designated as trained. Clearly, there is evidence that suggests the number of individuals receiving evaluation training is quite substantial. The issue of having candidates provide evidence of quality training and evaluation experience is and will continue to be a challenge for any credentialing organization

(Davies & MacKay 2014, p 427)



Converging elements



Some definitions



- Training: the process of bringing a person to an agreed standard of proficiency by practice and instruction
- Accreditation: the granting of approval to a training institution by a relevant official body
- Competencies: “the background, knowledge, skills, and dispositions program evaluators need to achieve standards that constitute sound evaluations” (CES 2010:2)
- Ethical guidelines: document which spells out principles that govern a person’s behaviour when conducting evaluations
- Employment demands: competency requirements of various types of organisations and sectors
- Standards: a rule or principle that is used as a basis for judgment – used to provide guidance for making decisions when conducting program, evaluation studies Stevahn et al., 2005, p.57)
- Professionalisation: make into or establish as a profession.



Modes of training



University programmes

Professional development
workshops

On-site training
opportunities

e-Learning

TRAINING



PGD MEM

- 5 modules
- Evaluation report

MPhil M&E

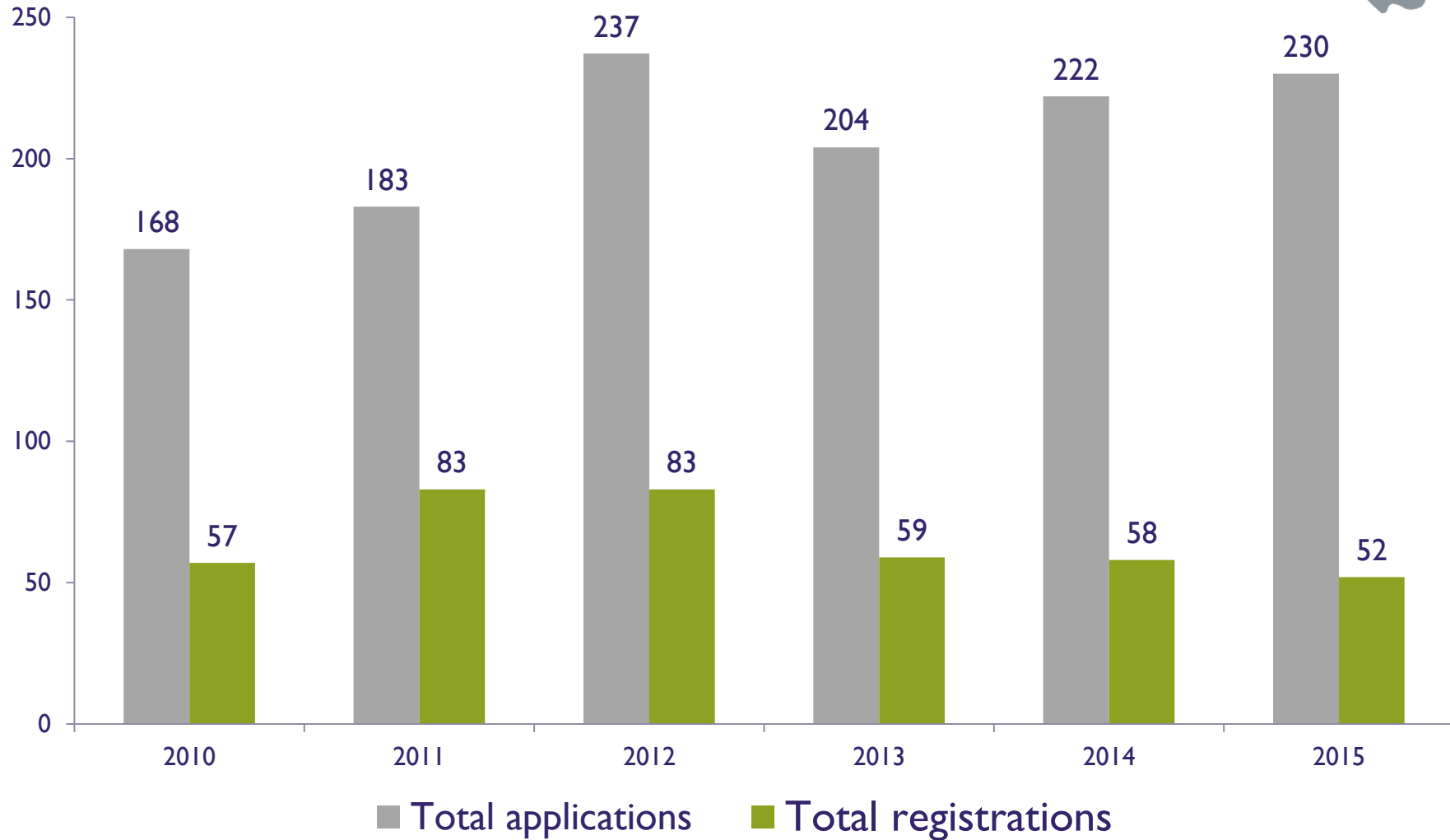
- 7 compulsory modules
- Elective
- Evaluation or research report

PhD in Evaluation Studies

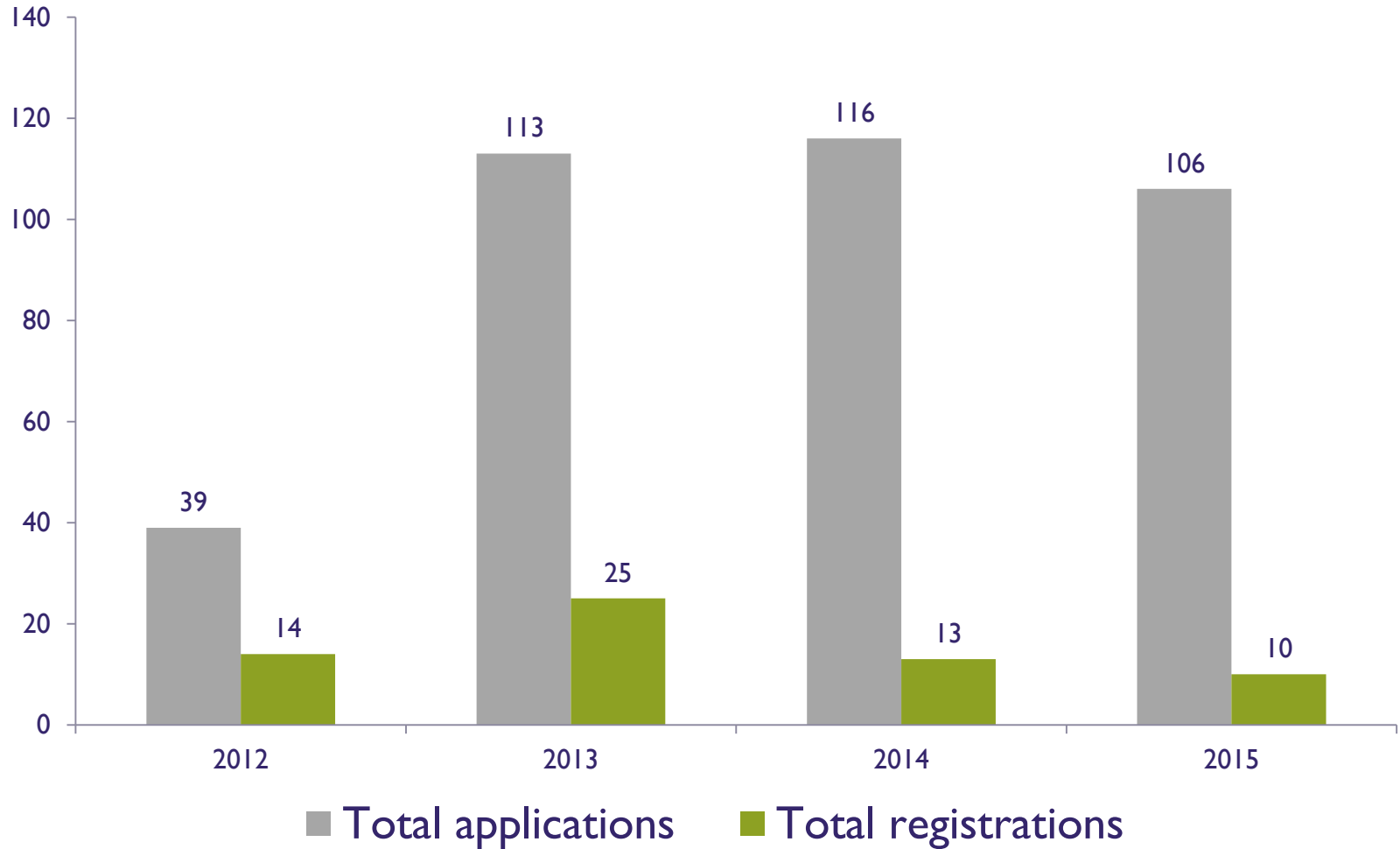
- 4 compulsory modules
- Thesis



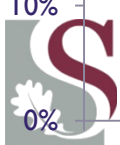
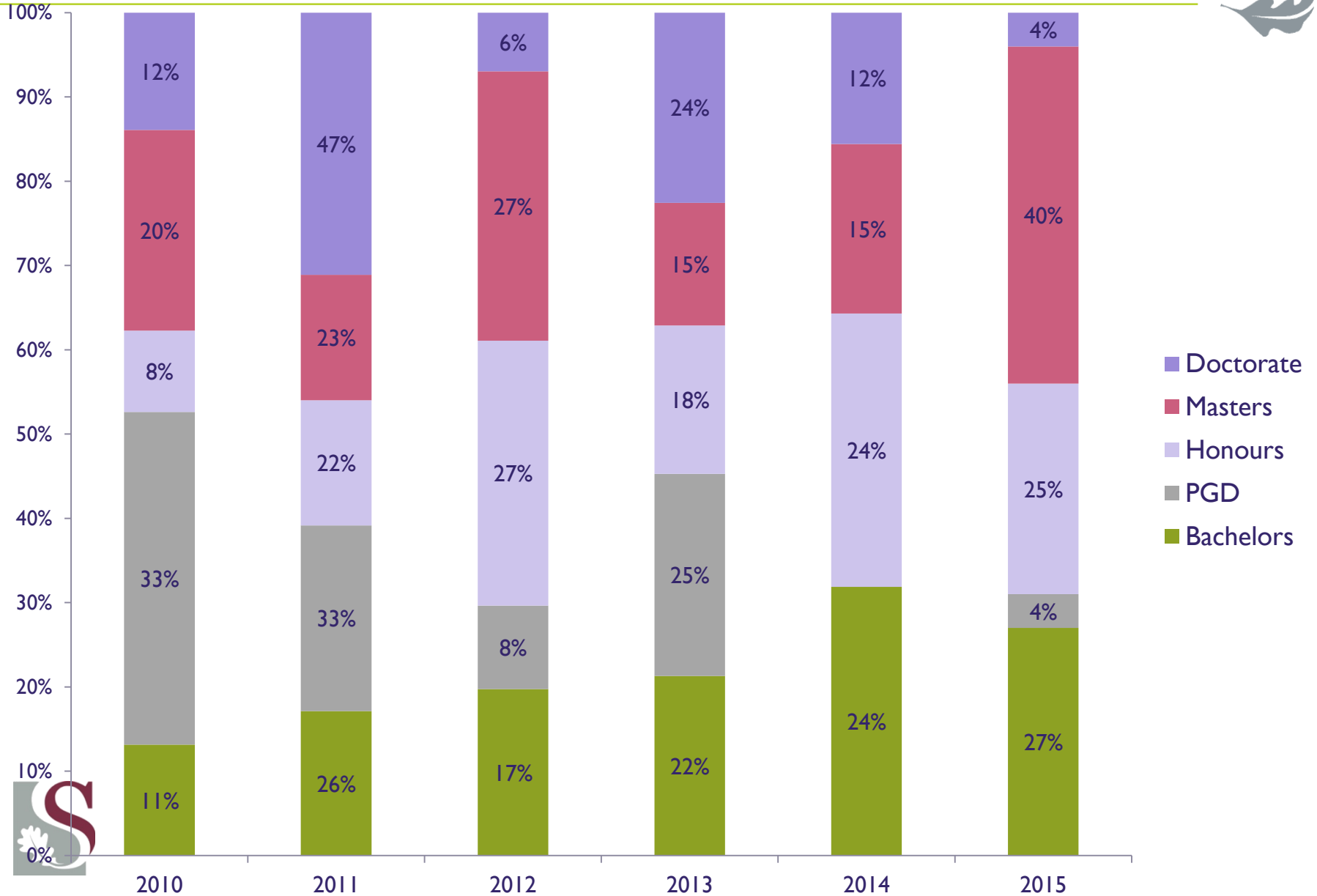
Steady increase in PGD MEM applications since 2010



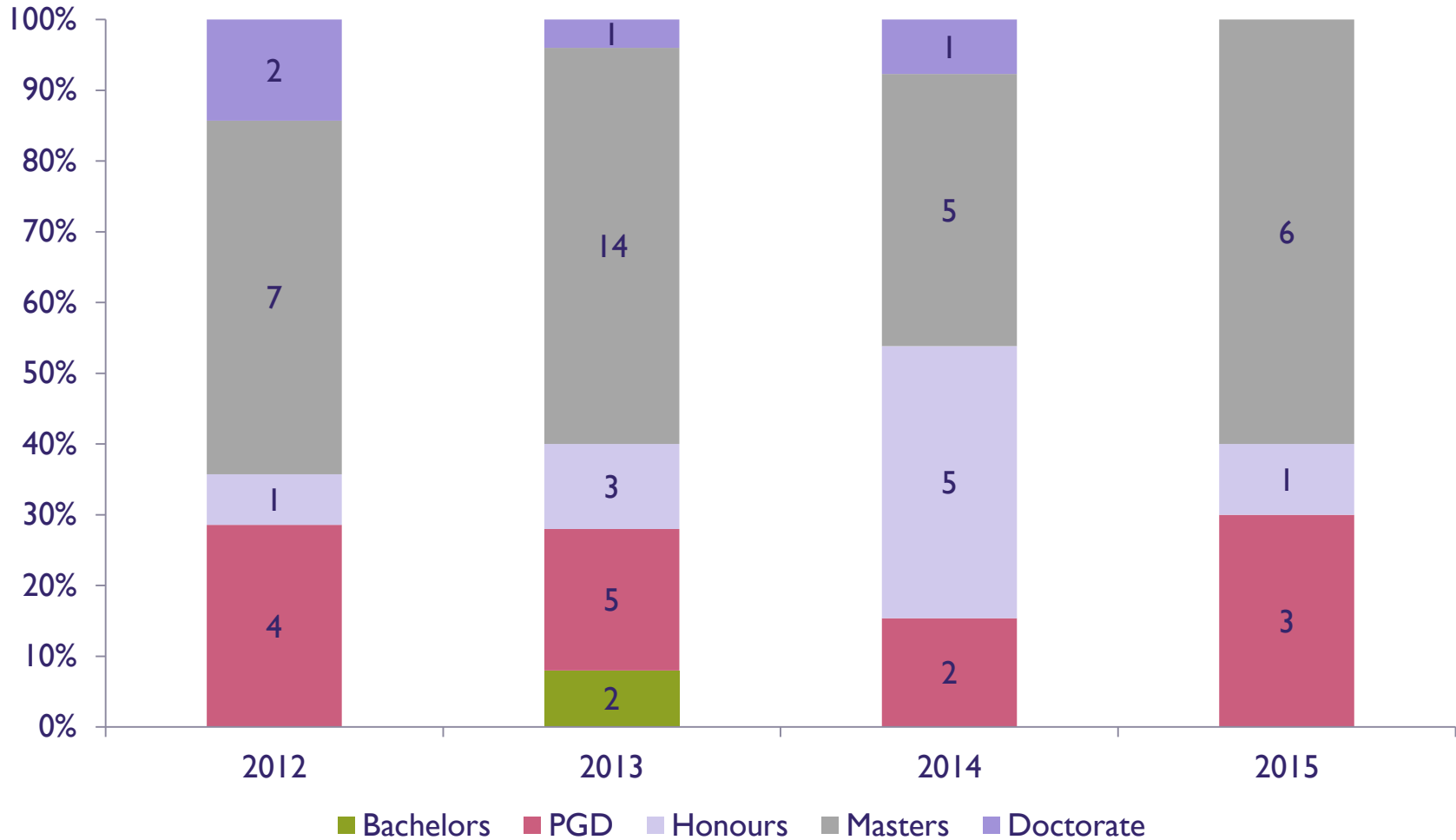
Discrepancy between applications and registrations



