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A model for the education and training of
ecologists and environmental managers
in the UK: filling the skills gap

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Summary

- **identify the objectives of the project**
- **describe the consultation and research undertaken to date**
- **outline the findings to date**
- **indicate future investigation and the way ahead**
- **consider possible solutions**

Terminology:

- ecology and a professional ecologist
- environmental sciences
- education
- training
- skills

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The project is being undertaken by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM)

IEEM is the professional body that:

- **represents and supports ecologists and environmental managers in the UK, Ireland and abroad**
- **provides a variety of services to develop competency and standards in ecology and environmental management**

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Established in 1991, IEEM has over 3,500 members drawn from local authorities, government agencies, industry, environmental consultancy, teaching/research, and NGOs

IEEM identified a gap in the skills and competence of ecologists being recruited into the profession

IEEM held two workshops jointly with the BES to start to tackle this issue but full focus has never been brought to bear on the issue

A project was launched funded by IEEM with an steering group representing the breadth of the membership

The objectives of the project are to:

- undertake a review of work that has been done
- clarify extent and magnitude of the skills gap through a targeted survey of statutory agencies, non-government organizations and environmental consultancies
- review all ecology and environmental management training provision in the UK and Ireland looking outlining any gaps. Training that employers provide their staff (and how they encourage staff to get skills and competence) also needs to be considered
- identify and implement mechanisms for closing gaps in training/skills

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Is there a skills gap?

What is this gap?

Work done to date:

- **universities and environmental science**
- **the statutory agencies**
- **on-going studies**

Extent and magnitude of the skills gap:

- **general lack of structure**
- **lack of specific skills**
- **poor science base**
- **Lack of critical general skills**

Current training provision:

- **further and higher education**
- **postgraduate studies**
- **continuing professional development**
- **in-house/on-the-job training**

Mechanisms for closing gaps in training/skills:

- developing a structure
- accreditation
- role of education institutes
- role of consultancies
- role of statutory agencies
- influence of policy

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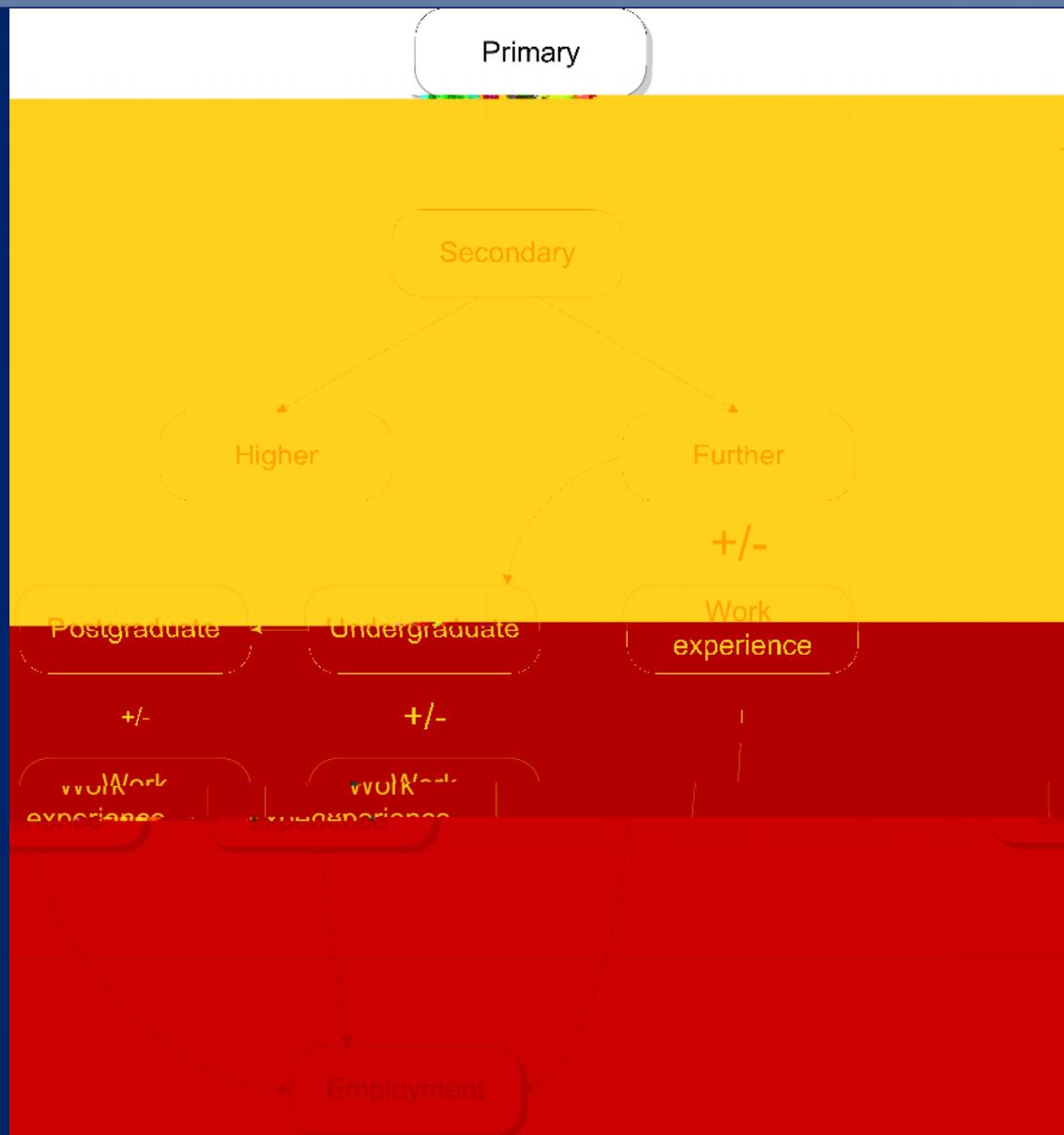
What next?

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Particular difficulties:

- environmental science is made up of a number of subject areas
- environmental scientists become ecologists, hydrologists, EIA experts etc.
- universities see advantages in keeping breadth in their degree programmes
- the culture that a professional ecologist needs to be a graduate

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Certain advantages:

- ecologists are considered as equals alongside other professionals
- geography and geology are relatively well organised

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Solutions:

- constituent groups/sub-disciplines need to work together to achieve concerted approach
- ensure liaison with closely related disciplines
- learn from well-established unrelated disciplines
- raise awareness within relevant professions
- analyse skills needed for professional ecologists and determine appropriate training and education

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