

Alumni Profile: Shane Armour, *Client Support Account Associate at RMS*

Profile compiled by Gordon Bradshaw, 4th Year, *Sustainable Development*



Shane Armour graduated from the University of St Andrews in 2011, with a degree in Sustainable Development. His main interests whilst studying at the University were climate change, energy, and global environmental policy. He now works at RMS (Risk Management Solutions), a world leader in catastrophic risk modeling.

How did you first become interested in sustainable development?

When I started to travel, I realized that a lot of places were not what I imagined them to be. I saw the effects of international organizations all over the world. I started to study International Relations and Sustainable Development simultaneously. I realized that there are many political limitations to solving global environmental issues, so I decided to study both.

What did you like about the Sustainable Development course at St Andrews?

I really appreciated my classmates more and more as the years passed. My first year, there were many students taking the class for credits. By third and fourth year, most of the passionate students remained. I now know that a lot of those people who stayed will go out and do amazing things for the world. Everyone had different interests, so it will be interesting to see how everyone keeps on developing.

How did getting a degree in Sustainable Development at St Andrews help you realize your early career goals?

I wouldn't say that it helped me realize my career goals, but it did help me to understand my career potential. When you study Sustainable Development there are so many interesting fields to pursue. I could not decide. I found an interesting job opportunity and took it. I didn't know anything about my current field, modeling hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc., but I wanted to learn.

Describe your current job at RMS.

I work at a tech company that makes catastrophic risk models. People need to know the potential risks for natural disasters, terrorism attacks, pandemic diseases, etc. On my third week at my new job, I was sent home with a massive stack of documents. I was asked to read them overnight. I was very intimidated, until I realized they were reports full of pictures and information on natural disasters. I found this very stimulating. When Hurricane Sandy made landfall, our office was really buzzing. One thing is to model hurricane damage; another is to see it happen.

How did the Sustainable Development degree help equip you to work in this field?

In SD, we were constantly asked to write papers about very diverse topics. We would cover very complex subjects in just one or two lectures. I remember having no idea what some essay questions even meant. One essay I was supposed to write had the most ridiculous question ever, "What is soil?" I had no idea how I would write 2,000 words about soil. I thought I could answer that question in one sentence. Having to constantly dive deep into very complex and diverse fields really prepared me for this job. I'm often talking about terrorism, earthquakes, and hurricanes in the same sentence, and these are very different catastrophes.

Do you have any advice for current SD students who are thinking about life past university?

Take a year off and travel. If you are worried because you are penniless and want to find a job, forget about those things and travel anyways. Once your career starts, life changes radically. Take advantage of not having work commitments. If you are broke, go backpack in a cheap country!