

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES GRADUATE

ELLEN LEDGER

CURRENT ROLE: MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCIENCES PO PARIS, FRANCE

PREVIOUS ROLE: POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS INTERN (ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT) PARIS, FRANCE

DEGREE: BACHELOR OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE



Ellen's passion to learn and work in international development is a serendipitous tale that took her from living in Singleton to Paris. Currently Ellen is living in Paris and completing her Master of International Development at Sciences Po's Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA).

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE GRADUATING?



Image: Ellen ledger.

When Ellen graduated from her Bachelor of Development Studies in 2017, she was interested in pursuing further study in international development at the renowned Sciences Po in Paris. To aid her in this decision, Ellen took a gap year and moved to France where she studied and immersed herself in the French language. Constantly practising her French with friends, family and during her work as a babysitter/English teacher, Ellen quickly became fluent in the language.

After a year of living in France, Ellen was confident about her decision and she began her [Master of International Development at Sciences Po](#) in 2019. Not afraid to take her

time, and gain new experiences, Ellen took a professional gap year after her second semester, where she undertook two internships.

Ellen's first internship was in the Director General's Cabinet at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO had completed an international survey which had gathered people's opinions of the major challenges currently facing the world. Amongst other things, Ellen analysed the survey data and put together a [report of the findings](#).



Image: Garden at the UNESCO HQ whilst Ellen was an intern.

Ellen followed this up with a second internship at the Development Centre at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Both internships provided Ellen with invaluable knowledge, insights, and new connections. Ellen credits her acceptance into the internships to her writing skills. As the positions involved report writing, Ellen needed to demonstrate her writing skills and did so in her cover letter when applying.

Ellen is currently in her final semester and working on finalising her Masters thesis, which is focused on climate finance and the Pacific within the Australian Development Program 2010 – 2019. Ellen is analysing OECD development finance data and policy documents using discourse analysis. She is finding her project incredibly interesting and has identified how policy and institutional changes under different leaders have greatly impacted the situation of climate change in the Development Program.

So why did Ellen choose to complete her master's in France? During Ellen's undergraduate degree she decided to study part-time in order to save up and undertake a six-month exchange to [The University of Oslo](#) in Norway. There Ellen met many other international students and gained a different institutional perspective. Before undertaking this exchange, Ellen spoke with the Development Studies Program Convener, Kathy Mee, to gain advice regarding the exchange. Whilst Ellen was in Oslo, she met a student of Sciences Po, and was inspired to pursue her international development studies in France.

Living overseas during a pandemic has been challenging, however Ellen was still able to attend the global climate conference [COP26](#) with the Sciences Po observer delegation in Glasgow 2021. Ellen also had the opportunity to attend the [Paris Peace Forum](#) in 2019.



Image: Ellen (right) and her Master's advisor [Carola Klöck](#) (left) at COP26, 2021.



Image: Ellen (right) and fellow international development student Rahul (left) at Paris Peace Forum, 2019.

Part of what has made Ellen's Master's experience so enjoyable is her wonderful supervisor, [Carola Klöck](#), with whom Ellen has been able to co-author a [journal article](#) that has just been published on German climate finance (and she wrote it in French!).

HOW RELEVANT HAS YOUR DEGREE BEEN SINCE YOU GRADUATED?

The Bachelor of Development Studies was key in solidifying Ellen's passion and desire to pursue further study and a career in international development and environmental sustainability.

Particular classes that peaked Ellen's interest include [Environmental Values and Ethics](#), [Integrated Impact Assessment](#) and [Rethinking Development](#). Each course broadened Ellen's perspective and gave her new ways of thinking.

“That fact that I enjoyed the program so much really built the foundation for me to end up where I am now.”

ADVICE: TAKE YOUR TIME AND GO ON EXCHANGE

Ellen's first piece of advice is to not be afraid to take your time. By taking four years instead of three to complete her degree, Ellen had the freedom to explore her interests through an exchange program. Ellen majored in environmental sustainability, however when she first began her degree Ellen also had a strong interest in law. Before heading to Sciences Po, Ellen took a gap year to be sure of what she wanted to do for her Masters, while also building the language base she would need to pursue her further studies. Ellen again took her time during her Masters, by taking a professional gap year, so that she could benefit from the opportunity to develop her professional experience.

“Know that you do not have to follow one specific pathway to finish your degree or go into your future career.”

Secondly, Ellen also recommends going on overseas exchange. Her exchange to Oslo was an invaluable experience that allowed her to meet a diverse cohort of people, gain alternative perspectives on critical issues for her studies, and cement her interest in pursuing international development.

“Be prepared to get out of your comfort zone.”

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Ellen has a good idea of where she wants to go next, and she is open to the jobs and opportunities that may arise. Ideally Ellen would like to continue researching and pair this with professional experience by working in a development agency or research institution, such as the OECD. Ellen would love to immerse herself in topics that really interest her such as the intersection of development and climate change, and then bring her firsthand experiences with her when she later pursues a PhD.

For now, Ellen is very happy living and learning in France. We will see where Ellen's career path has led the next time we catch up.

To find out more about Ellen Ledger 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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