



# IES Report Summary

## Introduction

High quality environmental education responds to critical societal needs, influences policy and decision making, and is essential to address the multi-faceted environmental problems that Australia and the world face.

Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (IES) at the UNSW has been at the forefront of inter-disciplinary postgraduate environmental offerings since 2000 and proactively identifies opportunities and needs for environmental education, research and continuing professional education. Our graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge in environmental management and policy in their chosen profession.

As part of an ongoing review process in early 2015, IES at UNSW commissioned a survey of the students who had graduated from the Masters of Environmental Management (MEM), and another survey of their employers. The findings of these surveys will inform the ongoing evolution of postgraduate interdisciplinary environmental education at UNSW.

We thank the cohort of students, current and past, that took the time to respond to this survey, and thanks to employers for assisting us in our ongoing objective of providing environmental education and skills to generate creative solutions and influence policies for a sustainable future.

## Summary of the findings

The surveys focused on employment outcomes for graduates, on the utility of current course content, and on future needs for knowledge, understanding, skills, practices and tools in the field of environment and sustainability.

Findings confirmed that the MEM attracted students who wished to change careers to environment and sustainability or who wished to improve their general environmental education.

After completion MEM graduates typically worked in Australia in large consulting or government organisations, although many also worked internationally, mostly in the Asia Pacific Region.

Employers often hired multiple MEM graduates.

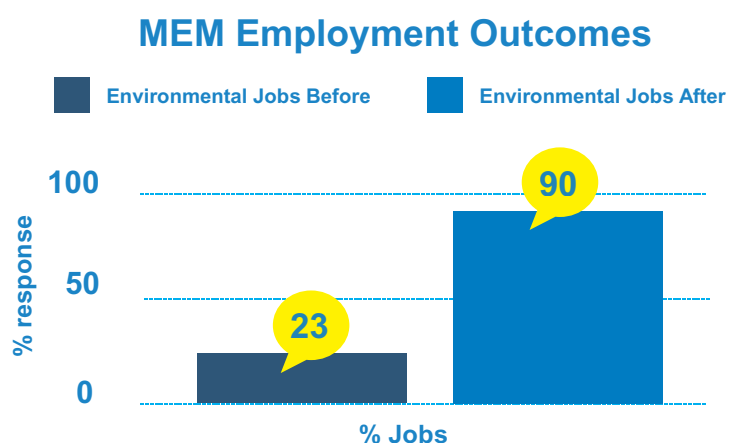


Figure 1 Employment destinations resulting from the MEM

# Who is the MEM graduate

MEM graduates and their employers said that the learning outcomes delivered by the course are highly relevant to the current workplace for environment and sustainability professionals, in particular:

- Knowledge and understanding of multi-disciplinary approaches, holistic thing and trans-disciplinary approaches
- Skills and practices for collaborative work, a wide range of communications approaches and critical thinking applied to solutions
- Applying environmental decision making tools such as monitoring and auditing, risk assessment and public participation.

These surveys found that the MEM is very highly regarded by both graduates of the course and their employers. All employers surveyed would recommend employing a MEM graduate to others. 92% of graduates said that they would recommend the MEM to others and many found the course transformational, allowing three quarters of them to switch to a career in environment and sustainability, as shown in Figure 1.

Graduates said the course was well organised and structured, especially the flexibility and the ability to study in different modes; that the MEM and UNSW have very good reputations, including amongst employers; that the content was relevant and appealing with holistic and transdisciplinary content; that the teaching staff were of a very high quality and that the diversity of peers and the networking opportunities were valuable.

Specific comments include:

*“Top uni, high quality teaching, flexibility in delivery, diversity in study areas, great reputation, And many more reasons...”*

*“I came out into a new career with a new way of thinking.”*

*“Gave me a good ‘boost’ to my previously very scientific perspective on the environment, a wider set of knowledge, as well as some good practical skills.”*

*“This is an interdisciplinary approach to manage the complex environmental issues and provides innovative tools and methods to solve them.”*

As well as getting a job (or changing it) the advancement of skills, the satisfaction of achievement, increased confidence, greater job satisfaction, improved communications skills and networking were the main reasons for enrolling in the MEM. Over three quarters of MEM graduates said that the course achieved their main reason for enrolling.

These surveys show that for past 15 years the IES, through the MEM, has been equipping graduates with the knowledge and skills to meet the complex challenges of their chosen profession, a track record endorsed by employers. Feedback from graduates and their employers indicate that the interdisciplinary focus at the core of the MEM will continue to define the program into the future.

MEM graduates also seek continued professional development of emerging environment and sustainability knowledge, skills and tools. Their employers flag an ongoing need for the learning outcomes delivered by the MEM. UNSW is well positioned to respond to professional development needs since both employers and MEM graduates emphatically recommend the IES' MEM course to others.