

I took the MSc in Economics as a full-time student in 2006/07. I've spent the six years since then working in economics consultancy, carrying out analysis for public organisations like the UK Government and the European Commission. I'm about to return to university (this time, to study public policy, rather than economics) and, as I reflect on these last six years, what stands out for me is how Birkbeck taught me *how to think* like an economist.

A good economist needs to have a strong grasp of both theory and practice, in order to carry out analysis and, just as importantly, to interpret and evaluate analysis for the benefit of others. Birkbeck excels in imparting those skills to its students. The lecturers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and very happy to discuss and debate the material. I'm not convinced of all the economics taught on the course (but which makes up a standard degree programme, around the world) but it certainly provided an environment in which to flex and develop the ability to critically assess information.

I couldn't fault the support available for more independent study, either; the econometrics project, in particular. The amount of help was just right: enough of a nudge to get you moving in the right direction, but not so much that it avoided you having to think at all. The project provided a great opportunity to consolidate (and learn) analytical techniques that I still use today. It was also a useful piece of example work to show potential employers later that summer.

The quality and diversity of the students at Birkbeck is a key part of the experience. Most are slightly older than the typical student you'd find elsewhere and many are already employed as economists i.e. practitioners. That really enhanced my experience of the MSc and added a level of discussion in class that you'd be hard-pressed to find in quite the same way anywhere else.

The MSc in Economics at Birkbeck is intellectually stimulating and challenging, but also supportive and friendly. It's proved to be a significant milestone in my career to date.