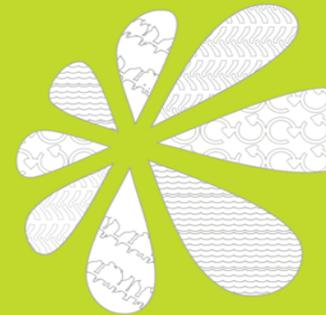


Andrew Morris



Degree: Economics with Geography and Sustainability

Year: Graduated (4th)

Why sustainability?

Sustainability has been a key component of my degree (it's in the title to start with!) and has interested me since I started university. My degree has enabled me to study the topic from a variety of perspectives from looking at the financial challenges to the social ramifications and environmental dilemmas associated with the term 'sustainability.' My degree sparked my interest in becoming involved outside the classroom through setting up Be The Change society as well as completing a project with the Sustainability team.

What experience have you gained at University?

As part of my degree I undertook a work experience module and was able to work with the University's Sustainability team. Through this I was able to see first-hand the role that sustainability can have upon an organisation. I was tasked with completing a Waste Management Audit for the Business School, running the project to look at current waste issues and reporting recommendations.

I was amazed at how much I was able to learn throughout this experience because although I was fully aware of the term 'sustainability', I was lacking in my understanding of what its practical meaning was. For example, at the start of the project I was unable to recognize which material types were recyclable or not (crisp packets for example are not!). I was also unaware that there were different 'types' of plastic that are graded upon their recyclable value. Through the project I learnt much more about the University's commitment to sustainable practices and was able to produce a report which was of tangible benefit and could be used to evaluate current procedures and influence the future direction and actions of the Business School with regards to waste.



What skills have you gained?

During my work experience I was able to gain a variety of different skills that will benefit me in the future. I was tasked with being a project manager and had to demonstrate strong organisational and communication skills to ensure that I could establish my team and effectively communicate with them to ensure we were working efficiently.

My time management skills were also tested as the project brief was to conduct the audit and complete a report within four months so I had to keep a diary of meetings and progress to establish 'stages' where a review process could take place to analyse and identify the future direction of the project. These are all key skill areas that employers look for in a candidate and at several interviews I have been able to talk about these areas and the challenges I faced in order to demonstrate my strength in these skills.

On a personal note I was able to benefit from challenging myself, proving that I was able to handle pressure and I feel that I thrived in a competitive climate. Before my work experience I had considered myself quite strong at giving PowerPoint presentations having done a number in the past. However, having to deliver a presentation to the University's Sustainability Advisory Group, which is chaired by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University and a number of other key players involved in implementing the University's Sustainability Action Plan, was extremely nerve wracking and tested my confidence! The experience ultimately gave me a greater confidence to give presentations in the future, and is just one of the many that I was able to benefit from whilst conducting this project.



What are you going to do next?

I am currently working for a major tour operator as part of a three month internship project managing two different projects that they want to implement. I feel this opportunity comes as a result of my ability to show my project management skills gained during my work experience with the Sustainability team, and hopefully I will be able to put the skills I have learnt to good use in this current internship.

After completing this internship I am hoping to complete another internship in sustainable consultancy and be able to put all the practical knowledge I have gained to good use! Ultimately I am hoping that either of these two opportunities will lead to a longer-term job offer, or the prospect of joining a graduate scheme next year where I am able to develop further my knowledge on sustainability.

What is one thing that everyone can do to make a difference?

Get involved! Students are full of brilliant ideas but I think they are often unaware of the opportunities that exist for them to get stuck in at the University and really make an impact. I would encourage students to keep an open mind and follow their passions because from my experience there

are plenty of people out there, be that fellow students or members of staff, who are more than willing to help and can really help you bring about a positive change. Students are at the heart and soul of the University and I would therefore encourage them to be proactive in making a difference to the University to benefit future students.

To keep up to date with opportunities in Sustainability, email sustainability@exeter.ac.uk to sign up to our opportunities mailing list.

