

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 (e.g. environmental impact)

Researching the sector

- Read about [job sectors](#) in which you could pursue an ethical career on the Careers and Placements web pages.
- Do you have a business idea driven by a social or environmental purpose? Look into how you could set up a [social enterprise](#) and see your business make a difference. As a student at York you can get support from our [Enterprise team](#) to help launch your idea.
- If you are a scientist, the [Scientists for Global Responsibility](#) website is useful 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 or planning
- 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).
- Companies, charities and public sector organisations can be members of the [Good Business Charter](#), providing accreditation for responsible business practices.
- An increasing number of organisations in the UK are [Certified B Corporations](#), businesses meeting high standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency and accountability.
- When job hunting, 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. The [Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability](#), the UK's professional body for this area, offers free student membership.

Work experience and developing skills

- How can you demonstrate your commitment to your definition of 'ethical'? Volunteer to develop your skills and show your commitment to the area you feel strongly about. Check out our [volunteering pages](#) for opportunities in York
- 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

Useful resources

Reference books and journals in Careers and Placements

- Screw work, let's play (John Williams)
- Green Careers for Dummies
- Enterprising non-profits: toolkit for social entrepreneurs
- How to get a job you'll love (John Lees)
- Third sector (journal)

Careers resources

- If you're interested in human rights or international development, read the [information sheets](#) on considering careers in these sectors.

Websites and job listings

- Read profiles and get in touch with York graduates who work in the areas you're interested in using [York Profiles and Mentors](#).
- [Job sector pages](#) (introductory information about working in the sector, including training, employment, work experience and useful links).
- Careers advice around 'effective altruism' and how you can choose a career that has a big impact from [80,000 Hours](#).
- [Idealist](#) global search engine for jobs, internships and volunteering opportunities

- [Worthwhile](#) offers a graduate scheme in the not-for-profit sector.
- Information from [Ethical Consumer](#) about the ethical integrity of various consumer companies
- Information from the University of Oxford on finding a career that fits your values, [Careers beyond profit](#)

Activities at York to help develop relevant skills and experience:

- [Volunteer](#) in a school or the local community to develop your skills and demonstrate your commitment to a particular sector.
- [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; a good way to gain experience of writing and presenting proposals for funding.

Please note:

- 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.
- The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.