

Amira graduated from the Master of Sustainability in 2016. In early 2016, she was employed by the company she did her capstone project with. She shared with us her experience on getting that role.

What aspects of the degree did you find most useful in seeking/gaining employment or your current job?

The capstone project allowed me to broaden my professional network and forced me to improve my networking skills. It enabled me to express myself more confidently and articulate my ideas; I can disagree with someone and have a constructive conversation about it. I'm more confident to

speak my mind. I feel like I've experienced great personal growth, and professionally, I feel a lot more ambitious and motivated by my work and knowledge capacity to keep improving to eventually be a professional in this field.



What did you do for your capstone unit?

My research investigated the role of creating shared value in the construction and property industry. Shared value is a decision that involves creating benefits for the company, financial or non-financial, and benefits for society. I was looking at four parts:

- 1) the market analysis of what was currently happening in the property development and construction industry,
- 2) what's happening with the current shared values in the company,
- 3) suggestions for further shared value initiatives, and
- 4) measurement of the social impacts resulting from those initiatives.

Fundamentally, shared value aims to address pressing social issues through strategic decisions. I think that is the only way that business will be able to contribute to society in a meaningful way.

How has the Sustainability program impacted what you're doing now or your plans?

I [was doing] an internship at my workplace where I did the research: Frasers Property Australia. Once I finish my current project, I will be able to work on the shared value initiatives that I presented in my report and I will be presenting to the executive management team at the end of November. Then I will be making small in-roads in the shared value strategy at Frasers Property.

Update in 2016: I was offered and accepted full time employment at Frasers Property as a Sustainability Coordinator. Most of the work I'll be doing will be around strategic community investment and shared value. Very exciting! The presentation to the CEO and management team went really well and the outcome of the discussion was very positive and acknowledgement that more needs to be done in this area.

On planning your capstone project

Look for companies that don't have the information about what you're researching so you're addressing a need for that company. Do background research on that company first.

Olivia graduated from the Master of Sustainability in 2015. In early 2016, she got a job with Ernst and Young. She met with us to tell us about her experience.

What aspects of the degree did you find most useful in seeking/gaining employment or your current job?

I am soon to start my new full time, permanent role at Ernst and Young (EY) in the Climate Change and Sustainability Services team. I can predict that every aspect of the degree has helped me to secure this role, as well as will prove helpful for the role itself.



The interviewers appreciated that I had this very broad, up to date and global knowledge and understanding on sustainability and all facets that are involved within it. ... I am very pleased, and very excited to begin this role with EY's powerful global voice to create a better working world.

How has the Sustainability program impacted what you're doing now or your plans?

The program has taught me a great deal. I have chosen the path I have because I see it as an area where I can make a great difference. Working in the corporate world but in the sustainability space is a fantastic juxtaposition. I feel lucky to be working for a company that wants to really create symbiosis between these worlds.

The Introduction to Sustainability unit (SUST5001) in the degree was filled with interesting visiting lecturers. This, I believe is also key to how I have ended up in the position I am in. Two of the visiting lecturers work in the Climate Change and Sustainability Services team at EY. To say they inspired me to look into the work they were doing is probably an understatement: I followed them to the company.

The program has also given me confidence to call myself a sustainability expert as there are so few graduands in this space. The students, as long as they continue to engage with what they are learning, can really shine in job interviews and [are] quite a rare stock.

On preparing for a new career

I have deliberately tried to gain different experiences – with my work, the units of study I took, and even the types of study (coursework and the capstone research project). This helps for some roles, such as consultants, who need to have lots of fingers in lots of pies that they can draw on.

I had some practical experience and I had confidence to claim myself an expert. It was a huge talking point for me – it was me proving that I could manage a project by myself. My [capstone] project involved a huge dataset, lots of data that not many people look at, a new tool, being able to put it together, and communicate the results. The role I'm going into is a generalist role, and all of these experiences will help me.

