



Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies

Career Progression in Animal Health and Welfare

Higher Diploma to an Apprenticeship

A career in Animal Care

Example – Zoo Keeper

Zoo keepers are responsible for the day-to-day care and welfare of animals in a zoo, wildlife/safari park, aquarium or special collection. Keepers may work with a wide range of animals from mammals and birds, to reptiles and amphibian, to fish and invertebrates. Many keepers become highly specialised and concentrate and work with one type of animal.

The job is interesting and varied and requires a wide range of different skills.

Zoo keepers need:

- an excellent awareness of the animal's welfare requirements
- to be able to plan and manage their own workload
- a good range of information and communication technology skills
- to be able to work well alone and as part of a team
- a good awareness of health and safety issues
- excellent communication skills.

Zoo keepers work at zoos, safari/wildlife parks, bird collections and aquariums throughout the UK. There are about 350 such places run by zoological societies, charitable trusts, local authorities or private businesses. More information can be obtained from the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), www.biaza.org.uk

For information on the skills gaps and shortages of the current workforce and factsheets on individual industries within the environmental and land-based sector, including animal care please visit: www.lantra.co.uk/skills-assessment

It is possible to enter a career as a zoo keeper through an apprenticeship programme in Animal Care (opting for the pathway in zoos/wildlife establishments). Apprenticeships are flexible training programmes tailored to meet the needs of a business. They combine practical and theoretical skills and are designed to help employees reach a high level of competency and performance.

When completing an apprenticeship programme most of the training is 'on the job' - working with a mentor to learn job-specific skills at the employers premises. Additional skills and knowledge are provided by a local college or a specialist training provider. The apprentice earns while they learn, and in a way best suited to many - hands on experience.

For further information on apprenticeships visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Completion of the Higher Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies will enable students to become equipped with real skills and knowledge with which to begin their apprenticeship and training.

There are also other job roles within the animal care industry and information on these can be found at www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/ and www.afuturein.com

Why choose the Higher Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies for entry into an apprenticeship in Animal Care?

What makes the Diploma different from the traditional GCSE route is that it is not purely a classroom based course. Students get out and about and learn from different employer businesses/organisations who understand what the next workforce generation needs to know. Consequently students take up to date, real world knowledge directly into the workplace.

This is achieved through employers being actively involved with the Diploma in a number of different ways, for example:

- Work Shadowing
- Industry Days
- Visits
- Mentoring
- Questions and Answers Sessions
- Work Experience.

For further information on Employer Engagement in the Diploma visit – www.diplomaelbs.org.uk/welcome/consortia/downloads-and-resources/

What does the Diploma actually consist of and how is it different?

The Higher Diploma is equivalent to 7 GCSEs (grades A*-C). You can also study additional GCSEs alongside the Higher Diploma.

There are **three** elements to the diploma:

- principal learning
- generic learning
- additional and specialist learning.

Principal Learning

Principal learning is a free standing qualification relating to the environmental and Land-based sector. It focuses on developing relevant knowledge, understanding and skills and applying them to work-based situations.

Therefore students would look at:

- exploring the productive and working environment – how we manage the environment in the modern world
- plants and animals – the role plants and animals in today's society covering subjects including nutrition, care, welfare and breeding
- developing the sustainable environment – the impact of people and business on the environment and debating current environmental issues.

Generic Learning

Consists of:

- functional skills in English, ICT and mathematics
- personal, learning and thinking skills
- a project
- work experience – a minimum of 10 days related work-based activities.

A Project

A student interested in a career as a zoo keeper would perhaps choose a project on 'The trade of exotic animals in the UK' or 'The perception of the public into the keeping of animals in zoos'.

In order to meet project objectives students need to:

- manage the project
- use resources/undertake research as appropriate to the topic
- develop the project to achieve the planned outcome
- review the project outcomes including own learning and performance.

Students need to show they can plan, deliver and present a piece of work.

Work Experience

There are numerous opportunities for work experience in the animal care industry. These could include working in a city farm, animal rescue centre or veterinary practice.

For a career in animal care enthusiasm and an interest in working with animals is really important. Many zoos require previous relevant experience and volunteering experience is extremely valuable.

Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL)

Additional and specialist learning adds breadth and/or depth to the learning experience. A student's choice of ASL enables them to personalise their programme to include studies which interest them and support their career ambitions. An example of this could include a Level 2 Certificate in Animal Care.

For further information on the qualifications within the diploma please visit <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/DiplomaCatalogueSelection.aspx>

Further Progression

Once the apprenticeship has been successfully completed apprentices could progress within employment or move on to further or higher education. A new employee will receive practical on the job training from qualified members of staff, gaining experience in different departments of the zoo with different kinds of animals.

In larger zoos there may be prospects of promotion to senior keeper and eventually to head keeper.

Some keepers move into related areas of work, such as RSPCA inspector.

Diploma progression illustrations can be found on the QCDA website: www.qcda.gov.uk/25715.aspx

More information on the Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies can be found at www.diplomaelbs.org.uk.