

Master's Degree in Sustainable Development

Insights into the master's study program MSD 2026

Master information event 12. March 2026

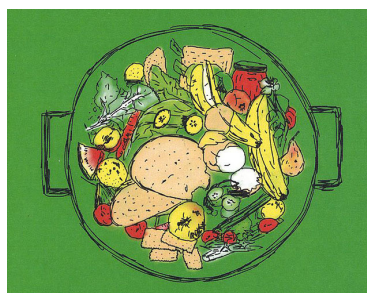


Sustainability at the University of Basel - the Oldest University of Switzerland

Wide range of courses in the field of sustainable development (SD) at the University of Basel, at almost all faculties and all academic levels



Specific course program with four courses on disciplinary perspectives on SD: **Pathways to Sustainability**



University of Basel

Sustainable Development

Excellence in Sustainability *msd*

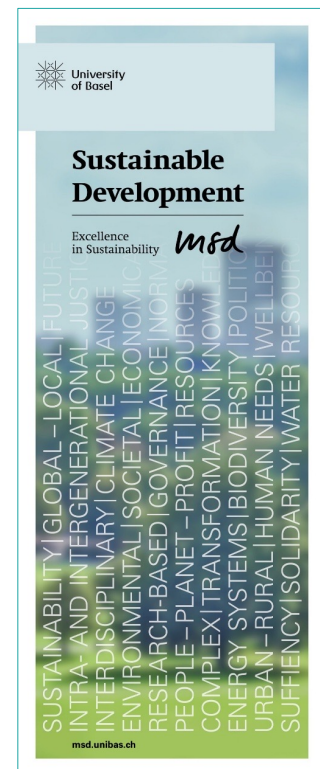
SUSTAINABILITY | GLOBAL - LOCAL | FUTURE
INTRA- AND INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE
INTERDISCIPLINARY | CLIMATE CHANGE
ENVIRONMENTAL | SOCIAL | ECONOMIC
RESEARCH-BASED | GOVERNANCE | NORW
PEOPLE - PLANET - PROFIT | RESOURCES
COMPLEX | TRANSFORMATION | KNOWLEDGE
ENERGY SYSTEMS | BIODIVERSITY | POLITIC
URBAN - RURAL | HUMAN NEEDS | WELLBE
SUFFICIENCY | SOLIDARITY | WATER | RESOURCE

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Master's Degree in Sustainable Development Facts Important to Know



- **academic title:**
Master of Science in Sustainable Development (MSc)
three majors (economics & management; natural sciences; social sciences), or without major
- **start of study program:** in fall (recommended) or spring semester
- **credit points:** 120 CP
- **duration:**
 - full-time study in 4 semesters; or
 - part-time study > 4 semesters
- **language of instruction:** English
- **tuition fees:** 850.-/per semester



Sustainable Development



= A global guiding idea how to develop societies to cope with risks/grand challenges:

*Sustainable development meets the **needs of the present** without compromising the **ability of future generations** to meet their own needs.*

