

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES GRADUATE

TOM BAKER



**CURRENT ROLE: SENIOR LECTURER, SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND,
AUCKLAND, AOTEROA NEW ZEALAND**

**PAST ROLE: POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

**DEGREE: BACHELOR OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE**

Tom found the environment at The University of Newcastle incredibly inspiring and productive as a junior researcher. Tom is now a lecturer and enjoys teaching and inspiring his own students, as well as researching topics around public policy.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE GRADUATING?

Tom is now based in Aotearoa New Zealand as an academic at The University of Auckland. He teaches urban geography, specifically around how public policies are made and implemented. Tom's interests lay in researching decisions around how public policy is made, who makes these decisions and what impact these decisions have on the people that work, live and visit cities around the world.

Entering into his Bachelor of Development Studies, Tom had an interest in learning about the urban environment. This interest has been constant thread throughout his higher degree learning and career. Initially Tom wanted to work in urban planning and entered his Development Studies degree to understand the applied aspects of urban planning. After graduating, Tom completed honours which gave him his first taste of research in social science.

After graduation, Tom pursued his career in the urban planning sector and worked for as a Statutory Planner at Cessnock City Council.

After a year of working in local council, Tom returned to The University of Newcastle (UON) to further develop his research skills and completed his [PhD](#). Following this Tom worked in Government at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on public policy issues. Returning again to research Tom completed a Research Fellowship at Simon Fraser University in Canada, where he looked at homelessness and drug treatment policies.

“I had formed really good relationships with the geography teaching staff. It seemed like an ideal place to develop my research skills in a supportive context.”

Tom gained plenty of experience in the urban planning

profession and found that he really wanted to pursue a research career. Tom has been working at the University of Auckland since 2015 and loves his work as it fuses teaching and research. Tom also enjoys living in Aoteroa and learning about its history and, of course, geography.

The Bachelor of Development Studies and Tom's experiences within the degree were at the forefront of nurturing Tom's interest in research. The degree developed a curiosity for understanding, and also questioning, how the world works and why it works the way that it does. The degree also emphasises the necessity of collaboration for work in Development Studies, whether in research and teaching, the public sector, a private company or NGO.



Image: Tom Baker.

HOW RELEVANT HAS YOUR DEGREE BEEN SINCE YOU GRADUATED?

Tom learnt the rudiments of social scientific research at UON and he is now teaching those rudiments to his students. The academics at UON showed Tom what a good teacher can do for a student and how they can inspire a student's curiosity and passion to learn, teach and create change.

The degree engaged Tom with real and current issues confronting the world within local neighbourhoods as well as at a national and global level. Tom was able to bridge what he was learning during his degree with the realm outside of university by communicating with the people around him. An unexpected opportunity presented itself to Tom in the form of a customer at his part-time work. Through this connection Tom gained the opportunity to complete an internship and gain experience in urban planning with local council. Tom recommends that you should remain aware of the opportunities and connections that exist in your everyday life and not limit yourself to discussing the topical issues that you are learning about to just within the classroom.

Tom experienced an incredibly positive, nurturing and inspiring environment as a junior academic in Geography and Environmental Science. That environment has shaped Tom's approach to research and teaching.

ADVICE: GET TO KNOW YOUR COHORT

Tom suggests that you should get to know the other students in your cohort. Knowing your fellow students can make your university experience much more enjoyable. Your cohort will come from a diverse range of interesting backgrounds and like yourself, they will also go on to fulfil interesting careers.

“These are lifelong connections that will continue to be important to you, years down the track.”

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Tom plans to continue pursuing research as well as teaching and guiding the next generation of students. Working with inspiring students and seeing what they go on to achieve after the graduate is gratifying and a highlight of Tom's job.

“You have the benefit when you are an academic to work with inspiring students. Students go out into the world and do amazing things.”

To find out more about Tom, and our other Development Studies graduates please visit;
uonblogs.newcastle.edu.au/ges/graduate-profiles/
facebook.com/DevelopmentStudiesatUON/

For more information about the [Bachelor of Development Studies](#) you can contact:
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