

Options with biology

Your skills

In addition to the in-depth subject knowledge you gain from studying biology, you develop a range of practical and technical skills from laboratory sessions. You also learn how to use specialist techniques and technical equipment and to confidently handle masses of diverse data and draw conclusions.

You also develop general skills from studying at undergraduate level. Your ability to learn, together with other skills you gain as a consequence of organising your own study, will be attractive to employers in all sectors.

If your course includes group project work and seminars, these develop team skills and communication skills, such as report writing and making presentations. If a placement is included in your course, it may help you to develop problem-solving and project and time management skills; self-reliance and initiative; business awareness; and strong interpersonal skills.

Your biology course may include an extended research project, possibly based in an existing research group. This enables you to develop project management, teamworking and organisational skills, and to stretch and demonstrate your ability to understand complex scientific data and information.

Consider the skills developed on your course as well as through your other activities, 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. Take a look at [applications, CVs and interviews](#) for some useful tips.

Job options

Jobs directly related to your degree

Here is a list of biology-related jobs. Use the links to investigate them further and find out which best correspond to your interests. You may have to gain further skills or do further study to enter and/or progress in some of these professions:

- [Research scientist \(life science\)](#) - analyses and interprets the results of experiments and field work and communicates findings to the scientific community by methods ranging from presentations at seminars and conferences to publishing work in specialist literature.
- [Research scientist \(medical\)](#) - plans and conducts experiments to increase the body of scientific knowledge on topics related to medicine and may also aim to develop new, or improve existing, drugs or other medicine-related products.
- [Pharmacologist](#) - investigates how drugs and chemicals interact with biological systems. A pharmacologist's aim is to understand drugs and their actions so they can be used effectively and safely. Pharmacologists also carry out research to aid drug development.
- [Secondary school teacher](#) - teaches one or more subjects to classes of pupils aged 11-16 or 11-18. The subjects are determined by the national curriculum but how they are taught depends on the professional judgment of the teacher.
- [Soil scientist](#) - interprets and evaluates soil and soil-related information to understand how soil contributes to agricultural production, environmental quality, human health issues, climate change and biodiversity.
- [Clinical molecular geneticist](#) - uses biochemical and molecular biology techniques to identify genetic

abnormalities associated with disease. Individuals are screened both before and after the appearance of symptoms.

- [Nature conservation officer](#) - works to protect, manage and enhance the local environment, including promoting and implementing local and national biodiversity action plans in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations.

Jobs where your degree would be useful

For non-biology-related jobs it is your skills and interests that will drive you towards particular career areas. You may have to do further study or demonstrate particular skills and experience gained through voluntary or paid work to enter these professions:

- [Programme researcher, broadcasting/film/video](#) - provides research support to the producer and production team for film, television and radio productions, either working on a wide variety of programmes or within one subject area.
- [Pensions adviser](#) - works as part of the financial services sector, providing advice on various aspects of pensions to organisations and individuals to help them ensure their future financial provision. The advice offered may include current financial status, type of scheme and contribution levels.
- [Education administrator](#) - organises and oversees administrative activities and systems that support and facilitate the smooth running of an education institution. The majority are based in higher or further education (HE or FE), but opportunities are increasingly available in schools and private colleges.
- [Training and development officer](#) - manages the learning of an organisation's workforce. The training element of the work gives staff the knowledge, understanding, practical skills and motivation to carry out particular work-related tasks.

Although some of the jobs listed here might not be first jobs for many graduates, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Remember that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here. Look at [your degree... what next?](#) for informed advice on career planning and graduate employment, or take a look at [what jobs would suit me?](#), a helpful starting point for self-analysis.

[Explore types of jobs](#) to find out more about the above options and related jobs.

Career areas

Employers love scientists! Your curious, investigative minds are useful to all sorts of employment areas, not just in the science sector. In 2008, six months after graduation, almost two thirds (59%) of biology graduates had entered full- or part-time employment and nearly a third (30%) went on to do full- or part-time further study.

Of those who entered work, just under 1 in 6 (14%) went into professional and technical jobs, such as research assistant or lab technician, and just under 13% went into scientific jobs. Almost 1 in 10 (8%) went into management jobs. The rest of the graduates who were asked in 2008 were working in a wide range of sectors including education (5%), sales and marketing (4%) and health (3%). Just under one third (28%) were working in administration, retail or catering, perhaps to build up work

experience or take some time out.

Where are the jobs?

A wide range of employers recruit graduates for biology-related jobs including:

- universities and clinical research organisations (research scientists);
- pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies (research scientists and jobs in quality control);
- private hospitals and NHS trusts (clinical biologists);
- national and global health and environmental charities;
- scientific and technical consultancies;
- schools and colleges (teachers and lecturers);
- outreach organisations such as museums, science centres and broadcast companies, etc. (science communicators).

Biology graduates who choose a non-biology-related career can cast their net more widely and so it is a good idea to look at the information on specific careers.

For an insight into employment areas see:

- [Science](#)
- [Environment and agriculture](#)
- [Health](#)

See [industry insights](#) for further information on possibilities in other employment areas.

Statistics are collected every year by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) (<http://www.hesa.ac.uk>) 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 [your degree...what next?](#)

Further study

A high percentage of biology graduates choose to do further study. In 2008, six months after graduation, around 30% had gone on to full- or part-time further study. Many biology graduates choose to study for postgraduate qualifications in a more specialised science to increase their expertise in a particular area of biology, such as resource management, clinical science, or science communication.

Many go on to further study because, with an increasing number of graduates entering the job market each year, it gives them an advantage to have a higher qualification. It can also help with career progression. If you want a career as a research scientist or a university lecturer, you must do a PhD following your degree. This takes three years but is likely to be fully funded with a 'salary'. Studying at postgraduate level will enhance your employability by increasing your research skills, specialist knowledge and communication skills.

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 thinking [about postgrad study](#). [Find courses and research](#) of interest to you; you can also [apply for courses online](#).

Look at [funding my further study](#) for details relating to finance and the application process.

What next?

If you are thinking about further study it may be worth exploring opportunities at your current institution and comparing them with those offered by other institutions.

Contacts and experience are vital for getting into many biology-related jobs in this competitive field. Arrange to visit people working in jobs which might interest you to find out more

about their role, join mailing lists and get as much relevant voluntary or paid experience as possible.

Does your university have a careers fair for scientists? This could prove a good opportunity to find out more about areas of work which interest you and for you to make contacts.

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whether you are in the early stages of career planning, or you have definite ideas about what you want to do, you will find further information to help you in the following sections:

- Analyse your skills, interests and motivations to find out [what jobs would suit me?](#)
- [Explore types of jobs](#) to find out about entry requirements, salaries and working conditions.
- See [industry insights](#) for hints on breaking into various industries.
- [Find graduate employers](#) and see what they have to offer.
- You may want to investigate [self-employment](#) or [flexible working](#).
- Look at the advice on [applications, CVs and interviews](#).
- Get [work experience](#) through vacation work or a work placement.
- [Find courses and research](#) and investigate postgraduate study opportunities.
- If you are thinking about taking time out, volunteering or travelling consider a [gap year](#) or explore [working and studying abroad](#).
- If you have already graduated, get online [interactive advice](#).
- Visit [your university careers service](#) for a wealth of advice and resources to help with your career planning.

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