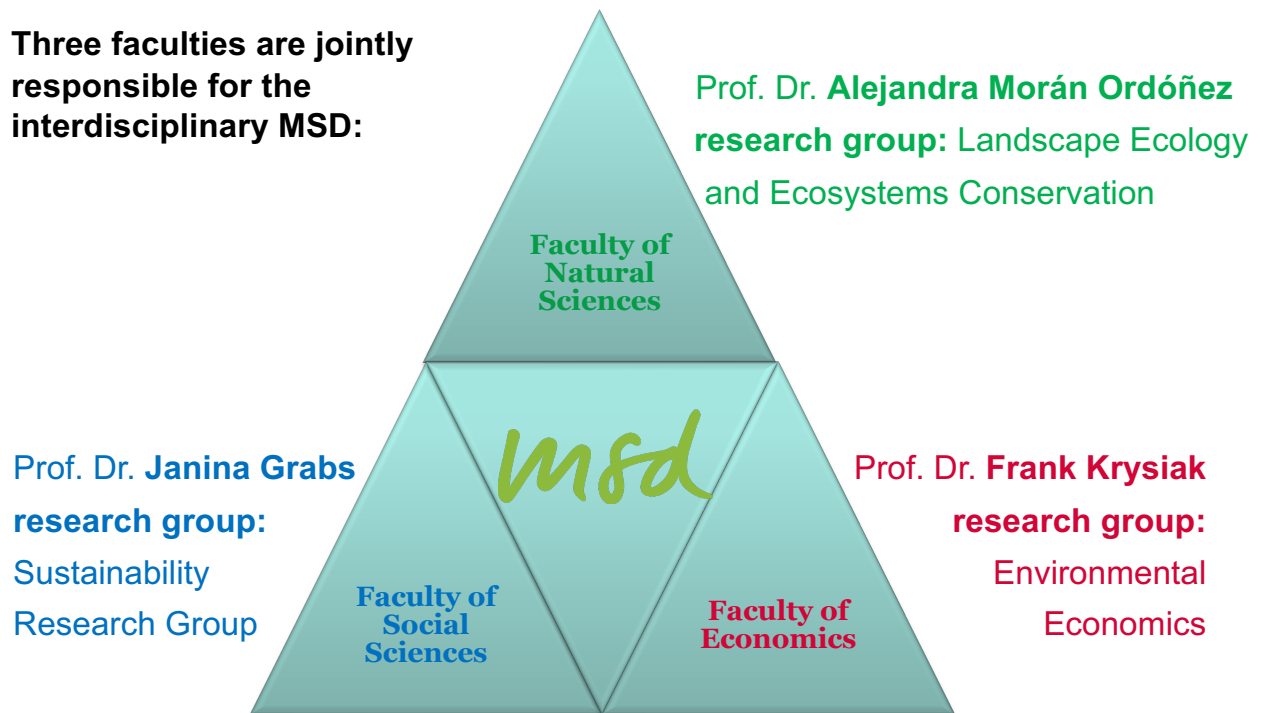
UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015:



Involved Faculties, Professorships and Research Groups

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Three faculties are jointly responsible for the interdisciplinary MSD:



Quote of Prof. Dr. F. Krysiak, Environmental Economics Faculty of Business and Economics

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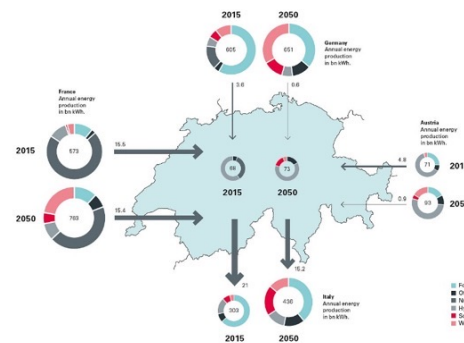
Sustainability is the challenge to balance risks and chances. We can change the world for better by developing new technologies and better institutions. But every change includes a risk that we (unintentionally) harm our descendants.

Environmental/Energy Economics



Main Research Topics

- Design of energy and climate policy:
How to support the energy transition?
How to mitigate climate change?
- Green technological change:
How to speed-up innovation and diffusion of green technologies?
- Economic concepts of sustainability:
How can we measure sustainability?



Environmental/Energy Economics



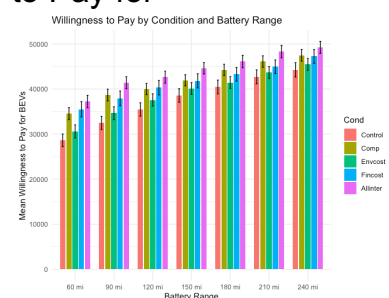
Typical course content:

- Design and effects of climate and energy policy
- Economics of biodiversity protection
- Integrated assessment of climate change

	Germany	UK
Phase I	FIT, funded via markup on electricity	Renewable Obligations, FIT, funded via markup on electricity
Phase II	<p><i>Small Install.</i> FIT up to 70% Peak</p> <p><i>Large Install.</i> Auction EIP Special case "Bürgerenergie"</p> <p>Funded via general tax revenue</p>	<p>Contracts for Difference (CfD), (FIT) Smart Export Guarantee "price floor" for permits, Capacity market</p> <p>Funded via markup on electricity</p>

Some Master's Theses:

- The Impact of Informational Nudging on the Willingness to Pay for Battery Electric Vehicles in the USA
- Understanding Residential Photovoltaic Diffusion
- Potential Effects of a European Meat Consumption Tax



