

Forensic scientist

Forensic scientists prepare traces of physical evidence for use in courts of law.

Annual Salary

£20,000 to £45,000

Working hours

37 to 40

4%

Future employment

There will be 4% more Forensic scientist jobs in 2022.
In your local area

What's it all about?

What you'll do

Forensic scientists use a range of techniques to find and study evidence from a variety of sources, like blood and other body fluids, hairs, textile fibres, glass fragments and tyre marks.

Your main role will be looking for evidence to link a suspect with a crime scene, but you may also specialise.

Your day-to-day tasks may include:

- blood grouping and DNA profiling
- analysing fluid and tissue samples for traces of drugs and poisons
- examining splash patterns and the distribution of particles
- analysing handwriting, signatures, ink and paper
- providing expert advice on explosives, firearms and ballistics
- researching and developing new technologies
- recovering data from computers, mobile phones and other electronic equipment
- attending crime scenes, such as a murder or fire
- giving impartial scientific evidence in court

Entry requirements

You'll usually need a degree or postgraduate award in forensic science. You may also be able to get into this career with a science-based degree like chemistry, biology, life sciences, applied sciences or medical sciences.

If you want to specialise in electronic casework (recovering data from computers, mobile phones and other electronic equipment), you may need experience and qualifications in computing, electrical engineering, electronics or physics.

To start as a forensics lab support assistant, you'll need A levels, a BTEC or an HND in science.

The [Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences \(CSFS\)](#) has more information about careers in forensic science.

Salary

£20,000 to £45,000

Starter salary: £20,000

Experienced salary: £25,000 to £35,000

These figures are a guide.

Working hours

37 to 40

You'll usually work 37 hours a week, Monday to Friday. Your employer may use a shift or on-call system for dealing with high priority work.

You'll be based mainly in a laboratory, but may also visit crime scenes, which could be distressing

You'll wear special clothing to prevent contamination and protect you from hazardous substances.

Career path and progression

With experience, you could move into management and direct other forensics staff as a forensics manager or casework examiner.

You could also work as a reporting scientist, acting as an expert witness in court.

Criminology

As a criminology graduate with critical thinking, analytical and communications skills, you're attractive to employers both inside and outside the criminal justice sector

Job options

Jobs directly related to your degree include:

- [Community development worker](#)

- Detective
- Police officer
- Prison officer
- Probation officer
- Social worker
- Youth worker

Jobs where your degree would be useful include:

- Adult guidance worker
- Chaplain
- Charity officer
- Data scientist
- Forensic computer analyst
- Housing manager/officer
- Local government officer
- Paralegal
- Social researcher
- Solicitor

Remember that many employers accept applications from graduates with any degree subject, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here.

Take a few minutes to answer the Job Match quiz to find out what careers would suit you

Try Job Match

Work experience

Employers value experience and a range of paid and voluntary opportunities exist. These include work with offenders, criminal justice agencies, social work and community education departments, and victims of crime. Specific roles include prison visiting, working as a special constable, and involvement in drug treatment schemes or youth/bail hostels for young offenders.

Some courses offer a placement year, which can be particularly useful in helping you to test out a certain area of work and build up good contacts for future jobs.

Think about the group or the environment you're interested in working with and how you could get involved with local support groups or projects. Narrowing down your preferences will allow you to focus on specific employers and voluntary organisations.

Search for placements and find out more about [work experience and internships](#).

Related case studies



Jamie

Student support administrator and special constable



Typical employers

Major employers include:

- central and local government
- the police and prison services
- the court services
- security services
- non-profit-making organisations, including the NHS, educational institutions and charities that work with young offenders or victims of crime.

Opportunities also exist in the private sector, for example in private security and in law practices.

It's also possible to work in a range of social welfare posts, such as mental health support and drug rehabilitation, housing (as housing officers or in outreach support roles), as homelessness officers, and in refugee and victim support/counselling.

Find information on employers in [law enforcement and security](#), [social care](#), [charity and voluntary work](#), and other [job sectors](#).

Employers hiring criminology graduates now

Leadership Development Programme

- [Unlocked](#)
- [Various locations](#)
- [£29,501-£32,000](#)

Graduate Leadership Programme 2019

- [Police Now](#)
- [Various locations](#)
- [Competitive salary](#)

Leadership Development Programme

- [Frontline](#)
- [Various locations](#)
- [Competitive salary](#)

[View more public services and law enforcement jobs](#)

Skills for your CV

Studying criminology develops your understanding of the social and personal aspects of crime, victimisation and responses to crime and deviance, as well as building specific skills such as:

- generating and evaluating evidence
- making reasoned arguments and ethical judgments
- critical thinking
- analysing and interpreting data
- report writing.

If you study other subjects alongside criminology, you should consider the complementary skills they provide you with, for example, an increased awareness of psychology or politics related to criminology topics.

Also consider your more general skills in areas such as research, written and oral communication, IT, time management and the ability to work productively both in a group and individually.

Advertisement

Further study

Most criminology graduates who go on to further study choose from a range of vocational areas including social work, teaching and [law conversion courses](#).

Some students choose to progress to [Masters courses](#), including MAs in criminology or criminal justice, which will enhance subject knowledge, possibly with a view to going on to further academic research. Courses relevant to specific client groups also exist, such as a Masters in alcohol and drug studies.

There are also many postgraduate courses where a degree in any subject is accepted for entry, offering the possibility to change career direction. To find a course that interests you, [search postgraduate courses](#).

What do criminology graduates do?

More than two thirds of criminology graduates are in employment six months after finishing their course.

Destination	Percentage
Employed	63.9
Further study	19.4
Working and studying	7.4
Unemployed	4.8
Other	4.5

Graduate destinations for criminology

Type of work	Percentage
Retail, catering and bar work	21.9
Technicians and other professionals	14.5

Type of work	Percentage
Legal, social and welfare	13.9
Secretarial and numerical clerks	10.8
Other	38.9

Types of work entered in the UK

Find out what other graduates are doing six months after finishing their degrees in [What Do Graduates Do?](#)

Graduate destinations data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency.