

Options with environmental science

Your skills

Over the course of your degree you develop a good mix of subject specific and technical skills as well as transferable core skills. Consider these alongside other achievements, such as paid work, volunteering, family responsibilities, sport, membership of societies, leadership roles, etc. Think about how these can be used as evidence of your skills and personal attributes. Then you can start to market and sell who you really are, identify what you may be lacking and consider how to improve your profile.

As an environmental science student, you develop very specific skills related to particular courses and specialisms you take whilst at university. You also develop broad transferable skills which will equip you for a variety of jobs, both related and totally unrelated to environmental science. These include:

- research skills and the ability to solve problems, useful in both environmental and non-environmental-related jobs;
- organisational and time-management skills gained by meeting assignment deadlines;
- the ability to gather, analyse and communicate complex technical data to others, developing both written and oral communication skills;
- field survey techniques needed for specific environment-related jobs;
- the ability to work in all kinds of environments, developed through fieldwork experience;
- an understanding of the application of statistics and measurement techniques, which will demonstrate your numerical skills and confidence in the use of IT;
- a broad understanding of local, national and global environmental issues.

You will develop these subject specific skills in addition to your own personal skills and abilities. Qualities such as self-motivation, teamwork ability and leadership can also be gained through non-academic activities and work experience.

Employment prospects

Every year, statistics are collected to show what HE students do immediately after graduation. These can be a useful guide but, in reality, with the data being collected within just six months of graduation, many graduates are travelling, waiting to start a course, paying off debts, getting work experience or still deciding what they want to do. For further information about some of the areas of employment commonly entered by graduates of any degree discipline, check out 'What Do Graduates Do?' and the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Your Degree... What Next?'

Statistics collected from students graduating from physical and terrestrial, geographical and environmental science degrees in 2005, show that almost 54% of those surveyed were in full-time employment six months after graduation, while 7% were in part-time work. The largest percentages were working in: professional and technical occupations (24%); clerical and secretarial occupations (15%); and commercial, industrial and public sector management (10%).

Figures collected by some of the universities offering environmental science courses showed that the directly relevant occupations taken up by their students included: environmental adviser, scientific officer, laboratory analyst, and research editor.

Job options

Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Get hold of the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Your Degree... What Next?' from your careers service. This looks more generally at the options for today's graduates and offers informed advice on career planning. Or try 'What jobs would suit me?', an online career planning tool, at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/pplanner.

You can choose between jobs that are degree-related or those that appeal because they use other interests or elements of your degree.

Jobs directly related to your degree

- [Conservation adviser, landscape/wildlife](#) - assesses the wildlife and landscape value of different habitats, making appropriate recommendations to farmers, land managers, voluntary and private organisations involved in land management.
- [Countryside manager](#) - manages countryside and visitor services for a local authority, ensuring that the requirements of rural communities and countryside users are met.
- [Energy conservation officer](#) - improves the energy efficiency of domestic properties and other buildings by providing practical solutions to energy saving and raising the profile of energy conservation and renewable energy options.
- [Environmental consultant](#) - works in a commercial environment in areas such as water pollution, air and land contamination, environmental impact assessment, environmental audit, waste management, and noise/vibration measurement.
- [Environmental education officer](#) - supports, sustains and develops environmental issues within the community, through visiting schools, businesses and community groups, giving talks, leading walks, and producing educational resources.
- [Environmental manager](#) - manages the environmental performance of an organisation, including training staff to help them contribute to improved environmental performance.
- [Nature conservation officer](#) - protects, manages and enhances the local environment, by promoting and setting targets within local and national biodiversity action plans. Works in partnership with other organisations, advises employers and raises awareness of environmental issues within the community.
- [Recycling officer](#) - develops, implements and monitors a local authority's environmental policy on waste reduction, re-use and recovery, and provides advice on the management of recycling issues.
- [Waste management officer](#) - works within local authorities, assisting the environmental services department to develop, manage, supervise and control waste disposal and recycling facilities, ensuring they dispose of waste safely and with consideration for the environment.
- [Water quality scientist](#) - analyses water samples to maintain quality to set targets and standards derived from complex legislation to safeguard all aspects of water quality.