Prof. Dr. Alejandra Morán Ordóñez
research group: Landscape Ecology and
Ecosystems Conservation, head,
Department of Environmental Sciences,
Faculty of Science

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“Every creature is better alive than dead, men and moose and pine trees, and he who understands it aright will rather preserve its life than destroy it“
(H. D. Thoreau)

Natural Science **Landscape Ecology and Ecosystems Conservation**

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Main Topics and Ongoing Research Activities

Ecological modelling to understand ecological patterns and processes

- Species and habitats distributions
- Ecosystem service provision quantification (nature's contributions to people)
- Connectivity analyses (ecological corridors, species dispersal)
- Development of biodiversity indicators

Spatial planning for conservation

- Identification of optimal areas for conservation of endangered species
- Evaluation of trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and human uses

Current projects

Conservation of glacier forelands in Switzerland

Impacts of renewable energy on biodiversity conservation

Implications of forest management on forest biodiversity

Natural Science Landscape Ecology and Ecosystems Conservation

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Key courses

Pathways to Sustainability Natural Sciences

Environmental impacts of current food production systems

Planetary boundaries, global change drivers, transformative change

Ecosystem Services: Concepts, Assessment, and Applications

Global Change Ecology

Master's thesis examples

Effects of solar photovoltaic utilities on red kite flight behaviour

Impacts of changes in traditional farming practices on the population of endangered species

Spatial prioritization of management zones within protected areas for the integration of competing objectives

Connectivity of protected areas in Colombia: identification and prioritization of potential corridors

Quote of Prof. Dr. J. Grabs,
Sustainability Research Group, head,
Department of Social Sciences,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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"I do have reasons for hope: Our clever brains, the resilience of nature, the indomitable human spirit, and above all, the commitment of young people when they're empowered to take action."
(Jane Goodall)

Main Topics and Ongoing Research Activities

- The governance of sustainability transformations in two key issue areas:
- Sustainable agri-food value chains
 - Private regulation (certifications, standards, company commitments)
 - Public regulation (import restrictions, due diligence legislation)
 - Focus on policy implementation, effectiveness, equity
- Energy Transition
 - Change of behavior
 - Sufficiency in daily life – e.g. changing mobility and food patterns
 - “Positive Energy Districts”

Key courses

Paradigms and Leverage Points for Sustainable Development

- Understand history and different worldviews of sustainable development
- Survey different levers of societal change, using the case of climate change

Political Economy for the Future: Growth, Inequality, and Planetary Boundaries

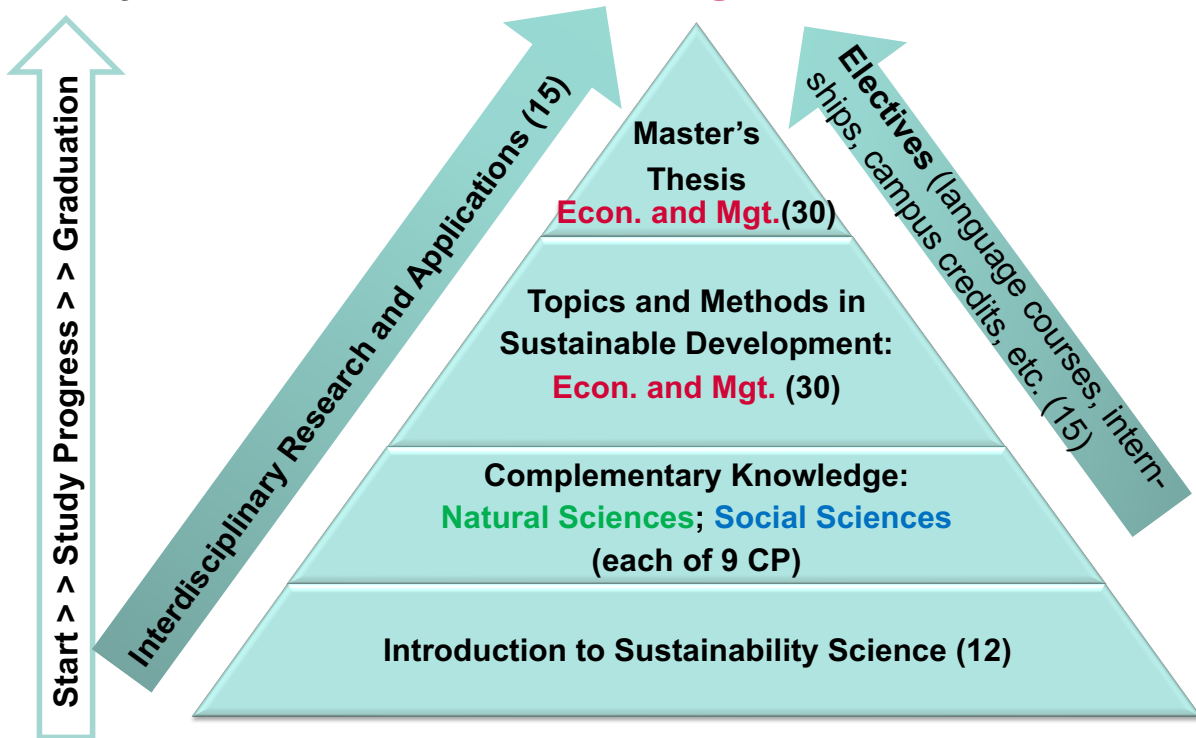
- Dive into new ways for politics (and citizens) to organize our economies
- Incl. Feminist economics, doughnut economics, degrowth, post-development