I am so glad the capstone exists – otherwise I wouldn't have had a talking point in all the interviews I've had. The sustainability industry is so small that there are probably only 2 other people in Sydney who have [done a project with the employer that I worked with] and that practical experience from the capstone is so important.

Students could be in any business, and any business would have the word 'sustainability' or 'environment' involved with what they do. Get a part-time job while you study – the experience will help you.

EY saw me as an all-rounder because of the work that I've done and the degree that I did. It's not common. There were 1001 people with a commerce degree, but maybe only 4 who have a Sustainability masters. I was competing with people with an engineering background who had an interest in Sustainability, whereas I understood the complexity of sustainability and was an all-rounder. This, I believe, helped me get the job.

Carlos graduated from the Master of Sustainability in 2016. He has gone from doing an internship with his capstone workplace to working at the World Economic Forum. He shared his thoughts on how the degree supported his career aspirations.

What aspects of the degree did you find most useful in seeking/gaining employment or your current job?

Well the Capstone Project is definitely what I would consider the most important route to get your foot at the door of some prestigious organisations, which in my case allowed to create a solid network with Ernst and Young (EY) staff.



Secondly, I would say the professors have immense technical knowledge but also really good connection with industry. For me it was very important to reach out to them for recruiting opportunities. Moreover, Sydney in a more general basis has a large amount of clubs and societies. Some of them are oriented towards professional fields which are also of help.

Finally, Sydney has a very good career centre that offers recruiting opportunities with top class companies. The brand strength and academic preparation from Sydney really gives you the edge on graduate programs locally and internationally. Even as an international student myself, these additional programs were of great help to me in terms of gaining employment.

How has the Sustainability program impacted what you're doing now or your plans? (Updated 01/2017)

I worked for EY in getting my Capstone published, as it is in their interest for its thought leadership and business proposition. Along with EY, I have been invited to interview with some management consulting companies in the following months to work in Australia, the U.S. and Latin America.

I am now working at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in New York City. At the Forum, my role as Project Specialist focuses on running the strategy, execution, and scale-up of the *Promoting Global Financial Inclusion (PGFI)* project, part of the Shaping the Future of Financial and Monetary System Initiative under the wider Financial Services team. For this role, my application was accepted out of approximately 3,000 applications (globally). My team is sits on the System Initiative on Shaping the Future of Future and Monetary Systems, under the wider financial services team.

It is a fantastic role that mixes my two of my passions (finance and sustainability). It has allowed me to meeting and collaborating with top global leaders around the world (including Heads of State and global CEOs of several industries). My co-workers are also extremely passionate and brilliant, and committed to improve the state of the world and I am learning so much from them. Right now, I am actually preparing my trip to Switzerland on preparing sessions for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum 2017 in Davos.

While I was at the University of Sydney working on my capstone project, I used many WEF reports as major sources for my research. Interestingly enough, I am now (almost a year later) writing some of those same reports and it has been a major highlight since graduating from Sydney. I am certain the global exposure that Sydney University (and the Master of Sustainability) provided, was a cornerstone of my success at the Forum.

On being at Sydney

I really loved my experience at Sydney: the program, the instructors, the classmates, the lifestyle and the Sydney mentality in general was a great fit for me. I would exhort to any potential applicant to definitely attend Sydney and take advantage of the great opportunities this university and the Master of Sustainability in particular offers.

Having said this, my recommendation is not to expect to be given the opportunities by the program or the instructors automatically, but to be proactive and look for them. Reach out to professors, classmates, other students, societies, etc. and then become truly involved in the Sydney community.

Matthew graduated from the Master of Sustainability in 2016. He has used an internship in 2015 with the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) Australia to inform his capstone project, and after graduation, Matthew continued his work as a Sustainability Consultant at WWF-Australia.

What aspects of the degree did you find most useful in working with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)?

The broad range of topics covered in the Sustainability program lays down a solid foundation for further work in the sustainability field; however, the capstone project was the highlight for me. The capstone project allowed me to



network with sustainability professionals from varying commercial and non-commercial sectors.

