

# Environmental studies

**What impact will increased tourism have on a local environment? Can good waste management affect company profits? How do we make decisions about changing land use?**  
Environmental studies is about society's relationship with the environment.

## Why study environmental studies?

The environment affects us all, and the relationship between society and the environment is crucial to maintaining health and a good quality of life. To ensure that we understand how best to manage this critical balance, we need smart professionals with a deep knowledge of environmental issues.

The study of the environment involves both the social sciences and the natural sciences. Broadly, 'environmental studies', including environmental management, tends to focus on the how society interacts with the environment, how we can mitigate and respond to environmental problems, and an understanding of the value of natural resources for society. In an era of increasing global uncertainty, from climate change to population growth and dwindling natural resources, the study of the environment and our role within it is becoming more important than ever before.

## What will I study at university?

Because 'the environment' covers such a broad area, courses can differ significantly from one university to another. It is important therefore to find out as much as you can about the particular content of a course before you apply. More than 40 institutions across the UK offer an environment-related degree, most of which are for environmental science or related subjects. Around 12 institutions offer degrees in environmental studies or environmental management. These can be either single honours degrees, or combined with a wide range of other subjects, including economics, business, media or law.

**“We are looking for students who have a fundamental interest in the environment and who hope to pursue a career that shapes how we as a society interact with the environment.”**

**Programme Director,  
BA in Environmental Management,  
University of Manchester.**

Typically, courses will cover:

- The causes and effects of climate change and what can be done to mitigate or adapt to them
- Environmental applications of geographical information systems (GIS)
- Issues of urban planning
- The politics of the environment
- Aspects of environmental law



# Environmental studies

### What skills will I gain?

You will learn many skills directly related to environmental issues, but which are also highly transferable:

- Gathering and analysis of data
- Critical appraisal of information
- Problem solving
- Working effectively as part of a team

### After my degree... what next?

For anyone interested in a postgraduate degree in environmental studies, many courses are available leading to an MA or MSc qualification. Students may also find opportunities for PhD studentships.

Graduates will find a range of careers available in environmental and sustainability management, from local and central government to private industry. Policy-makers and think-tanks employ people to develop their strategy and audit environmental performance, whilst large companies in every sector employ environmental managers to ensure best practice and compliance with environmental regulations and guidelines. There are also many environmental consultancies that provide services to industry and local communities.

### Top tips from employers

- Try to do some voluntary work to show interest, passion and experience in the sector
- Bring new insights – research and talk about how these could be applied to current and potential future environmental issues
- Think about how you can relate environmental issues to the daily life of citizens and consumers, including yourself
- Demonstrate that you can appreciate the broader issues relating to the environmental sector - do not retain a narrow focus.



Typical jobs for graduates in environmental studies include:

- Environmental manager
- Environmental policy officer
- Business network officer
- Community project officer
- Leisure and parks facility manager
- Recycling officer
- Research assistant
- Environmental protection officer
- Environmental awareness assistant
- Water, energy and waste manager/technician
- Sustainable communications officer

Employers are looking for people with good project management skills who can work effectively in a team and who show awareness of current trends and legislation. You need to be able to draw connections from what you have learnt to applications in the business and consumer worlds.



# SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR SCHOOLS

## Further resources

- **The Society for the Environment (SocEnv)** is the independent, not-for-profit organisation that sets and maintains the standard for the Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) qualification. An individual can apply to become a Chartered Environmentalist through membership of one of its Licensed Professional Partners – IEMA, for example (see below). Student members of one of the Society's licensed professional bodies can benefit from support, mentorship and guidance on training and career progression.  
[www.socenv.org.uk](http://www.socenv.org.uk)
- **The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)** is the UK's leading environmental professional association. IEMA is dedicated to creating a sustainable future through environmental skills, knowledge and thought leadership and is an independent and international not-for-profit membership organisation that represents the views of 15,000 environmental professionals. Its membership is open to students.  
[www.iema.net](http://www.iema.net)
- **WRAP** is a not-for-profit company established in 2000 and backed by government funding from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. WRAP's vision is a world without waste, where resources are used sustainably. It works in partnership to help businesses, individuals and communities to improve resource efficiency.  
[www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk)
- **The Environment Agency** is a public body whose purpose is to protect and improve the environment and promote sustainable development. The Environment Agency's work ranges from the restoration of rivers and other habitats to the prosecution of polluters.  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)
- **Living With Environmental Change (LWEC)** is a partnership of 22 public sector organisations that fund, carry out and use environmental research and observations. The partner organisations include government departments and agencies and UK research councils. The purpose of LWEC is to ensure that decision makers in government, business and society have the knowledge, foresight and tools to mitigate, adapt to and benefit from environmental change.  
[www.lwec.org.uk](http://www.lwec.org.uk)
- **The Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability (STEPS) Centre** carries out interdisciplinary research projects and policy engagement activities with partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. The Centre brings social and natural scientists together across development studies and science and technology studies, working in and across the areas of food/agriculture, health/disease, water/sanitation and energy/climate change to generate new thinking and practical solutions.  
[steps-centre.org](http://steps-centre.org)