Master's thesis examples

- The Swiss Due Diligence and Reporting Obligations in Relation to Child Labor: An Analysis of their Potential to Foster Foreign Corporate Accountability in the Cocoa Sector
- Analysing Actions & Cooperations to Reduce Food Waste in Switzerland

Module Structure (Study Regulations § 8): Major: **Economics and Management**

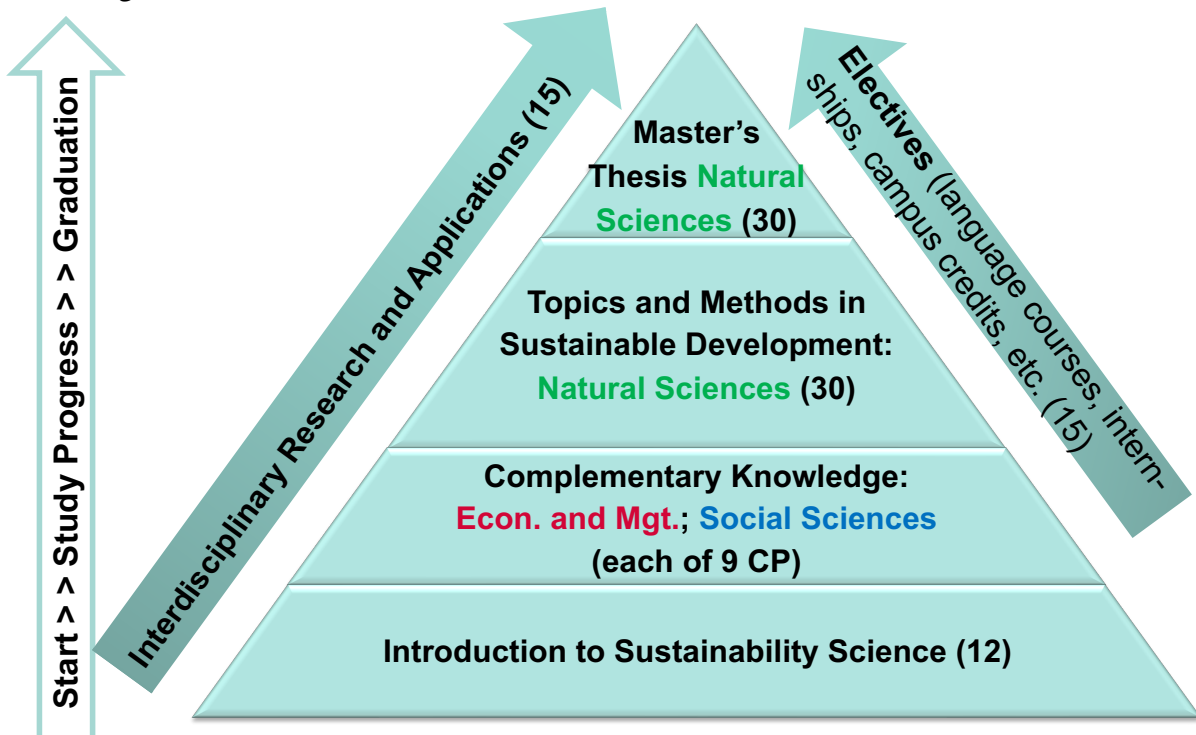
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MSD 2026_module structure

