

Russell is a Petroleum Engineer with a background in Portfolio Management, Uncertainty Management, Production Forecasting, Opportunity Identification and Decision Risk Analysis. He has worked in the industry since the mid 1980's, working for BG Group and later Shell.

Why did you decide to take time out of work to study and how did you decide which course? Tell us a little about the course.

I had been interested in the Energy Transition for about 10 years when I was asked to study the possible impact of carbon pricing on the BG portfolio. When I left Shell in 2020, I was looking to study the subject further and the MSc Energy Policy by University of Sussex offered a good opportunity.

Energy Policy making is a very complex subject, it interweaves a myriad of subjects including energy justice, sustainable development, economic growth, governance, and politics as well as technology and innovation. To achieve a successful energy transition requires policy makers to understand both these subjects as well as role of governments, industry, and NGOs.

The course is offered online and is modular so you can, within reason stop and start, as required. I have been impressed by the quality of the interactive material and tutors and have very much enjoyed the group team working assignments. Despite the course being online you do get to engage with a wide range of people outside the oil and gas industry.

Assignments include both individual essay and report writing as well as group presentational work. So far, I have looked at the impact of energy subsidies on achieving net zero, the opening of the Woodhouse Colliery in Cumbria and an analysis of the UK Government policy mix supporting Carbon Capture and Storage.

What was challenging about going back to study? Have you had the support of an employer or another organisation in pursuing this additional qualification?

Going back to study demands you keep an open mind and be prepared to see things differently from your initial perceptions. While working in the O&G industry was a good grounding for the course, you quickly realise that there is a lot more to energy than producing barrels of oil and gas. The main personal challenge from my perspective was learning to adapt to an academic reading and writing style. I am self-funded and am doing the course for my own interest.

Has it been what you expected so far, has anything surprised you? What were the key things you have learnt so far that you think will change your career path going forward?

The course has changed my perspective on the Energy Transition, and I now see that achieving net zero will be much more about changing the way we live and our social practices than solving the substantial technical challenges that will also need to overcome.

One key takeaway from the course is that energy transition will require many of us to change our priorities and work more collaboratively together, the oil and gas industry does not have all the answers and should be prepared to listen to others a bit more. I have made no decision on my future career path at this stage.