

The B.A. vs. B.S. Degree in Environmental Studies at UCSB

If you're thinking about pursuing Environmental Studies (ES) at UC Santa Barbara, the first important decision you must make is choosing which degree to pursue: the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Environmental Studies. While both majors are similar in design and stress the importance of understanding the complex interrelationships between the humanities, social sciences, and natural science disciplines, having two-degree options allows maximum flexibility to choose a major that best fits one's environmental interests and long-term goals. In this document we provide a detailed comparison of the academic requirements of the B.A. and B.S. major so one can understand the differences and make an educated decision. We have also highlighted a few example job/career paths each degree might lead to. No matter which degree you choose, remember, your decision should be based on what you believe will ultimately make you happy. *Be sure to visit the ES website to learn more about Environmental Studies, our degrees, and major worksheets at: es.ucsb.edu/degrees*

Simply put, the **B.A. in Environmental Studies** is the Program's more interdisciplinary degree, requiring a broad foundation of coursework in the humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and natural sciences. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the social, cultural, and scientific dimensions of environmental issues, as well as how these perspectives interact to shape effective solutions. While the degree ensures students are "scientifically literate" through a core of introductory science courses, it also provides maximum flexibility to explore all Environmental Studies electives. The Outside Concentration affords access to courses from nearly every academic discipline, including arts, public policy, economics, languages, culture, and the humanities.

The goal of the **B.S. degree in ES** is to train students to become "proficient" in the natural and physical sciences while still being aware of and understanding the important role social and cultural influences have on addressing environmental problems. The major curricular differences from the ES B.A. degree are an increased number of chemistry, calculus, biology, and physics courses required in the lower-division and many of the ES electives and the outside concentration requirements are focused on the physical and natural science disciplines (STEM). This enhances the B.S. student's background and ability to apply scientific concepts in solving environmental problems. *Please see the reverse side for a comparison of B.A. vs. B.S. degree requirements.*

What are the general employment differences between B.A. and B.S. majors?

Employment options vary widely depending on individual coursework taken. As some career fields are heavily dependent on a strong scientific background, those who pursue the B.S. degree would have enhanced science proficiency and experience in field and laboratory techniques. While B.A. majors earn a solid foundation in the sciences, they often develop a higher degree of writing and communication skills and a stronger background in social, political, and economic issues that often lead to careers in planning, law, advocacy, education, journalism, media, sustainability, and business. These are broad trends rather than fixed career paths. Many B.A. graduates work in scientific careers, while many B.S. graduates become planners, attorneys, educators, and business leaders. The examples below highlight some possible career paths but are far from comprehensive.

For more about environmental careers and helpful resources visit: es.ucsb.edu/resources

B.A. Degree	Both	B.S. Degree
-- Urban/Regional Planning	-- Environmental Education	-- Pollution Monitoring, Control and Prevention
-- Green Business	-- Environmental Policy	-- Waste Management Specialist
-- Environmental Law	-- Sustainable Agriculture	-- Environmental Toxicology/Health
-- Non-government Organizing	-- Environmental Consulting	-- Field Scientist/Technician
-- Energy Consultant	-- Environmental Health and Safety Management	-- Conservation/Restoration Biology
-- Environmental Justice	-- Local/State/National Government	-- Renewable Energy Designer
-- Environmental Media, Communication Specialist	-- Computing and Information Technologies	-- Natural Resource Management
-- Sustainability Management	-- Environmental Activism	-- Environmental Engineering
-- Environmental Economist	-- Landscape Designer/Architect	-- Soil Scientist
-- Parks/Recreation Management		-- Wildlife Biologist/Management
-- Waste Management		-- Environmental Risk Assessment
-- Environmental Historian		-- Air Quality Specialist

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR REQUIREMENTS: B.A. vs. B.S.