Module Structure (Study Regulations § 8): Major: **Natural Sciences**

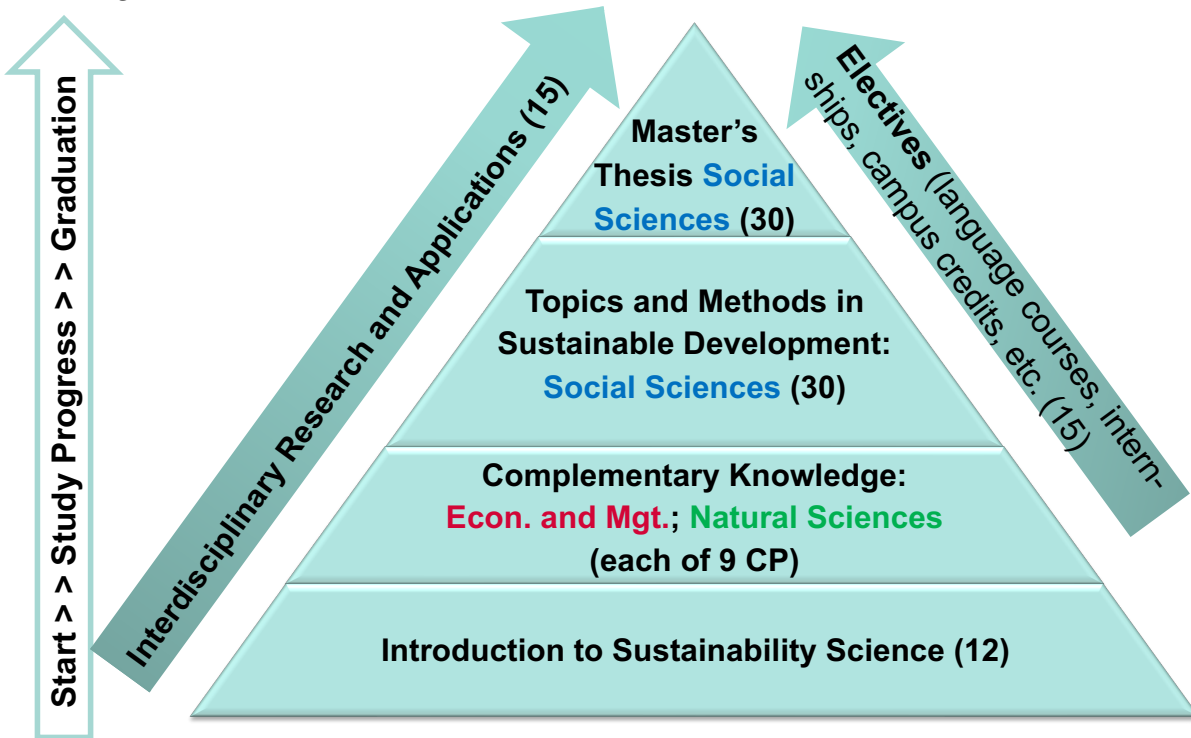
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MSD 2026_module structure