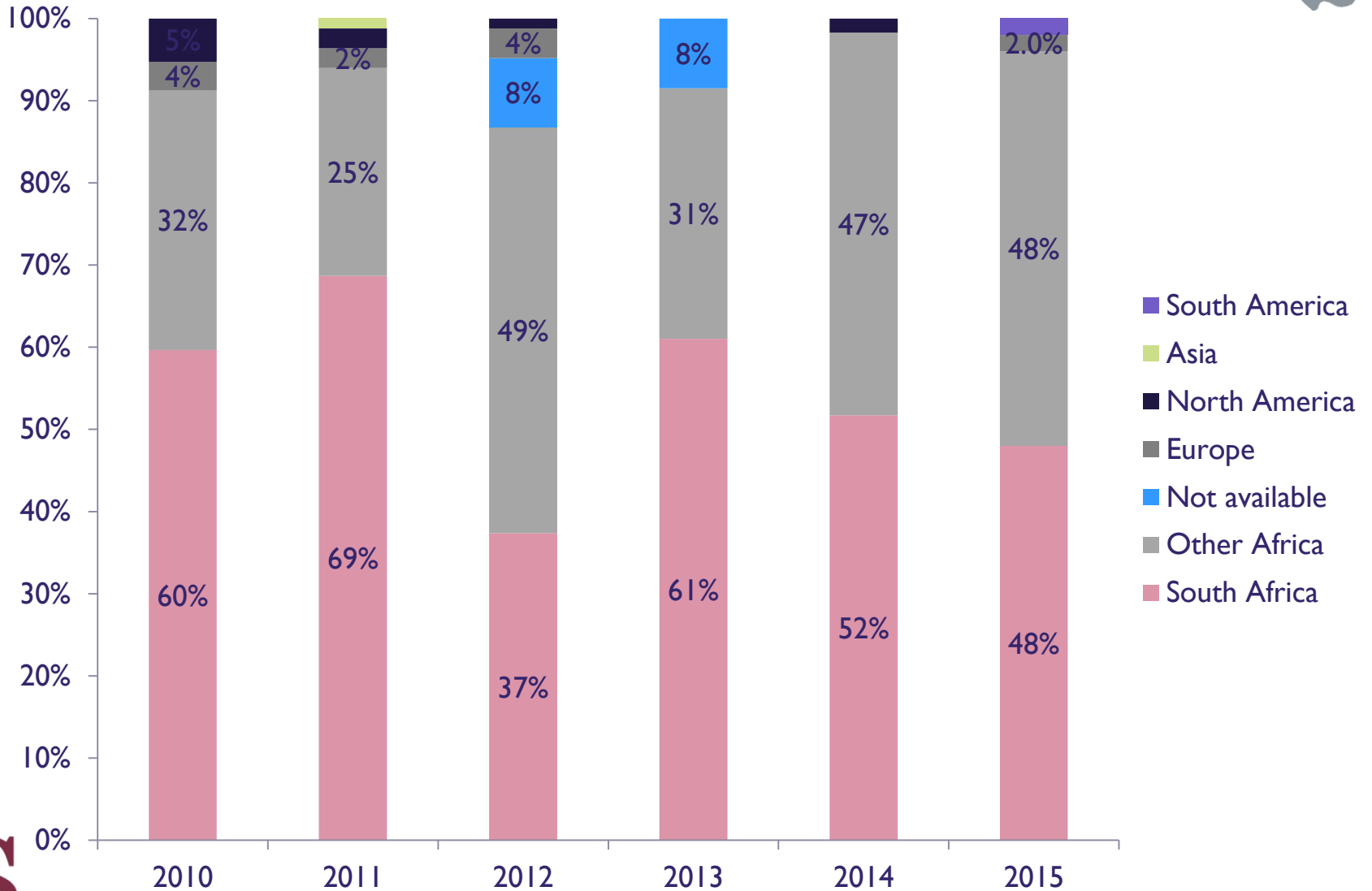
PGD MEM students are well qualified on entry



