



Is a double degree double work?



Jörn Onken, top scoring MEcon student, looks back on a great first year at Stockholm School of Economics. In his second Master year at HSG now, he is scouting a challenging research topic for a Master thesis. Which topic is waiting for thesis research? What are the highlights in Stockholm? How does MEcon knowhow help with internships in leading consultancy firms? What is the future holding?

You studied with great success at Mannheim University, top school in Germany. Why did you choose MEcon at HSG for your Master studies?

I chose the MEcon SSE (Stockholm School of Economics) double degree programme because I was looking for a top-level education and challenging academic experience combined with gaining international experience. I also really enjoyed the exchange semester in my undergrad at Tsinghua University in Beijing, because living and studying somewhere new after having lived in Germany my entire life was a unique experience that I am very grateful for and that I wanted to experience again during my Master studies.

You are studying the double degree programme of MEcon/MiQEF with Stockholm School of Economics. Why a double degree? Is a double degree double work? How do the two programmes compare?

The MEcon double degree programme is more work than studying at one school alone when you start it in Stockholm, because SSE requires you to write a thesis over one full semester (30 credits) in the second year, while you are taking classes at HSG at the same time. It is however far from double the work and I would highly recommend it to anyone who is trying to make the most out their Master studies. Regarding courses, after having studied in both MEcon programmes, I can say that both the level and the contents taught are very similar. Both schools manage very well to combine rigorous theory training with high policy relevance.



You have done several internships in leading consultancy firms, KPMG and PWC, and served as a corporate research intern at a big Landesbank. Is economics the secret for success in business and finance? How are quantitative skills helpful?

While I did not apply any of the economic theory or methods I learned in my internships, you still acquire valuable skills as an economics student that companies are really looking for: being a quick learner, not giving up on tough problems, being able to focus on an issue and solve it. I learned in my internships that a big part of being good at the job is learning-by-doing, which requires you to have the skills I mentioned above.

Which questions are most interesting for you? Is it big data, growth, managerial economics or public policy? Have you already chosen a hot topic for a Master thesis?

I am very much into macroeconomics and specialized as much as I could in macro at both universities. Especially the intersections of growth theory, development economics and labor economics are very interesting to me, and I am in the process of pinning down a related thesis topic.

Where are you heading professionally after graduation? Any ambitious plans with your private hobbies? What are they?

I still have not gotten enough of studying economics! I want to continue with a Ph.D. programme next year. I enjoy cycling long distances a lot, last summer I cycled from Mannheim to Stockholm. If time allows it, I am hoping to see more of Switzerland by bike next summer.

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