

Master of Science in Sustainability Management

Top Five Questions our Students are Frequently Asked

If you're involved in the Sustainability community in the GTA, it is likely you've heard of the University of Toronto's Master of Science in Sustainability Management Program. It is also likely that you have questions about MScSM – I know because as a second year student in this program I am often asked about the program. People seem genuinely curious, so I thought it would be helpful to write an FAQ for five of the questions I get on a regular basis.

1. What exactly is a Master of Science in Sustainability Management?

To put it simply, the MScSM develops an integrated understanding of natural and management sciences that is necessary to address sustainability issues. This focus allows students to deconstruct the decision making processes that all organizations must go through while adopting sustainability and provides students with the tools and skills necessary to strategic, innovative, and sustainable decisions.

The MScSM is a professional course-based degree program with an internship, capstone project, and independent research integrated throughout the 20 month program. It's difficult to capture all the nuance of the MScSM in just a few sentences, but the most important take-away is that it prepares student to be career ready by the end of the program.

2. What sort of job can you get after?

Asking this question of any graduate student is enough to put them on edge. Fortunately, it's not as bad for MScSM students, given the options that are afforded through an education in Sustainability.

Sustainability is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses such a wide range of topics that no individual could ever hope to know it all. Therefore, it is necessary to have a focus on a specific interest. In the MScSM students have the freedom to explore different topics and develop skills that will align them with their future career goals. Whether it's an interest in water conservation, waste management, urban agriculture, etc., it is ultimately up to the student to decide what sort of job they get afterwards.

Although it's difficult to start a career in any field, the MScSM provides students with the resources and tools to make it just a little bit easier. I truly believe that whatever each student puts into the program is what each student is able to take out.

3. What is your Master's thesis?

As I mentioned earlier, the MScSM is a professional program. It's unlike the tradition Master's program in that there is no thesis – rather it is divided between course work, an internship, a capstone project, and independent research. If that sounds like a lot, it is! But in the best way possible because the MScSM is structured so students get both hands-on and

academic experience through one program. That said, it is worth explaining the independent research component in more detail.

During the second year as an MScSM student, each student must complete a research project. This requires finding an advisor willing to help with conducting primary research. At the end of the second year of students, each student must present their findings to their colleagues and professors – one of the main difference is that you do not have to ‘defend’ your research. However, that does not preclude your research from being published; that aspect is based on the quality of your research.

Ultimately, in the MScSM program, you get the best of both worlds – the structured learning of the classroom and the discovery of self-guided research.

4. What about the internship? Is it paid?

One of the best experiences in MScSM has been having the opportunity to go out in the real-world to build the skills for a future in sustainability. The internship spans over the summer months after the first year of classes so that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be proficient in a professional space. Furthermore, the internship is a required component of the program and students must develop a poster presentations of their work experience at the annual Sustainability Leaders Series hosted at the Institute for Management Innovation at the University of Toronto Mississauga.

Whenever I tell anyone that there is an internship associated with the MScSM, the next question is whether the internships are paid or not – the short answer is yes and no. It really depends on the employer. The important thing to focus on is getting valuable work experience and building a network of industry peers.

5. What are your classmates like?

Okay, I admit that I almost never get asked this question - but I wish it was a question that people would ask more often! There are a lot of amazing things about the MScSM program, but none of them compare to how amazing the people are. It’s one thing to be studying sustainability, a topic that most people are truly passion about, but it’s another to be studying it with twenty-seven other students that share your passion. The insight that each student brings to the classroom adds a dimension of learning that just can’t be measured. That is, we learn from each other’s experiences and backgrounds and challenge each other’s understanding – the outcome is a rich understanding of issues and real-world applications.

In some ways we like to think of our class as family and together we embody the loving and collaborative spirit of sustainability. I may be a little biased, but you couldn’t ask for a better group of individuals to work with.

So there it is – my top five MScSM FAQ. I hope this FAQ has been informative and has answered some of the questions that you have about the program. *Tyler!*