LOWER-DIVISION FOR THE MAJOR (generally 1st and 2nd years)

Required Courses for Both B.A. and B.S.		UCSB Course(s)
Four introductory courses in Environmental Studies		Envs 1, 2, 3 and Envs 40
One intro micro, macro, or general/environmental Economics		Econ 1 or 2 or 9 or Envs 30
One general or physical Geography or Earth Science		Geog 3 or 4 or Earth Sci. 2 or 4 or 20
One introductory Statistics		Pstat 5A or 5LS or Econ 5
One introductory Ethics & Justice		Envs 70 or AsianAm 9 or Engl 37 or Femst 50 or Phil 4 or Pols 1
Different Lower-division Requirements: B.A. vs. B.S.		
	B.A.	B.S.
Culture & Society	One course from broad list of options	One course from a <u>combined</u> list of Culture & Society and Policy and Politics courses
Policy & Politics	One course from list of options	
Math (calculus)	Two quarters: Math 34A or 2A or 3A and Math 34B or 2B or 3B or Envs 25 (<i>Quantitative Thinking in ES</i>)	Two quarters of Calculus w/applications: Math 3A-B (or 2A-2B)
Biology and Ecology	One or Three courses of intro Ecology/Bio: Envs 60 or MCDB 1A-1LL and EEMB 2	Four courses of fundamental Biology w/2 labs: MCDB 1A-1B-1LL and EEMB 2-2LL-3
Chemistry	Two courses + One lab: Chem 1A-1B-2AL or Envs 15A and 15B-BL (<i>Env Chem series</i>)	Three courses of Intro Chemistry + two labs: Chem 1A-1B-1C and 2AL and 2BL
Physics	None	Three quarters of introductory Physics: Phys 6A-AL, 6B-BL, 6C-CL or 7A, 7B, 7C-CL

Total Lower-division Units = 71 to 78.5

Total Lower-division Units = 97 to 99

UPPER – DIVISION FOR THE MAJOR (3rd and 4th years)

Area	Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)	Bachelor of Science (B.S.)
A	13 units of Required Upper-division ES courses: ENVS 190 (one unit seminar) and one course from each of three themed clusters of ES courses.	17-18 units of Required Upper-division ES courses: ENVS 190 (one unit), and one course from each of three clusters of ES courses, and an additional upper-division statistics, data science, or modeling course.
B	28 Upper Division ES Elective units: Any Environmental Studies courses #100-199 not used to satisfy Area A for a total of 28 units.	32 Upper Division ES Elective units from two sections: • B-1: 20 UD ES units which must be taken from a list of environmental “science” courses (see major sheet) • B-2: 12 units from any ES course #100-199 not already used to satisfy the 20 units in B-1 or Area A
C	16 Unit Outside Concentration: Complete any 16 upper-division units from any one College of L&S department or program (double major or official minor will satisfy this area). OR Choose an interdisciplinary concentration of courses from more than one department forming a coherent environmental emphasis of their choice. Students can use courses from any department/programs or abroad.	16 Unit Outside Concentration: Complete any 16 upper-division units from one of the following STEM departments (dbl. mjr. or minor o.k.): Brain Science, Chemistry, EEMB and/or MCDB (bio), Geography, Earth Sci., Math, Statistics, or Physics. OR Choose an interdisciplinary concentration of courses from one or more of the departments listed above, forming a coherent environmental emphasis of choice.
By petition, upper-division Study Abroad or Environmental Field Studies units may be transferred and applied to satisfy part or the entire Area C (Outside Concentration). Up to 12 abroad units may also apply to the Area B Electives.		

Total Upper-division Units = 57

Total Upper-division Units = 65 to 66

BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) WORKSHEET 2026-27

LOWER-DIVISION / PREPARATION FOR MAJOR (generally 1st and 2nd years)

ENVS 1 (F or Sum qtrs)*

ENVS 2 (S or Sum qtrs)*

ENVS 3 (W or Sum qtrs)*

ENVS 40 (F, W, S qtrs)*

Ethics & Justice:

ASAM 9; Engl./Rgst. 37;

ENVS 70 (F qtr)*;

Fem. St. 50; Phil. 4;

Pol. Sci. 1

Culture & Society:

Anth. 2; ASAM 1;

Blk. St. 1; Ch. St. 1A;

Film. St. 46; Globl. 1;

Psych. 1; Relig. St. 1

or 14; Sociology 1

Policy & Politics:

Globl 2; Hist. 5, 7;

Poli. Sci. 6, 7, or 12

Chemistry:

Chemistry 1A + 1B

and 2AL

----- OR -----

ENVS 15A (W qtr)* and

ENVS 15B/BL (S qtr)*

Economics:

ENVS 30 (S qtr)* or

Economics 1 or 2 or 9

Quantitative Skills:

Math 34A or 3A (2A)

and one course from

Math 34B or 3B (2B)

or ENVS 25 (S qtr)*

Physical Earth Sci.:

Earth Sci. 2 or 4

or 20 or Geog. 3 or 4

Statistics:

PSTAT 5A or 5LS

or Econ 5

(Or by petition: Comm. 87

or Poli.Sci. 15, or Psy. 10B

Ecology:

ENVS 60 (F or Sum qtrs)*

----- OR -----

MCDB 1A/1LL (F/W qtr)*

and EEMB 2 (W qtr)*

Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Transfer credit may be substituted for Prep for Major requirements!

Review your *UCSB Course History* on GOLD for automatically articulated credit or see an ES Advisor for assistance.

UPPER-DIVISION (generally 3rd and 4th years) - Total of 57 units

A. ES REQUIRED COURSES (13 UNITS)

ENVS 190 (a 1 unit seminar offered P/NP only) (F or W qtrs)*

One course from each of the themed cluster of courses below:

1. *Ecosystems & Society*: ENVS 101, 130C, 149, 1532. *Energy, Water, Climate*: ENVS 115, 117, 163A3. *Built Environment*: ENVS 116, 135A, 155, 156

Additional courses may be taken and used as Area B electives.

B. ES ELECTIVES (28 UNITS)

Any upper-division ES courses (#100-199) **not** used in Area A.

ES Elective Courses	Units
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

Total = 28

No more than 8 units combined and 4 units each from Envs 192, 194, 199, and 199RA may apply; and max 12 UCEAP units by petition.

C. OUTSIDE CONCENTRATION (16 UNITS)

There are 2 options for the Outside Concentration:

1) **Single department**: Complete any 16 upper-division units from any **one** UCSB department or program and they will automatically apply. Completion of a double major will automatically satisfy this area as will an official minor as long as 16 UD units don't overlap with Areas A or B.

OR

2) **Interdisciplinary emphasis**: Combination of 16 upper-division units from more than one department or program outside ES may be used to create a concentration of study as long as they form a coherent focus or emphasis. A student pursuing this option must submit a [Petition for Degree Requirements](#) form to ES justifying how courses taken relate to each and form a coherent theme. A list of some example environmental concentrations one might use is available from the ES Advisors or at:

www.es.ucsb.edu/degrees

NOTE: Study Abroad or Environmental Field Studies units may be used to satisfy part or all of Area C using either option 1 or 2 above. Units earned must be UC transferable, upper-division, and relate to a coherent concentration. A *Petition for Degree Requirements* must be approved by Environmental Studies before units will be accepted.

Students interested in applying study abroad or field studies units, or pursuing an interdisciplinary emphasis, are encouraged to consult an ES Advisor before starting. Visit the ES Advising webpage at: www.es.ucsb.edu/advising

Outside Concentration Courses	Units
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____

Total = 16

NOTE: All courses, including cross-listed (either version), may apply to one area only in any part of the major. Courses taken to fulfill any major requirement must be taken for a letter grade unless only offered P/NP.

* Denotes specific quarter a course is to be offered; accurate for current academic year ONLY & subject to change year to year

BACHELOR OF Science (B.S.) WORKSHEET 2026-27

LOWER-DIVISION / PREPARATION FOR MAJOR (generally 1st and 2nd years)

ENVS 1 (F or Sum qtrs)*
ENVS 2 (S or Sum qtrs)*
ENVS 3 (W or Sum qtrs)*

ENVS 40 (F, W, S qtrs)*

Ethics & Justice:
ASAM 9; Engl. 37;
ENVS 70 (F qtr)*;
Fem. St. 50; Phil. 4;
Pol. Sci. 1

Culture, Society, Policy & Politics:

Anth. 2; ASAM 1;
Blk. St. 1; Ch. St. 1A;
Film. St. 46;
Globl. 1 or 2; Hist. 5,
7; Poli.Sci. 6, 7, or 12;
Psych. 1; Relig. St. 1
or 14; Sociology 1

Chemistry:

CHEM 1A 1B 1C
and 2AL + 2BL

Physical Earth Sci.:

