



What Undergraduate Degrees are Students Earning to Pursue Careers in Soil Science?

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Soil science is an interdisciplinary field. This provides soil science with many strengths, however, it has also led to questions concerning where the discipline belongs within the academic community. The titles of the degrees received by students who are training to work as soil scientists can provide insight into academia's views regarding where soil science belongs. Therefore, this study evaluated the degrees received by students in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA). For Australia it is estimated that 30 to 40 graduates with sufficient relevant soil science knowledge are needed annually to meet demand, therefore knowing the changing degree recognition, with sufficient soil science training, needs to be understood. In the UK there are no BSc degrees solely titled "Soil Science". Soil science training is primarily offered within Agriculture, Plant Science, Environmental Science, and Geography programs. In Canada the most frequent degree programs that deliver soil science coursework are Geography (36% of soil science coursework), Environmental Science (30%), other (30%), Natural Resource Science (24%), Ecology (15%), and Soil Science (12%). Only three "BSc in Soil Science" degrees are offered in Canada. In the USA, 57 universities were found that offered a 4-year degree that prepared students to work as soil scientists. Like Canada, only three of the degrees were titled "BS in Soil Science". In the USA there were another five degrees that had soil as the first word in their title: "Soil & Land Resources", "Soil and Hydrologic Sciences", "Soil and Water Sciences - Soil Science Specialization" "Soil and Waste Resources - Soil Science option", and "Soil, Environmental and Atmospheric Sciences - Soil Resource Management emphasis". Other BS degrees that prepared students for a career in soil science were in the areas of Agriculture and Agronomy (14), Environmental Science (14), Plant and Soil Sciences (10), and Crop and Soil Sciences (6). Finally, five degrees that did not fit into any of the broader classifications above were in Geography; Land, Plant and Climate Systems; Rangeland Resource Science; Wildlife, Sustainability, and Ecosystem Sciences, and Water and Soil Resources. The degrees earned in the USA will be compared to degrees earned by students in Australia, Canada, and the UK to investigate whether soil science is viewed as fitting into the same academic areas in different countries.