

Employability Profile: Agriculture, Forestry, Agricultural Sciences, Food Sciences and Consumer Sciences

What is employability?

Employability can be defined as: “a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations”. You may also hear employability skills referred to as transferable skills.

What is an employability profile?

An employability profile highlights the skills and qualities employers value and that you would be likely to gain during your degree.

How can I use it?

Studying a profile gives you the opportunity to tailor your CV or an application form to a specific job or simply consider the range of subject-specific and transferable skills you have developed, or could develop, during your degree.



What could I study in an Agriculture, Forestry, Agricultural Science, Food Science or Consumer Science degree?

Study in these areas focuses on land-based industries, applied biology, rural studies and sciences, and consumer studies and sciences. They are practically orientated, broad-based subjects and require study across a range of disciplines from physics and chemistry through biology to the social sciences, economics and management sciences, and consumer behaviour.

- Agriculture and horticulture apply fundamental physical, biological, economic and sociological principles to sustainable production in the countryside and consider the social and environmental impacts of these management systems. Some degrees will focus on the management of companion animals, working animals and animals kept for their athletic abilities or the recreational and sporting interests of their owners
- Agricultural sciences are the fundamental sciences of plants, animals, micro organisms and global processes which underpin the use of natural resources, including the production or management of animals, crops, forest and horticultural products and the management of productive resources for economic or social value
- Food science and technology is the understanding and application of a range of sciences to satisfy the need for sustainable food security, quality and safety.
- Rural studies apply biological, economic and sociological principles to the sustainable management of the countryside
- Forestry applies physical, biological, economic and sociological principles to tree and forest management
- Consumer science and studies are interdisciplinary subjects which seek to understand the relationships between the consumer and the economic, technical, social and environmental forces which influence the development and consumption of goods and services



What could I expect to gain from a degree in this area?

You could develop a wide range of both subject specific and more generic employability skills. Discipline specific skills could include:

- Knowledge of a wide range of subject-specific facts and principles as well as an awareness of the current limits of theory and applied knowledge within your subject
- An understanding of the provisional nature of information and the competing and alternative explanations within your subject

- Ownership of aspects of the discipline through in-depth study or research
- Technical skills, including working with specialist equipment and learning a variety of relevant and specialist techniques
- Awareness of legal, moral, ethical, sustainability, environmental and social issues relevant to your discipline and an appreciation of the need for professional codes of conduct
- An insight into current issues such as climate change, organic crop production and the use of agricultural systems to store carbon

The more generic skills you could develop may include:

- The ability to use qualitative and quantitative information creatively and imaginatively to solve problems, suggest changes or developments and make decisions
- The ability to plan and conduct research, evaluate the outcomes and draw valid conclusions
- The ability to evaluate and interpret, in a balanced and critical manner, new information provided by others from a range of disciplines and sources
- The ability to think holistically and laterally and appreciate inductive (inferring general principles from specific instances) and deductive (inferring a specific instance from a general law) reasoning
- Numeracy, communication (both oral and written) and IT skills
- Effective use of interpersonal and teamworking skills, for example through group projects, lab-work and fieldwork, including initiative and leadership skills
- Self-management and lifelong learning skills, such as working independently, time management and organisation skills, for example through managing your workloads and designing and executing practical investigations



What sort of job could I use these skills in?

Destination surveys show that graduates from these disciplines enter a very broad range of careers. The major areas of subject-related employment for graduates in agriculture and related subjects are in farm management, research and advisory work, and sales and marketing of agricultural products and animal feed. Graduates in Food Sciences may become dieticians, food technologists, scientists, product developers, buyers, production and quality assurance managers and researchers, and managers of enterprises and businesses. Depending on your discipline, employers could include the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS), the NHS and Forest Enterprise.



Where can I find out more about employability?

The Centre for Bioscience student webpage brings together employability resources from the Centre and links to careers and employability focussed websites: www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/students.aspx

You may find the following career and further study related websites useful:

- Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk
- Windmills: www.windmillsonline.co.uk
- Find-a-PhD; www.findaphd.com/ and find-a-masters; www.findamasters.com
- Institute of Biology; www.iob.org/general.asp?section=education_careers/education_job/he
- Environmental Careers: www.environmentcareers.org.uk/
- Lantra, careers in the land based industries; www.lantra.co.uk/employees-and-volunteers/

