

## Careers for Ecological Economics graduates

It is obviously a very 'tight' job market just now in recession-hit times but our graduates have continued to perform well in this competitive environment. Broadly speaking, our graduates tend to work in consultancies, for government agencies and for non-governmental organisations, with some (although a smaller proportion) going into industry. With the launch of the TEEB report for Business (<http://www.teebweb.org/ForBusiness/tabid/1021/language/en-US/Default.aspx>) this is likely to change.

Approximately one-quarter of our graduates go on to complete PhDs, some a few years after graduating. Some have also entered academia, and it is wonderful for me to collaborate in research with former students. Indeed some are 'friends' of the MSc as they either teach on the courses or supervise dissertations. Students seem to benefit from having former students involved in this way - and indeed I was a former student on the programme myself.

I have asked some of our alumni to contribute a few lines on their job experiences post-graduation, with a focus on more on recent graduates. There are a number of former graduates who are Edinburgh-based and so I try to organise at least one meeting between them and the current cohort over the course of the summer.

No degree can 'guarantee' employment but I feel that the combination of the global reputation of Edinburgh University, the programme content and the socio-political 'coming of age' of Ecological Economics makes it a relatively desirable option in terms of career development.

Dr Salman Hussain  
MSc Programme Director

12 April 2011

**Dr Catherine Gamper, World Bank**  
(Ecological Economics 2003-4)

My MSc thesis, written in collaboration with the Sustainable Europe Research Institute did not only inspire the work of my PhD, but also convinced me of the relevance of our research in EE for policy making for sustainable development. Despite the fact that EE is rarely found as a degree on its own, I was able to teach EE for undergraduate and graduate students during my PhD as an assistant professor as part of environmental economics. With a research focus on participatory local governance issues I ended up working for the World Bank after the PhD. During the last 3 years I have been involved in various analytical and operational work focussing on local governance issues in the area of decentralization, community-driven development, and natural disaster risk management. I have been part of project teams in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Morocco. The MSc certainly laid the foundation for my analytical lens that I apply to my work today and that covers a niche that becomes more and more relevant - which is the interaction between research and policy making for sustainable development.

**William Murdoch, BP**  
(Ecological Economics 2004-5)

After completing my MSc I joined BP through their *Challenge Graduate Scheme* as an *Environmental Advisor*. The scheme gave me an excellent introduction to environmental management systems within business. The three year scheme included a year working in Aberdeen supporting the North Sea offshore platforms and drilling rigs, a year in the Algerian Sahara supporting two large gas production facilities and a year in the corporate environment team in London. I am now supporting the Angola business providing advice on environmental management, legal compliance and sustainable development initiatives.

<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9023295&contentId=7043497>

**Valerie Caldwell, Jacobs Engineering consultants**  
(Ecological Economics 2006-7)

I graduated from the University of Edinburgh with an MSc in Ecological Economics in 2007. Since then, I have worked as an environmental economist at Jacobs Engineering, based in the Edinburgh office. My day-to-day job involves task management, research and report writing for environmental economic appraisals, including two large Defra valuation studies on the value of terrestrial ecosystems and the benefits provided by inland waterways. Details of these projects can be found at:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=14752#Description>

<http://www.iwac.org.uk/reports/>

Other areas of interest and experience include carbon assessment and flood risk management appraisal.

Earlier this year I finished a four month secondment to the Sustainable Development Commission Scotland in a policy advisory role, where I prepared policy consultation responses to Scotland's Zero Waste and Energy Efficiency plans, along with organising events around the Commission's work on economic policy entitled "Prosperity Without Growth".