Jobs where your degree would be useful

- [Environmental health officer](#) - develops, co-ordinates, implements and enforces public health policies.
- [Landscape architect/designer](#) - designs outdoor spaces to

ensure that changes made to the natural environment are appropriate, sensitive and aesthetically pleasing.

- [Secondary school teacher](#) – teaches pupils in the age range 11-18.
- [Transportation planner](#) – forecasts travel patterns and develops strategies to manage demand taking environmental impact into consideration.
- [Town planner](#) - plans the management and development of towns, balancing the conflicting demands of housing, industrial development, agriculture, recreation, the transport network and the environment.
- [Toxicologist](#) - plans and carries out studies to discover the impact of toxic materials on humans, animals and the environment.

Although for many graduates the jobs listed here might not be their first, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. It's worth noting that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines.

To find out more about the above options and other jobs, see AGCAS Occupational Profiles and other sources of occupational information available in careers services. Occupational Profiles are also available on www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations.

Where are the jobs?

Typical employers for environmental science graduates include local authorities, The Environment Agency (EA) (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), environmental monitoring organisations, environmental consultancies, and charitable trusts such as English Nature (<http://www.english-nature.org.uk>) and The Wildlife Trusts (<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>). For more information, take a look at the following sectors:

- [Environmental, food chain and rural](#);
- [Local, regional and national government](#);
- [Science](#).

Career management is an ongoing process, one that you'll no doubt develop all your working life. For further information on all the above employment areas, visit www.prospects.ac.uk/links/sectorbs or ask to see the AGCAS Sector Briefings at your careers service.

Further study

In 2006, six months after graduation, almost 19% of environmental science graduates had gone on to undertake further study, and of these, 5% were combining work and study. Postgraduate courses could be aimed at developing knowledge of a particular specialism or entering a sector, such as environmental health, where a postgraduate qualification is an essential requirement. Some graduates embark on further study to train for a particular career path, e.g. teaching or management.

These trends show only what previous graduates in your subject did immediately upon graduating. Over the course of their career - the first few years in particular - many others will opt for some form of further study, either part-time or full-time. If further study interests you, start by taking a look at the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Postgraduate Study and Research' or the 'Further study' section of www.prospects.ac.uk. For a comprehensive list of courses, see 'Prospects Postgraduate Directory'.

Refer too to the 'Prospects Postgraduate Funding Guide', the AGCAS Special Interest booklet 'Postgraduate Study and Research' and AGCAS Vocational Course Surveys for further details relating to finance and the application process.

Other options

Don't forget there are alternatives to entering employment or postgraduate study, such as taking time out, volunteering or travelling. Longer term, you may want to consider starting your own business. Check out the AGCAS Special Interest booklets 'Beyond Nine to Five: Flexible Working', 'Self-employment' and 'Working Abroad', all available from your careers service.

Gaining experience and contacts can be extremely important for moving into many environmental science-related areas and enthusiasm and hard work as a volunteer for a relevant organisation show commitment and help with developing contacts and experience.

What next?

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whatever stage you are at, your careers service will be able to help you. A huge number of resources, including most of those mentioned here, plus a wide range of other services, including individual careers guidance, employer presentations and workshops on topics such as successful applications and interview techniques, are likely to be on offer.

A full list of useful resources plus case studies of graduates in this subject can also be found on www.prospects.ac.uk/links/options.

(c) Content copyright of or licensed to AGCAS (www.agcas.org.uk)

Written by Julie Bhagat, AGCAS, October 2006.
Edited by Carol Bebawi, AGCAS, October 2006.

The work of writers and editors is gratefully acknowledged.

To view the terms and conditions for the material provided in this publication, please see <http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/disclaimer>.