Postgraduate Research

Institute for Sustainable Futures

Why join ISF?

Our Graduate Research Program has three key characteristics:

We are transdisciplinary

We integrate knowledge from diverse academic disciplines to create new perspectives on sustainability challenges. Engineers and ecologists work alongside social scientists, designers and planners to address environmental and social problems.

We are hands on

We are not ivory tower academics, so get ready to roll up your sleeves! Our staff and students work closely with partners in government, business and civil society to realise change.

Our support is second to none

Doing a research degree is a tough, individual challenge. But through peer support, meetings, workshops and retreats, you'll connect with our vibrant community of sustainability researchers who share your goals.

How does it work?

You can apply to study a:

Doctoral program in Sustainable Futures
(three years full-time, also available part-time)

Masters by Research program in Sustainable Futures
(two years full-time, also available part-time)

How do I apply?

Identify your area of interest

What problem are you interested in solving? How would you like to contribute to a more sustainable future?

Check out our areas of expertise

You may find it useful to become familiar with our research areas and approaches, and you may be interested in working with a particular supervisor.

You're interested! Contact us

We'll guide you through the process of preparing your research proposal and ask you to respond to the Postgraduate Application Assessment Criteria. We'll check the availability of potential supervisors and assess the viability of your research project.

We're interested!

We'll ask you to submit your application to be considered by the ISF Board of Studies.

Welcome

If your application is successful, you'll be invited to formally enrol in our higher degree research program. Welcome to the team!

Change makers of tomorrow

Creating positive change in the energy market

Dr Juergen Peterseim was designing boilers for power stations and industrial plants for German company ERK Eckrohrkessel GmbH when he saw an opportunity to build a more sustainable future within the sector.

Attracted to ISF's multi-disciplinary approach to research, he embarked on his doctorate, exploring the benefits and potential role of concentrating solar power hybrid plants in Australia's transition to a low carbon energy future.

"I wanted to cover all the relevant aspects – economics, resources and the social implications – not just the technical parts. It's exciting to connect your research with valuable real-world outcomes, not just a thesis," he says.

After graduating in 2015, Juergen was appointed Director for Strategy and New Products with ERK, building renewable energy products and integrating them into industrial facilities. Now on the board of Industrial Solar Gmb, he implements solar thermal systems in industrial applications. He plans to build a bespoke solar hybrid plant in Australia, with project development activities well on their way to making this vision a reality.

Place identity in peri-urban environments

While undertaking an internship at the National Research Institute of Science and Technology for Environment and Agriculture in France, Dr Laure-Elise Ruoso had many questions around how people shape the landscapes in which they live.

"I wanted to know what we value in our landscapes. What type of cities do we want to live in? What is our relationship with the land and what do we want from it?"

She was encouraged to pursue higher degree research in this field and hasn't looked back. Laure-Elise's PhD with ISF examined the politics of place identity and the role of productive landscapes in the peri-urban. The current global trend of rapid population growth creates significant urban planning challenges. But what does that mean for people who live beyond the urban fringe in peri-urban areas?

Using a framework to describe the different dimensions of place identity, Laure-Elise conducted a case study of Wollondilly Shire in NSW to investigate how these dimensions affected decision-making about urban planning and agriculture. Her research highlighted potential ways the role of agriculture land uses in peri-urban areas can be renegotiated and adapted to exist in harmony with developing peri-urban environments.

Laure-Elise is now working as a senior research consultant at ISF, looking at ways to increase biodiversity conversation activities on private lands.

Exploring social behaviours

There's a lot of market research on what motivates people to buy things, but little on why we throw them away. Many people donate stuff to charities to avoid feeling bad about wasting resources. Though well intentioned, it passes waste onto someone else, still ends up in landfill and creates added disposal costs for charities.

Exploring the motivations that drive unsustainable consumption and disposal practices, Dr Andrew Glover's research aimed to discover social levers to change behaviour.

Using social practice theory, Andrew's PhD sought to discover how and what motivates people to dispose of stuff they don't want. The findings? A strong sense of responsibility. Andrew found that people do worry about waste and care enough to change our behaviour when we know where it goes and what the impacts are.

Now a post-doctoral research fellow at RMIT, Andrew is working on embedding greater sustainability within the academic research sector.

"The skills I developed at ISF enable me to grapple with complex problems, where no solution is obvious," he says.

Moving beyond corporate social responsibility

After working in Bhutan where their development philosophy focusses on Gross National Happiness (GNH), Dr Isabel Sebastian wanted to look deeper into the dynamics of operating sustainable business.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, activities and reporting are often considered an indication of businesses' good intentions and corporate citizenship. But good CSR performance is not synonymous with good business ethics and responsibility.

Inspired by Bhutan's Gross National Happiness philosophy and her interest in how this influences business ethics, conduct and sustainability, Isabel's PhD thesis explores how Bhutanese and international businesses move beyond 'conventional CSR'.

Isabel's research developed the 'Beyond CSR Maturity Model' which allows mapping of businesses against five dimensions of maturity to understand their level of CSR maturity and identify ways to move beyond 'conventional CSR'.

"I wanted to look at business through a holistic lens – to consider both Eastern and Western philosophies, business ethnics and systems theories. With ISF I had the support to take this transdisciplinary approach. The diverse and international group of team members and PhD Students at ISF made it a very rich and inspiring experience," she says.

Isabel is now a Research Associate at the University of Luxembourg, working on Nexus Futures, a transdisciplinary project that explores the sustainable water, soil and energy nexus in Luxemburg.

Do you want to change the world?

Are you searching for new ideas on how to create that change?

At the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF), our mission is to tackle the sustainability challenges of the 21st century. One of the ways we do this is by developing research leaders of the future. You could be one of them.

A Masters or Doctoral research degree with ISF can help you build the skills and experience to deliver a better future in your chosen field. You will work with committed colleagues from diverse disciplines to transform your ideas into positive change.

We're tackling some of the most complex sustainability challenges facing our world, from climate change to resource scarcity, and this calls for innovative approaches. We take a holistic view that looks not just for technological solutions, but also the political, socio-cultural, organisational and individual factors that contribute to real change.

Topics covered by our graduates and current students are diverse: from water policy to climate change to transforming the building industry. They fit into at least one of our key research areas:

Energy and resource futures

Leading the transformation to a 21st century energy sector and more circular flows of resources.

Water and sanitation

Developing net-positive, sustainable and resilient water management solutions to meet challenging global conditions.

International development

Working in partnerships to alleviate poverty and ensure sustainable development for all.

Natural resources and ecosystems

Managing and minimising the impact of human consumption on our land, water and vegetation ecosystems.

Urban futures

Building better cities and towns by embedding sustainability into building practices and urban transport systems.

Learning and change

Driving positive transformation through individual, social, organisational and cultural dimensions of change.

isf.uts.edu.au

Join our team

We are passionate about making the world a better place.

Find out more and apply today.

uts.edu.au/isf-postgrad
isf@uts.edu.au
+61 495 144 950

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22716 MARCH 2019
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