

Our academic year is finally over – dissertations have been handed in and now all that is left to do is to wait for our results.... The past year and a half seems to have passed incredibly quickly, yet looking back there have been dramatic changes in this short space of time, particularly in our economic circumstances. Few of us entering the course in the autumn of 2008, would have envisaged that we would be graduating in a climate such as this.

The process of finishing the dissertation was followed by somewhat of an anticlimax; and it now seems strange to have days which are not filled by writing and editing! It is also strange to engage with a subject matter so intensely for a relatively short period of time, and then to leave it, although there may be much more to be done and more research possible. There is a need at this time, I feel, to try to maintain the momentum generated by the year, and the entire course, and not to be dispirited by the challenging employment market. As (almost) graduates, we need to keep our enthusiasm and our ambitions alive, and to remember that we are only at the beginning of our careers as planners.

For some this may mean revisiting why they chose to do the course in the first place, and to use this opportunity to try and gain as much experience as possible, either formally or informally. For others it may mean travelling abroad to work and gain experience which also provides a different perspective, and for others more research may be an opportunity.

Paradoxically, it seems that while there may not be many jobs in the planning domain in Ireland, there is also much work to be done – as we were reminded by this year's National Planning Conference. Graduating in such a challenging environment will probably prove difficult initially, but it may also be a chance, driven by necessity, to widen our skills, and to learn from those who have already gained experience in the planning domain. I remain optimistic that having to adapt to these circumstances will help us to become professionals who are comfortable with, and who are advocates for, a more multi-disciplinary approach to planning in Ireland.