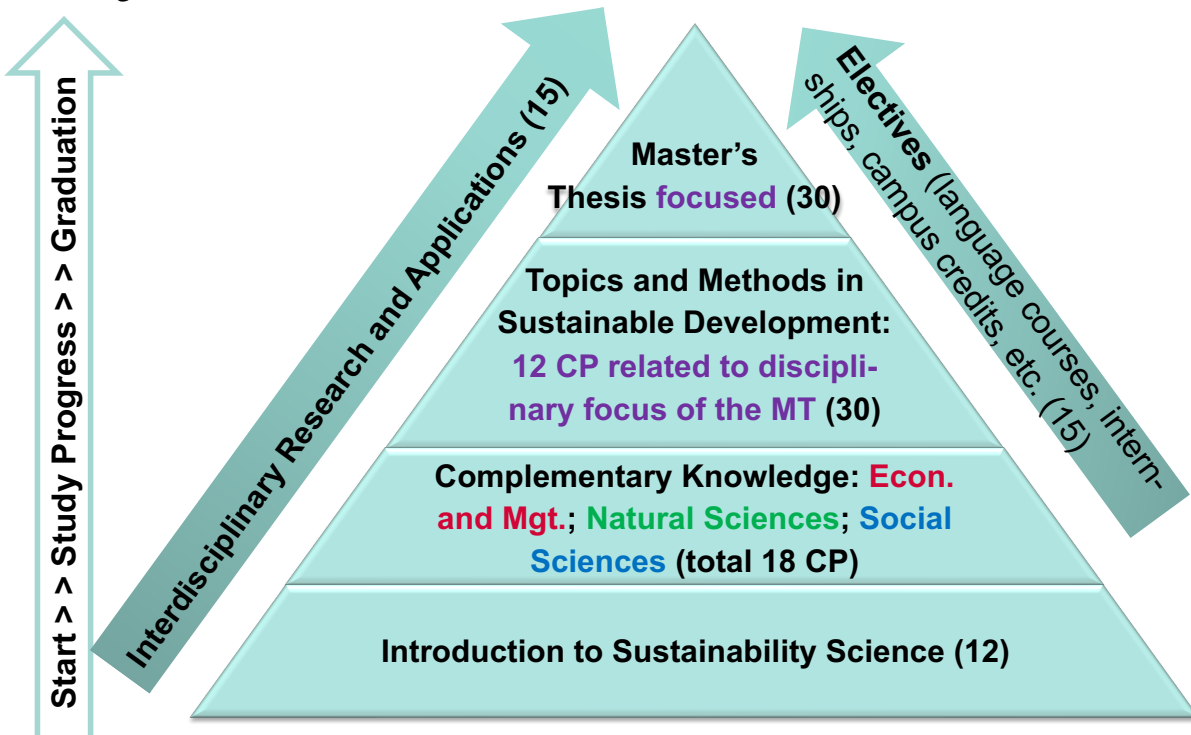
Module Structure (Study Regulations § 8):
Major: Social Sciences

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Module Structure (Study Regulations § 8):
Major: without

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Admission requirements (1/3)



The MSD is a **specialized** Master's degree with special admission requirements:

- a) Swiss university bachelor's degree in selected branches of study** (alphabetical order) according to study regulations (§ 3):
agricultural sciences, business administration, biology, chemical engineering, communication and media sciences, electrical engineering, earth sciences, environmental engineering and geomatics engineering, environmental sciences geography, macroeconomics, mechanical engineering, pharmaceutical sciences, philosophy, political science, social work and social policy, social and cultural anthropology/ethnology, sociology.

Admission subject to additional requirements of max. 30 credit points may follow if submitted degree is only partially equivalent; e.g. in the case of a bachelor's degree awarded by a university of applied sciences or a foreign university; or if a completed branche of study is not identical to the listed one but similar.

Admission requirements (2/3)



- b) minimal average grade in your bachelor's degree: 5.0** (Swiss scale).

A grade lower than that is to be compensated with a Graduate Record Examination® (GRE) General Test (only for applicants with university degrees):

Required GRE Test areas & results
quantitative reasoning: among the top 30 %
analytical writing: among the top 20%

- c) proof of evidence of basic knowledge in mathematics, in statistics or methods of empirical social research** at university level of at least **6 CP** (either or, or a mix of it).

What are our Alumni Doing?



- PhD or Post doc positions (Unibas, ETH, Freiburg i.Br., Vancouver, etc.);
- scientists (universities, research institutions, etc.)
- (co-)management- and project management in SD specialized consulting companies;
- sustainability assessment specialist in banks, auditing and insurance companies;
- project management in the field of renewable energies;
- positions in public authorities, museums, NPOs, political parties and corporations, etc.;
- head of the Sustainability Office at the University of Basel;
- founders of start ups dealing with food waste, sustainable mobilities, etc.
- and many more.



University
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Master's Degree in
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You still have questions?

Contact Camelia Chebbi,

head, MSD office/coordination of PtS

coordination-msd@unibas.ch

+41 (0)61/207 04 20



For details regarding **availability** see www.msd.unibas.ch

Individual study counseling upon request