

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

WHAT DOES AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER DO?

Environmental Health Practitioners carry out advisory or enforcement work, in either the public or private sector, to ensure that our surroundings are safe, healthy and hygienic. They might specialise in one of the following areas of public health, or deal with them all: environmental protection; food safety; health and safety at work; housing standards; noise control; pollution control; waste management.

Their day-to-day work could involve: inspecting businesses for health and safety, food hygiene and food standards; advising employers on environmental health matters; responding to complaints; investigating outbreaks of food poisoning, infectious disease or pests; collecting samples for laboratory testing; enforcing environmental health laws; investigating accidents at work; advising community groups and giving educational talks; giving evidence in cases that come to court; keeping records and writing reports.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Environmental Health courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- good spoken and written communication skills
- negotiation skills
- care and attention to detail
- the ability to understand and explain legislation, procedures and requirements
- good people skills, for dealing with people from all backgrounds
- a good level of scientific and technical understanding
- the ability to investigate, analyse and provide solutions to problems
- assertiveness and tact

A full driving licence is likely to be required for this job.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- To become an Environmental Health Officer/Practitioner, candidates need an undergraduate or postgraduate Environmental Health degree that has been approved by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH): see https://www.cieh.org/professional_development/EH_degree.html for a list of approved courses. Graduates then undertake work-based learning and study for a series of professional examinations.
- For an MSc in Environmental Health, a first degree in a related field or a scientific subject will be required.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Foundation Degree programmes in Environmental Health exist in the UK, but there are none offered in the West Midlands. Graduates from accredited Foundation Degree programmes may be able to top up to an accredited BSc degree. There are 2 undergraduate degree courses in the West Midlands:

BSc (Hons) Environmental Health: University of Wolverhampton (<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time, or 4 years full-time (includes a 1-year work placement). 5-6 years part-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: GCSEs in English and Maths at grade 4/C+ or equivalent.

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* in Science must pass 60 credits, at least 45 of which are at Level 3, of which 18 Level 3 credits must be in Science at 'merit' or 'distinction' credits.

Applicants with a *BTEC QCF Extended Diploma* need to have gained at least a Merit/Merit/Pass.

Entry requirements – other requirements: Students must have studied a minimum of two years post GCSE level. However, it is expected that some applicants will be mature students with work experience, who wish to further their career development. These applicants will be processed through standard procedures, which may involve an interview as part of the process. Please see <http://wlv.ac.uk/mature> for further information.

BSc (Hons) Public Health: University of Wolverhampton (<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time or 5-6 years part-time

Entry requirements - qualifications:

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* should contact the University's *Gateway* team (gateway@wlv.ac.uk; 01902 321032) to seek guidance on entry requirements.

BTEC applicants should have a BTEC National Diploma with at least Merit/Merit/Pass or a BTEC QCF Extended Diploma at grade Merit/Merit/Pass or a BTEC QCF Diploma at grade Distinction/Merit.

Entry requirements – other requirements: Students must have studied a minimum of two years post GCSE level. However, it is expected that some applicants will be mature students with work experience, who wish to further their career development. These applicants will be processed through standard procedures, which may involve an interview as part of the process. Please see <http://wlv.ac.uk/mature> for further information.

NB Please check with each course provider as entry requirements can change.

POSTGRADUATE COURSES

Graduates who have at least a second-class honours degree in another subject, or who have equivalent qualifications and experience, may be able to enter an accredited postgraduate MSc course. Candidates are usually expected to hold a degree in a science-based discipline or a subject closely related to Environmental Health.

NB Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

There are opportunities with local councils and also in the private sector: for example, assessing food standards and health and safety for food suppliers and hotels.

Many Environmental Health Practitioners are employed by local authorities. There are also opportunities in the NHS, the armed forces, central government and its agencies - such as the Environment Agency, Food Standards Agency and the Health & Safety Executive - and with private sector companies including: large retailers, especially food suppliers (monitoring quality assurance); holiday companies (checking the standards of foreign hotels and resorts); airlines/shipping companies (ensuring health and safety requirements are being met).

Opportunities also exist for experienced Environmental Health Practitioners to work for private consultancies.

A 2014 public health workforce report estimated that there were 5,500-8,500 environmental health practitioners in England with approximately 4,000 of them working in the public sector. 3% of Chartered Institute for Environmental Health members are employed by charities.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Although the majority of Environmental Health Practitioners are office-based, they spend a significant amount of time on-site, for example visiting shops, restaurants, factories and offices, as well as people's homes. As the sites visited may be dirty, unpleasant or potentially dangerous, the Environmental Health Practitioner would wear protective clothing when necessary.

They occasionally undertake evening or weekend work. Part-time work and job sharing may be available. Local authorities generally offer a number of flexible working opportunities, including part-time work, job share, reduced or compressed hours, and working from home.

Career breaks are possible, although self-employment/freelance work is unusual. Casual employment through agencies is more common.

SALARY

Starting salaries are around £25,000 per year, rising to £35,000 for experienced staff. Environmental health managers can earn between £45,000-£60,000.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

INFORMATION SOURCES

- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH): <http://www.cieh.org/>
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMOjR7NgXzQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQAx8uujrdu>
- https://www.cieh.org/professional_development.html