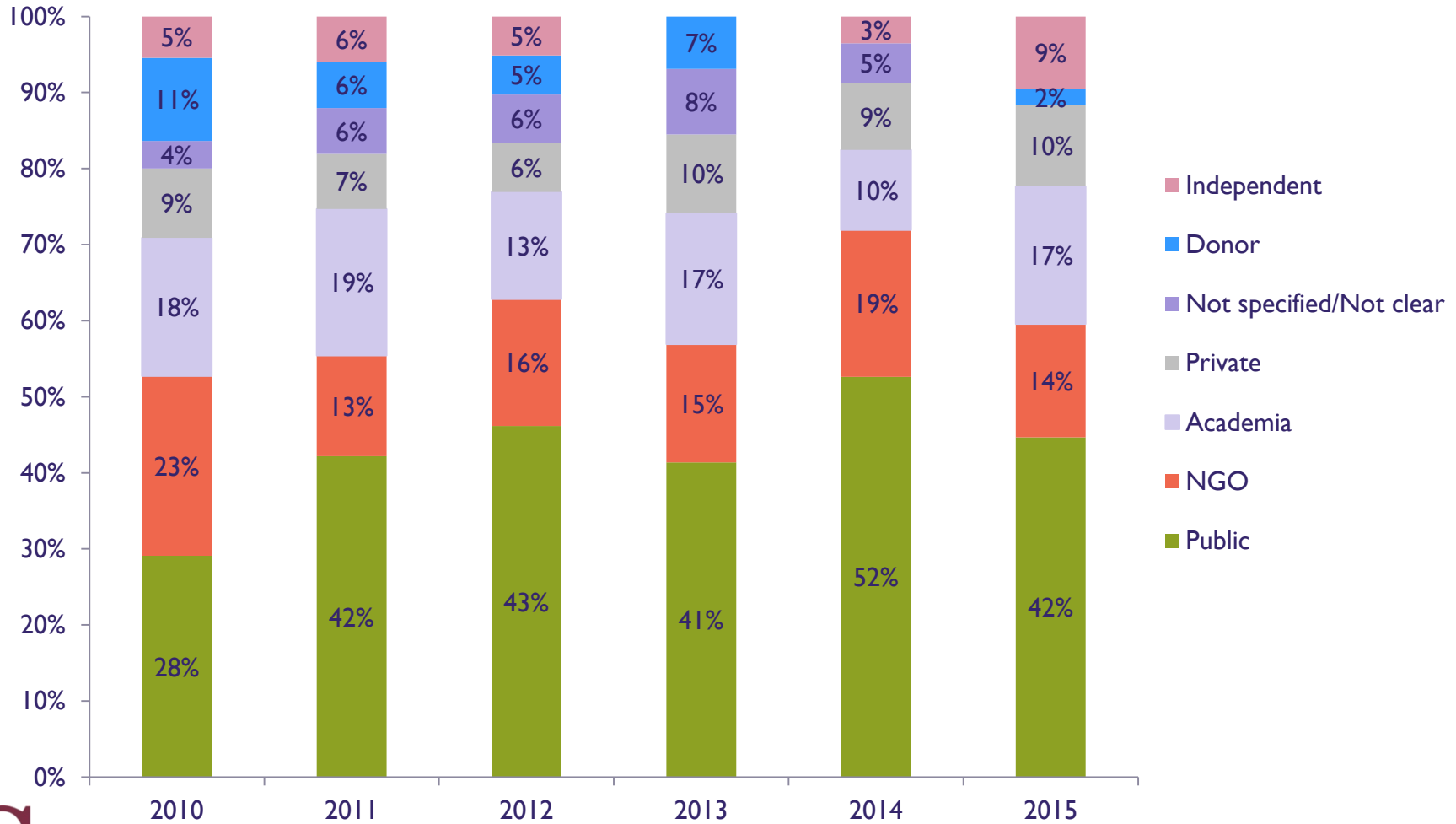
MME students are well qualified on entry



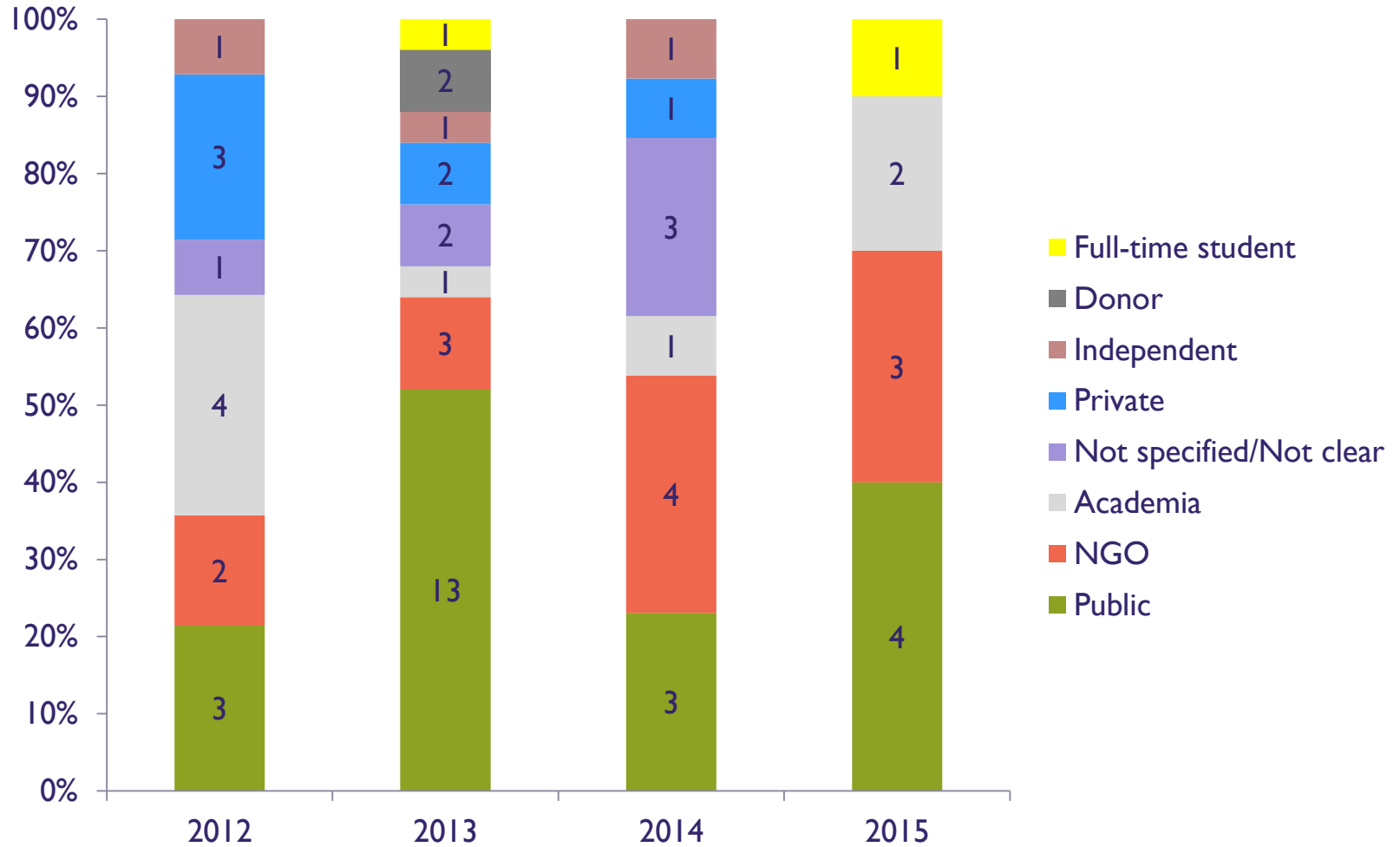
Almost half the PGD MEM students are from other African countries