How has the Sustainability program impacted what you're doing now or your plans?

The capstone has helped me orient my future career path and the masters as a whole has enhanced my interest in certain aspects of sustainability, such as ecological economics, business strategy and systems thinking.

As a Sustainability Consultant at WWF I am responsible for food waste research, stakeholder engagement and identifying funding opportunities for future work on food waste. I also work part time at Good Environmental Choice Australia, a not-for profit eco labelling organisation as a Standards and Technical Officer where I assist in the research and development of environmental standards.

I worked with my Academic Advisor to complete a scholarship to attend the Crawford Conference in Canberra, which is a sustainable agriculture conference. We are also looking at publishing my research in an international journal.

Tell me more about your capstone project and what inspired it.

For my capstone, I was given the opportunity at WWF to contribute to larger scale research and change regarding reducing food waste in Australia, and I jumped at the chance. My work at WWF-Australia began with a one-month internship in November 2015. This internship consisted of a literature review of food waste impacts. My review identified a large data gap in the food value chain between the farm gate and the retailer, a gap that a survey of commercial organisations operating in Australia could partly fill. However, nearly two thirds of food waste is produced at the consumer stage of the supply chain. I knew that WWF would also have to find out what was being done at the consumer level, and I did this by surveying how local councils manage their residents' food waste and educate residents about food waste. The food waste survey of commercial and non-commercial organisations operating in Australia established a baseline for WWF to measure its future food waste reduction campaigns.

What was the best part about the program?

I thought the best part about the degree was the diverse range of topics covered throughout the Master's program. For example, it's not often mentioned that sustainability and health closely connected. A lot of the literature focuses on the economic and social costs, leaving out the health element of sustainability.

I enjoyed how the capstone project brought most of these sustainability elements learned throughout the course together.

Preetika graduated from the Master of Sustainability in 2016. At the end of her capstone project in 2015, she was employed to do a sustainability-related role at IKEA Australia. She met with us to tell us about her experience.

What aspects of the degree did you find most useful in seeking/gaining employment or your current job?

The capstone gave me the opportunity to take on more responsibility in my existing role [at IKEA] and reach out and make connections within the IKEA network. It helped me build connections with people.



I feel that I had a unique experience with my workplace mentor because he gave me a lot of freedom in guiding the project and making decisions; we had a very collaborative relationship. So the capstone gave me the environment, and my workplace mentor facilitated that environment and let me figure out the boundaries for myself that I would in a full-time job setting.

What did you do for your capstone unit?

I was able to work with IKEA because I'm already an employee there. I reached out to the National Sustainability manager for IKEA Australia and told him about the capstone and was able to formulate a capstone project. My project was about establishing a snapshot of customer and co-worker perspectives on sustainability so that IKEA could see what they did and didn't know. For IKEA, that was important, because they offer solutions for people to live sustainability at home, such as LED lightbulbs, recycling systems, water-saving taps, and induction hobs, which are more energy efficient. Most people are interested in living sustainably at home, and they didn't know that IKEA has solutions to help that. So my project was establishing a baseline of data.

How has the Sustainability program impacted what you're doing now or your plans?

I am now the Sustainability Developer for IMS (Indirect Material Services) at IKEA Australia. They're responsible for sourcing everything for an IKEA store that is not an IKEA product.

On the Sustainability program

I've never been one of those people who knew exactly what they wanted to do, so for me the degree was good because it was so general. In that sense, it allowed me to explore everything. It exposed me to a number of industries that I hadn't considered in the first place and wouldn't have associated with sustainability.

I think it's important for people to know that they don't have to have it figured out – [the Master of Sustainability] gives people room to see everything, they can learn a bit about everything, and they can work out what they want from there.

I also think it's important that people don't underestimate how much others are willing to help you out. No question is silly, and if you need help, ask for it! During my coursework and capstone experience I was continually amazed at how much people are willing to help out or answer questions if you just ask.