Earth Sci. 2 or 4
or 20 or Geog. 3 or 4

Economics:

ENVS 30 (S qtr)* or
Economics 1 or 2 or 9

Math 3A or 2A (F qtr)*
Math 3B or 2B (W qtr)*

Physics:

Physics 6A/AL
Physics 6B/BL
Physics 6C/CL
----- OR -----
Physics 7A
Physics 7B
Physics 7C + L

PSTAT 5A or 5LS
or Econ 5
(Or by petition: Comm. 87 or
Poli.Sci. 15, or Psy. 10B)

Biology & Ecology:

MCDB 1A (F, Sum qtrs)*
MCDB 1B (W, Sum qtrs)*
MCDB 1LL (W, Sum qtrs)*
EEMB 2 (W, Sum qtrs)*
EEMB 2LL (S, F qtrs)*
EEMB 3 (S, F qtrs)*

Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Transfer credit may be substituted for Prep for Major requirements!
Review your *UCSB Course History* on GOLD for automatically articulated credit or see an ES Advisor for assistance.

UPPER-DIVISION (generally 3rd and 4th years) - Total of 65-66 units

A. ES REQUIRED COURSES (17-18 UNITS)

ENVS 190 (a 1 unit seminar offered P/NP only) (F or W qtrs)*

One course from: ENVS 126 (193DS) or 164;
GEOG 172; EEMB 146, 179; PSTAT 120A (Math 4A required)

One course from each of the three clusters of courses below:

1. *Ecosystems & Society:* ENVS 101, 130C, 149, 153
2. *Energy, Water, Climate:* ENVS 115, 117, 163A
3. *Built Environment:* ENVS 116, 135A, 155, 156

Additional courses may be taken and used as Area B electives.

B. ES ELECTIVES (32 UNITS)

32 UD ES units from courses (#100-199) **not used** in Area A.

Section B-1: At least 20 units must be taken from this list: Envs 101, 103A^, 105, 111^, 113^, 114A-B^, 115, 119^, 120A-B, 121, 126, 128^, 130C, 133^, 134, 137, 140, 141, 142, 144^, 145, 147, 148, 149^, 150, 152^, 153, 154, 156, 162^, 163A, 164, 166DC, 167^, 168^, 169^, 171^, 193AW, 193CS, 193DD, 193EB^, 193GW, 193ST, 197. ^ = cross-listed

ES Elective Courses

Units

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |

Section B-2: Any UD ES courses to reach 32 total units

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 6. _____ | _____ |
| 7. _____ | _____ |
| 8. _____ | _____ |

No more than 8 units combined and 4 units each from Envs 192, 194, 199, and 199RA may apply; and max 12 UCEAP units by petition.

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |

Total = 16

C. OUTSIDE CONCENTRATION (16 UNITS)

There are 2 options for the Outside Concentration:

1) Single department: Complete any 16 upper-division units from any **one** of the following **STEM** departments: Chemistry & Biochemistry, EEMB and/or MCDB (Bio), Earth Sciences, Geography (only courses that apply to the B.S. Physical Geog. major), Math, Statistics, Physics, or Psychological & Brain Sciences. Completion of a double major or minor from the above depts will satisfy this area. If pursuing an official minor make sure 16 UD units don't overlap with Areas A or B.

OR

2) Interdisciplinary emphasis: Combination of 16 upper-division units from more than one department listed above may be used to create a concentration of study as long as they form a coherent focus or emphasis. A student pursuing this option must submit a [Petition for Degree Requirements](#) to ES justifying how proposed courses relate to each other and the desired concentration. A list of some example environmental concentrations one might use is available from the ES website at: www.es.ucsb.edu/degreess.

NOTE: Study Abroad or Environmental Field Studies units may be used to satisfy part or all of Area C using either option 1 or 2 above. Units earned must be UC transferable, upper-division, and relate to a student's chosen concentration. A *Petition for Degree Requirements* must be approved by Environmental Studies before units will be accepted.

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NOTE: All courses, including cross-listed (either version), may apply to one area only in any part of the major.
Courses taken to fulfill any major requirement must be taken for a letter grade unless only offered P/NP.

* Denotes specific quarter a course is to be offered; accurate for current academic year ONLY & subject to change year to year