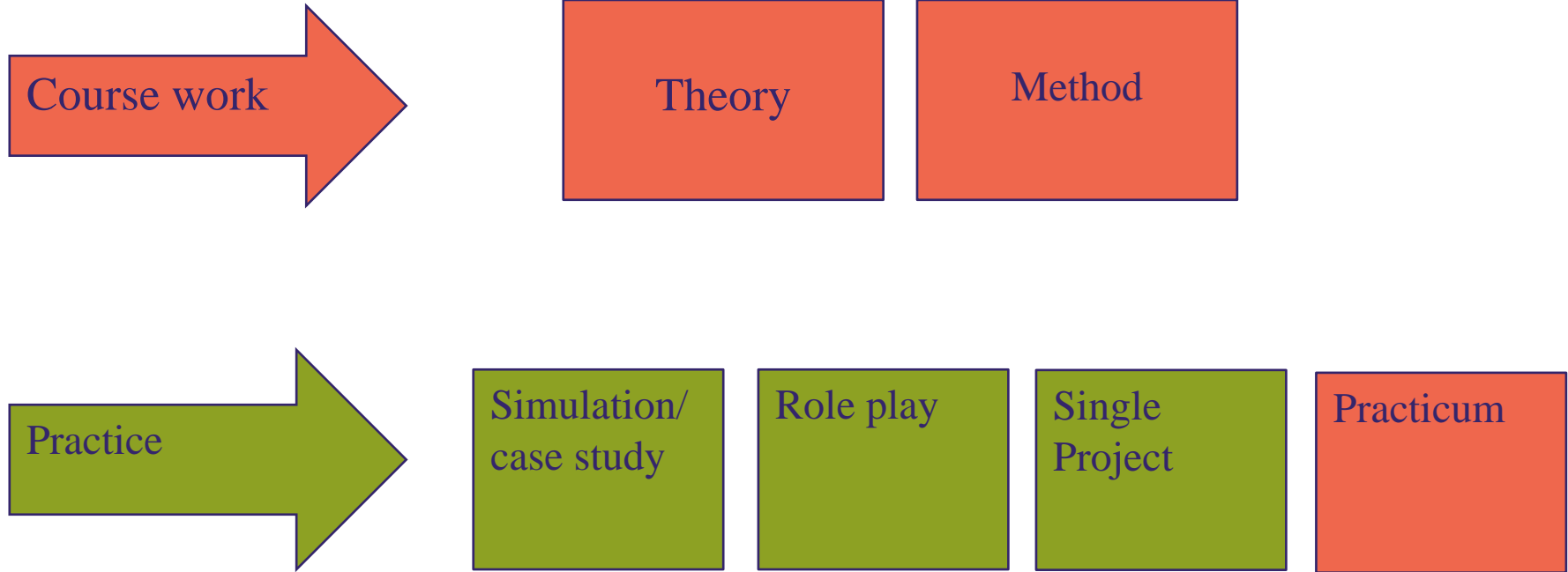


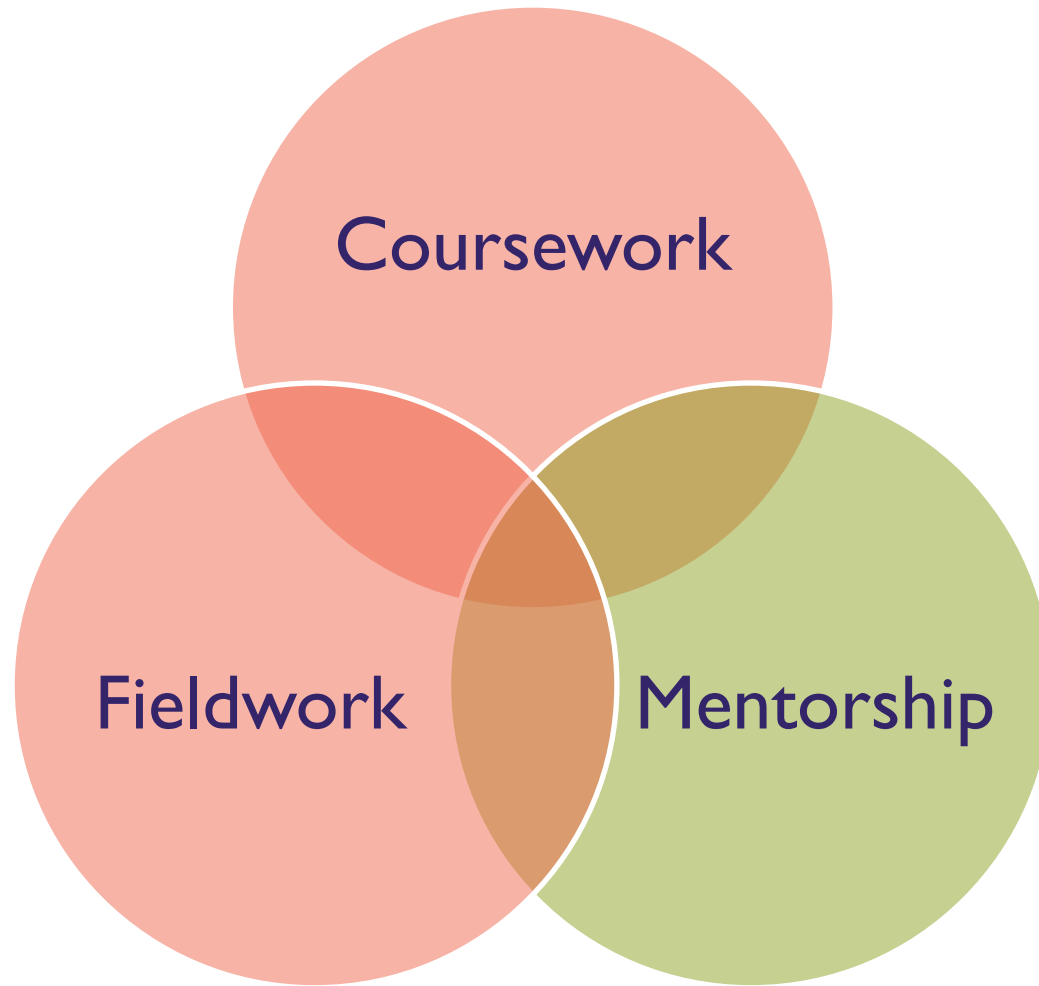
Half the PGD MEM students are in government positions



Almost half the MME students work in government positions







Some implications



Programme realities	Implications
Disjuncture between demand for course and students accepted	Many people who cannot meet admission requirements will never access formal training (although they may urgently need it). Small number of staff limits intake
Students well-qualified (particularly at PGD MME level) – base degrees in other sectors	Course needs to address evaluation issues in various contexts
In PGD MEM nearly half the students are from other African countries	
Almost half the PGD MEM and MME come from the public sector	
The course consists of two key components – course work and fieldwork	
Fieldwork is a practicum	Students get limited guidance when in the field



The majority of university-based programmes in the USA are offered through a range of departments



Results indicated that in 2011–2012 in the United States, there were

- 35 evaluation-specific certificate programs,
- 50 evaluation-specific master's degrees, and
- 40 doctoral programs with the purpose of preparing future evaluators

Consistent with previous research, LaVelle (2014) found that the majority of evaluation education programs and degrees are being offered through departments of education, educational psychology, psychology, and public policy



Recent international developments (competencies)



1. A special issue of the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation (2014) includes case narratives about the development of evaluator competencies in four countries (Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, Russia, and South Africa)
2. The International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) have developed lists of evaluator competencies for international development evaluators.
3. Japan and Thailand have competency training for educational evaluators (Roengsumran, 2007; Sasaki & Hashimoto, 2012).