**Lori Curtis, freelance consultant**

(Ecological Economics 2006-7)

After graduating from the MSc in Ecological Economics, I moved back to Canada and started working right away at an environmental consultancy (was Jacques Whitford, now [Stantec](#)) as a socio-economic analyst. While I enjoyed the security of having a permanent position, I wanted a little bit more variety and freedom, so I started pursuing more short-term contracts internationally. I moved to Cairo, Egypt to work as a researcher for the [WorldFish Center](#), focusing on small-scale fisheries livelihoods in Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa. Once I had finished that one year contract, I began freelance consulting and I have been working for one year as a research consultant mainly with the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) and the [Food Economy Group](#) (a small consultancy), focusing on food security and livelihoods in rural areas. This generally involves field work through interviews with farmers and evaluating development projects and policies relating to livelihoods in the agricultural arena. I would say that it was the course work that was key in getting my first job at the environmental consultancy, and Salman's support with tailoring my dissertation topic that allowed me to branch out into a more development/food security field of work.

**Chris Zawadzki, MCW consultants**

(Ecological Economics 2008-9)

Since graduating from the Ecological Economics Master's Programme, I have been working for a Canadian engineering firm that specializes in comprehensive building energy retrofits. We work primarily with government social housing programs, universities and municipalities on projects that improve the energy efficiency and overall living standards within their building stocks. The Ecological Economics Master's Programme prepared me well for several of the important tasks that I have undertaken and continue to perform in my role as Sustainability Consultant. The quantitative tools and methods I acquired in the Project Appraisal course, particularly net present value, internal rates of return and environmental valuation, have enabled me to excel and advance in my position. Similarly, modules from the Ecological Economics Fundamentals and Applications have provided me with a sound theoretical understanding and an informed perspective to engage in crucial discussions with clients.

Company Website: <http://www.mcw.com/>

Project Links:

University of British Columbia's ECOTrek Program

<http://sustain.ubc.ca/campus-sustainability/greening-the-campus/ecotrek>

- approximate annual energy savings generated from this project \$2.6million CAD
- included the installation of a district heating system across the campus

Province of British Columbia's Social Housing Retrofit Program

<http://www.bchousing.org/programs/HRP>

**Amanda Larsson, WWF**

(Ecological Economics, 2008-9)

I joined WWF in 2010 to work on a new REDD+ pilot project in the Brazilian Amazon. Through a partnership with Sky, we've been raising money from the UK public to fund this important work, as well as raising awareness through TV programmes, PR and social media. I've got a bit of a funny role in the organization, spending half my time on public communications and the other half doing some quite techy research into REDD+, but it suits me really well. On my first day at WWF, I was told that my MSc was what had put me above the other candidates who'd applied. And you can definitely tell that the conservation world is evolving to respond to growing political interest in ecological economics.

The project website: <http://sky.com/rainforestrescue>

**Paulina Rakowska, Vertis Environmental Finance**

(Ecological Economics 2008-9)

After accomplishing my MSc in Ecological Economics studies I started my experience with the carbon market on an internship in London (the European Climate Exchange) and at the same time I was writing my MSc thesis on the influence of carbon price on fuel switching in the British electricity sector. Afterwards, I had the opportunity to work at the European Commission, DG Environment, dealing closely with the emissions auctions design for the future phases of the EU ETS. Currently, I hold the position of carbon trader at Vertis Environmental Finance.

My job entails day to day contact with the client (either on the phone or personal), generating trust in carbon market and promoting different financial transactions with carbon allowances (EUAs, CERs, ERUs). I support trading opportunities for sell and buy-side clients from the the Baltic States, Slovenia, Sweden, Austria and Poland, mainly power plants/manufacturing firms managers, CFOs, brokers and other market players. I also research new market opportunities and suggest them to my BoD, e.g. specialised products for the aviation sector (that joins the European Emissions Trading Scheme from 2012, EU ETS), biomass trading, water rights markets. My job is very demanding, intense and very much performance-based. Although I have no financial background, I think that I hold this position because of my knowledge of the mechanism (the trading scheme), my MSc thesis research and my experiences from the European Commission and a carbon exchange.

**Other Comments**

The studies in Ecological Economics constituted a great investment in my career, and a perfect addition to my business background (I hold my second MSc from the Technical University of Lodz, Poland in Business and Technology).

