

L6 Environmental Practitioner Degree Apprenticeship experience

Esme's story

Hi, I'm Esme and I'm a **Level 6 Environmental Practitioner apprentice** at the Environment Agency. I've been on the apprenticeship since October 2021, however I started at the Environment Agency in March 2020. Since starting the apprenticeship, I have worked in the **Water Resources** Planning Team where I work with a water company to help them plan the future of water resource availability, regulating the supply-demand balance to ensure there is enough water to provide customers, and responding to emergency drought events.

I've always aspired for a career in the environmental sector since studying Geography, Environmental Science and Geology at A-Level. I then went to the University of Leeds in 2019 to study Physical Geography, however after one month I dropped out because studying full-time wasn't what I imagined it to be, it just didn't feel right.



“the perfect fit... I could study towards that degree I've always wanted whilst earning”

When the opportunity for this apprenticeship came up, it was the perfect fit as I could study towards that degree I have always wanted, whilst earning a salary, allowing me to save for a house deposit and gaining professional industry experience! I'm completing the apprenticeship to enhance my skill set which I can use in water resources planning and my professional working behaviours. I have a **great balance between my working life, study life and personal life.**



My degree apprenticeship is provided by the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) and I'm studying for a BSc Environmental Management degree part-time over 5 years, and each Thursday I travel to campus to attend a full day of lectures (in my working hours). I then work a hybrid week with a mixture of home working and attending the office for the four other working days of the week, and have the weekends off to relax.

This year, I have learnt how to use ArcGIS in computer practical sessions, attended lectures about engaging stakeholders in environmental projects and the science of the Earth's fundamental processes, specifically a detailed study into the water cycle. Studying the water cycle and its processes has been extremely useful for my day job as I have learnt about the processes in the atmosphere and biosphere which impact water availability, but also the skills on how to estimate and calculate volumes of rainfall, rates of evaporation, groundwater flow velocity and so much more. **The degree has been incredibly transferable to my day job** in water resources planning so far!

There is plenty that I enjoy about being a degree apprentice in Water Resources. Water resource planning is more interesting than I could have imagined, there is so much that goes on behind the scenes and it's a very diverse career path. I could eventually focus on one specialism such as demand/water efficiency, or I could join the hydrogeologist planning team to gain experience in groundwater

Benefits of working at the EA

abstraction and licenses... **the options are endless.**

I have a designated apprenticeship mentor to help monitor my progress against the apprenticeship Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) and who actively encourages my development. Every 12 weeks I have a meeting with my university tutor and mentor to review my progress, my assignments and work through any personal, work or apprenticeship issues, meaning I am well supported. The EA is a great place to work, with flexible working hours allowing a greater work/life balance, and supportive colleagues – my team are understanding of my development journey, offering support, mentoring and shadowing opportunities. My travel to/from the university is paid for by the EA, removing any financial barriers. From a social perspective, **I have made some life-long friends** with the other apprentices on my course, I even went on holiday last summer with someone who I didn't know before starting this apprenticeship! I'm due to graduate and complete my apprenticeship in 2026/27 and I will also become a chartered Environmental Practitioner with CIWEM.



In between now and then I hope to work hard towards another promotion or even move to a different area of the organisation such as hydrogeology, whilst still being able to continue with my apprenticeship. I think I would like to specialise in customer engagement and increasing awareness to the public on our precious water resources, and how we can educate customers to reduce their water consumption.

Written by Esme, Environmental Practitioner Degree Apprentice at the Environment Agency