4. A working group of the European Evaluation Society has developed a Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review (VEPR) that could potentially be framed around competencies and in April 2014 they and the United Kingdom Evaluation Society (UKES) conducted a workshop to discuss the possibilities of its implementation.
5. The International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation is considering organizing a task force on professionalization, evaluator competencies, and certification
6. The Board of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) voted at its June 2014 meeting to create a task force to consider how AEA might move forward in considering evaluator competencies and other paths to professionalization.



COMPETENCIES

King & Stevahn 2015



Organisation	Document	Country/region
Department of Planning, Monitoring and evaluation (DPME)	Evaluation Competency for Government July 2014	South Africa
Canadian Evaluation Society (CES)	Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice (2010)	Canada
International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS)	Competencies for Development Evaluation Evaluators, Managers, and Commissioners (January 2013)	700 members from 90 countries
Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation (anzea)	A Precipis of the Evaluation Competency Literature (2010)	New Zealand
The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (development Co-operation Directorate) (OECD) DAC	Evaluating development co-operation: Summary of Key Norms and Standards	European USA Canada Australia Japan
African Evaluation Association	African Evaluation Guidelines - Standards and Norms 2007	Africa



While the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation practice were developed as part of the Credentialing Program of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES), they provide a much broader foundation for the evaluation community.