I highly recommend this program for three main reasons (facts that I experienced myself):

1. You will meet a great range of people from different backgrounds and countries, the exchange of experiences and knowledge is a crucial part of your study year in Scotland
2. The programme is designed in a way, allowing flexibility in choosing the modules and specializing in different subjects – my business-oriented approach did not interfere with others' "economic research" or "academic career's" approaches. Simply, you can get a wide range of jobs after this programme, depending on what you choose.
3. The studies themselves were very intense, combining theory with practice. The study tour was an excellent supplement to what we have learned in 2 semesters. Graduating from the

Edinburgh University with the MSc degree provided me with the feeling of “*now, I can achieve anything!*”

**Jonathan Starling, Forestry Commission**  
(Ecological Economics, 2008-9)

Following my Masters at Edinburgh I took up a job at Forest Research, part of the UK's Forestry Commission (the government department in charge of forestry), as a junior economics researcher. I am working on the FC's contribution to the UK's National Ecosystem Assessment, writing a review of the ecosystem goods and services of woodlands in the UK. For this I am looking at timber production, wood-fuel, deer as a woodland animal, and the social value of carbon sequestered in UK woodlands. It can be challenging, but I am enjoying it and it is complementing the theoretical knowledge I gained during my Masters.

Project link: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>

**Lee Pearson, College of Business and Economics, Australia National University**  
(Ecological Economics 2008-9)

The programme was my first formal education in economics and it prepared me very well. After completing the MSc, I spent the next year reading an MPhil at University of Cambridge in Engineering for Sustainable Development. The MSc programme at Edinburgh prepared me the most for my current career path and the quality of the course content was the best I had in the UK. My thesis in Edinburgh inspired me to consider more deeply the environmental and development impacts from international trade in agricultural products. My current research interest is in the economics of quarantine barriers in agriculture trade that are covered under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement in the World Trade Organization (WTO). I am on a Fulbright Research Fellowship in Australia before continuing for PhD at Imperial College London in the Centre for Environmental Policy.

**Olivier Vardakoulias, New Economics Foundation**  
(Ecological Economics, 2009-2010)

"I am working on the development of SROI and CBA methodologies, including the construction of appraisal models for numerous socio-economic, health and environmental projects. A critical part of my tasks consists in creating an exhaustive database of social and environmental monetary proxies to be used in CBA and SROI appraisals in the consultancy. The Msc Ecological Economics has played a crucial part in fostering my capacity to achieve these tasks. Beyond providing me with the essential *technical skills* relative to CBA appraisals, it has equally offered me an invaluable *holistic* insight into the socio-economic aspects of environmental issues, thus permitting me to work on a wide range of issues going beyond environmental economics *per se*. As such, the strength of this Msc programme consists precisely in providing an all-encompassing perspective and tool-kit, which has been important not solely for my intellectual development, but also for my professional life. For which I am grateful"

<http://www.nef-consulting.co.uk/about/olivier-varadakoulias/>

**Benedikt Pollmeier, Research Associate at Adelphi Research**  
(Ecological Economics, 2009-10)

“The MSc in Ecological Economics in Edinburgh has the rare capacity of providing a broad spectrum of knowledge while allowing at the same time for in depth research on specific topics of personal interest. I obtained an holistic understanding of the interconnectedness between the economic and political spheres on the one hand and the ecosystems and sustainability aspects on the other. What is more, the courses never lost touch with real world challenges. The academic knowledge, and the practical skills acquired during this master clearly facilitated enormously the start of my work as environmental policy consultant for adelphi on sustainability issues where I am working since handing in my dissertation in September. I have already been involved in diverse projects for German Ministries and the European Commission on challenging and interesting topics.”

[http://www.adelphi.de/en/resources/project\\_database/dok/43514.php](http://www.adelphi.de/en/resources/project_database/dok/43514.php)