Considering... an ethical career

Introduction
What is meant by ‘ethical career’? It usually refers to a career which is environmentally or socially responsible and involves working for an organisation or company which you feel has a positive effect or influence on society. It may involve self-employment or setting up or working for a social enterprise.

Is the right sector for me?
- It is clear that an individual’s criteria for measuring environmental and social responsibility will vary. You need to define ‘ethical’ for yourself, in relation to your values and beliefs
- Consider also whether your ethical interests relate to some or all of the following: the type of work you do; who you work for/with; how you do your job (eg environmental impact)
- A good starting point is to do the quiz on: www.ethicalcareers.org/news/111/16/Quiz-Ethics-unlimited/. This is an excellent site with lots to get you thinking.

Researching the sector
- Careers job sector pages www.york.ac.uk/careers/sectors (Environment, Charity and voluntary sector, and ethical careers in other sectors)
- www.prospects.ac.uk/features_ethical_careers.htm - a useful introduction
- Remember that it is not only charities or the not-for-profit sectors which may offer an ‘ethical’ career. Social enterprises are businesses driven by a social or environmental purpose. This purpose is at the very heart of what they do, and the profits they make are reinvested towards achieving that purpose www.socialenterprise.org.uk/pages/about-social-enterprise.html
- If you are a scientist, the Scientists for Global Responsibility website is useful www.sgr.org.uk/projects/ethical-careers and includes resources about ethical issues in science, design and technology and includes case studies and contact lists of employers
- Consider other job sectors such as social care, health, education
- Many private companies also take ethical considerations seriously, particularly now that there is increased public scrutiny of companies’ affairs. You may need to look at what the organisation does, what it supports and where it gets its funding. Examine their organisational values and code of ethics. Organisations such as Business in the Community can be helpful as they include over 800 members committed to corporate social responsibility (CSR) www.bitc.org.uk
- When considering your career, take into account a company’s or organisation’s:
  - Environmental impact – of operations, products or services
  - Marketplace and business conduct – responsible behaviour in developing, purchasing, selling, marketing
  - Social or community impact – local or global
  - Ethical governance – conduct and ethics at all levels in the workplace
  - Workplace practices – equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices
- Employers may use the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to indicate their approach to ethical issues and many companies have a dedicated person, team or department working on CSR. Again, look at companies’ activities in the light of your own definition of ‘ethical’ practices. A good starting point on Corporate Social Responsibility is www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/experience/occupations/csr/overview

Work experience and developing skills
- How can you demonstrate your commitment to your definition of ‘ethical’? Have a look at www.oxfam.org.uk/get_involved/ for some ideas of what you can do
- Check out www.york.ac.uk/careers/volunteering for possible local involvement
The skills you need will depend upon the role you are seeking. Research roles carefully to identify skills and experience needed and look for ways to develop these skills (see below for ideas of how you can do this at University).

Routes into the sector
Entry routes will depend on the type of work you are seeking

- Think about different employment sectors, e.g., private, public and the voluntary sector. Where does your interest lie? Within all these sectors there will be a range of jobs, which will include professional roles for which further qualifications will be needed, possible internship opportunities and non-graduate level jobs. Think about your skills and interests when investigating these. Looking at job descriptions and person specifications on 'ethical websites' will help you to get an idea of the range of opportunities. See the end of this information sheet for useful websites which include job vacancies
- You may find that there isn't a clearly defined career path but that you have to be flexible, open-minded and prepared to seek out opportunities
- There is an index (Corporate Responsibility Index) which is a benchmark of responsible business practice. Check it out at www.bitc.org.uk. Alternatively, use www.ethicalperformance.com - the global independent business newsletter on corporate social responsibility and socially responsible investment.

Useful resources

Reference books and journals in Careers

- The Ethical Careers Guide
- Careers Un-Ltd (Richardson & McConnell)
- Screw work, let's play (John Williams)
- Be a free range human (M Cantrell)
- Diggers and Dreamers: the guide to communal living
- Enterprising non-profits: toolkit for social entrepreneurs
- How to get a job you'll love (John Lees)
- You want to do what? (Kathleen Houston)
- Coffins, cats and fair trade sex toys (Jeremy Piercy)
- Third sector (journal)

Information sheets www.york.ac.uk/careers/infosheets

- Considering... human rights; international development ...(and many more)

Careers Websites

- York profiles and mentors – www.york.ac.uk/careers/profiles
- Job sector pages (introductory information about working in the sector, including training, employment, work experience and useful links) – www.york.ac.uk/careers/sectors
- www.ethicalcareers.org/sections/career-doctor/ - for useful tips about ethical careers
- www.idealista.org – global search engine for jobs, internships and volunteering opportunities
- www.ethical-jobs.co.uk – ethical job and voluntary vacancies
- www.worthwhile.org.uk – offer a graduate scheme in the not-for-profit sector
- www.co-operative.co.uk/en/corporate/sustainability - Co-op’s sustainability report
- www.globethics.net – jobs in responsible enterprise and finance
- www.ethicalconsumer.org – looks at companies behind brand names
- www.charitypeople.co.uk – jobs in the not-for-profit sector
- www.peopleandplanet.org – a student organisation which campaigns to alleviate world poverty, defend human rights and protect the environment. The site includes permanent and voluntary positions and graduate internships
- www.careers.ox.ac.uk/careers-beyond-profit - really useful information sources
- http://thejobcrowd.com includes reviews of companies
Social media

- Science, Engineering and Technology Facebook sector page (www.york.ac.uk/services/careers/vle/opps/sci) and on Twitter (http://twitter.com/YorkCareersSci)
- Voluntary Sector careers at York Facebook sector page (www.york.ac.uk/services/careers/vle/opps/3s) and on Twitter (http://twitter.com/YorkCareers3s)

Activities at York to help develop relevant skills and experience:

- York Students in Communities offers placements of varying lengths with organisations in the local community and charity internships. These can develop skills of project management, teamwork, communication, problem solving, organisation and time management. You can also gain ideas for individual volunteering opportunities www.york.ac.uk/careers/volunteering
- York Students in Schools offers school based placements and the opportunity to work on team projects with York Children’s University. These activities can help you to develop your skills in communication, creativity, teamwork, organisation and project management www.york.ac.uk/careers/ysis
- Enterprise advice and support (financial and office space) for students who wish to set up their own business or social enterprise. Also workshops, competitions, talks etc. for those interested in developing a more enterprising approach www.york.ac.uk/careers/enterprise. A good way to gain experience of writing and presenting proposals for funding
- Courses from Careers may help you to develop relevant personal skills and may help you to develop commercial awareness and work related skills: www.york.ac.uk/careers/courses

Please note:

- The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.
- Some internships offered in this sector may be unpaid. Before starting an internship you should be clear about the length of the internship, pay and conditions, what you will be expected to do, and what you will gain from the experience.