They can be used as a foundation for:

- developing training programs and deciding what skills and knowledge to incorporate in a learning event;
- self assessment by Evaluators to decide what professional development they want to pursue;
- designing jobs, writing job descriptions when deciding to employ evaluation expertise;
- developing RFPs, SoWs or ToRs when contracting for evaluation services;
- And supporting decisions made in the Credentialing Program.

(CES 2010:2)



CES AND DPME COMPARED



Reflective practice	Fundamental norms and values underlying evaluation practice and awareness of one's evaluation expertise and needs for growth.
Technical practice	Specialized aspects of evaluation, such as design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting.
Situational practice	The application of evaluative thinking in analyzing and attending to the unique interests, issues, and contextual circumstances in which evaluation skills are being applied.
Management practice	The process of managing a project/evaluation, such as budgeting, coordinating resources and supervising
Interpersonal practice	People skills, such as communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, collaboration, and diversity

Competence Dimension	Domain
1. Overarching Considerations – This Dimension is concerned with outlining the competencies relevant across the practice of evaluation. Without the development of these skills evaluation use will be limited.	Contextual Knowledge and Understanding
	Ethical Conduct
	Interpersonal Skills
2. Leadership - This is the quality of being able to champion evaluation processes.	Leadership
3. Evaluation Craft – What people need to know about evaluation and links to research practice.	Evaluative Discipline and Practice
	Research Practice
4. Implementation of evaluation	Planning
	Management
	Reporting

Competency gaps

Job seeker responses

Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills were ranked second from the top among job seekers' self-reported competencies. Furthermore, when job seekers were asked about their own weaknesses, interpersonal skills were never mentioned.

Writing

Job seekers rated report writing fairly high.

Project and team management

Only 20% of job seekers noted that they were taught project and team management skills in graduate school, and fewer than 30% indicated that they were taught project planning. Project planning and project and/or team management were also rated 13th and 14th, respectively, out of 19 skills in regard to job seekers' self-competence ratings.

Research design

This response is noteworthy, given that most job seekers had received training in this area and regarded themselves as being competent in research design

Evaluation theory

This contrasts with the AEA job bank postings, less than half of which mentioned evaluation theory as a needed skill. Furthermore, evaluation theory was taught to less than half of the job seekers, which is consistent with the findings of Engle et al. (2006).

Experience

job seekers listed lack of experience as the most frequent employment hindrance. Again, real-world experience appears to help evaluators navigate complicated interpersonal relationships, expand the possibilities (or acknowledge the limits) of research design, and target report writing and presentation of findings to specific audiences

Challenges for academic programmes



1. Current format of courses
2. Differentiated student groups – sector, context, country, level
3. Competencies are being developed with various roles (South African) and levels (Japan)
4. Competencies like those categorised under inter-personal are difficult to teach
5. Capacity for mentorship during practical components (compulsory internships?)



Some implications for academic programmes



1. Clearly, one of the challenges associated with any training programme is **time**. Few programmes have the luxury of dedicating space in their curriculum to accommodate the number of evaluation and skills courses needed to fully train a professional evaluator. All courses should contain **coursework, fieldwork and mentoring**
2. Diverse Competency Profiles - lists of evaluator “competencies” tend to imply to the evaluator that “have them all” = competent; “any missing” = incompetent or not fully competent. Evaluators are not expected to have all the competencies.
3. It is also clear that the **competencies need to be appropriate**
 - for the social, cultural, historical, economic, political, and demographic
 - context of the evaluator.
4. The use of **case studies** - once one has learned the basic knowledge of a field, higher-level applications require judgment, astute situational analysis, critical thinking, and often creativity. Professional practice does not lend itself to rules and formulas. Decisions are seldom routine.





5. The proliferation of **alternative modes of and technologies** for delivering course content makes this a good time to consider how to address the challenge of offering a more in-depth evaluation and methodology curriculum to both traditional students and professionals.
6. Practical experience in academic courses is critical. Such experience can be gained in practicums, internships, and graduate associateships. However, only 30% of programmes in the USA offer some type of internship opportunity (Engle et al., 2006)
7. In 1999, Worthen recommended that as a first step toward evaluator certification, the profession would need to implement an accreditation system for institutions that provide evaluation training; but formal accreditation of evaluation training programmes has not materialized.





Education is a required but not necessarily a sufficient condition for quality evaluation results. Likewise, evaluation experience is desirable but does not guarantee an evaluator will consistently complete a satisfactory process. But getting an education that includes evaluation experience is a good predictor of success (Dewey et. al., 2008; Worthen, 1999; Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Even if the goal of creating an evaluator certification program may not be attainable, given Stufflebeam's (2001) assertion that the success and future of the evaluation profession depends on the training of new evaluators, the topic of what constitutes quality training will continue to be a concern for those providing this training



Some questions to consider



1. How can the mentoring element of programmes work?
2. Are all of the listed competencies necessary?
3. Are there any minimum required competencies?
4. Can one person possess all the competencies, and to what degree should he/she?
5. Can evaluators acquire the competencies that they do not already exhibit?
6. Are all of the competencies teachable?



Some questions to consider



7. How can competencies attend to the specifics of evaluation in a given subject area or a specific cultural context? Should they do so?
8. How often should a set of the competencies be updated? What is an appropriate process for updating them?
9. There must be meaningful reasons why the movement toward develop credentialing has to date led to only two professional associations' commitment to doing so. Why has the field not yet conducted research that could ground the creation of a meaningful system of credentialing?

