

# Appendix for USAJobs Guide for Biologists and Ecologists

## A: Example education qualification letter

Below is a letter you should consider attaching to your application in addition to transcripts if the position has any educational requirements. You can make it a 2nd page of your cover letter to make it more streamlined. It's not required, but will make it much easier for HR Specialists to qualify you. This is especially true if some of your courses have shortened names or abbreviations which make it hard to understand their relevance. If you have more than the required credit hours there is nothing wrong with listing all relevant courses.

If you had relevant courses where the title is vague, include them anyway along with an explanation. For example you're applying for a position that requires genetics courses. You had a "Wildlife Studies" course on your transcript but it had a large amount of genetics material, I would include it anyway along with the official course description from the university or even the syllabus, if it's available, to show that it's relevant.

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Dear Hiring Manager,

I'm applying for the GS-486-11 Wildlife Biologist position at the National Elk Refuge in Jackson, WY. I qualify for this position with the following education:

I have a PhD in Wildlife Ecology obtained in December, 2019 from the University of Florida

I have the following coursework to meet the minimum requirements (in bold). You can find them in the attached transcripts from the University of Nevada, Reno, the University of Georgia, and University of Florida.

**9 Semester hours of wildlife subjects:**

University of Nevada

Spring 2016

3 - ENV 234 - Wildlife Ecology

Fall 2016

3 - ENV 235 - Wildlife Ecology II

3 - ENV 247 - Mammalogy

**12 Semester hours in zoology subjects**

University of Nevada

Spring 2016

3 - ENV 355 - Introduction to Conservation Genetics

University of Georgia

Fall 2018

3 - WIS 340 - Wildlife Ecology and Management

3 - WIS 355 - Wetland Wildlife Ecology

University of Florida

Spring 2019

3 - BIO 455 - Physiology and Molecular Biology of Animals

**9 Semester hours in botany**

University of Georgia

Fall 2018

3 - BIO 455 - Plants of Georgia

3 - BIO 467 - Advanced Plant Systematics

University of Florida

Fall 2019

3 - BOT 572 - Tropical Botany

3 - BIO 554 - Plants of Florida

Regards,  
John Smith

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## B: Example experience qualification letter #1

This is an example letter to attach to an application for this [GS-12 Research Ecologist Position](#). Here this person has a Bachelors in ecology with the required credits to meet the minimum education requirements. They also have a PhD in ecology, and nearly two years as a postdoc. The postdoc qualifies as a GS-11 experience with the specifics outlined. Note that the requirements in italics are copied straight from the USAJobs announcement.

This letter is meant to make it as easy as possible for the HR Specialists to see that you are qualified and pass your application onto the person doing interviews. This application would also include the person's resume, cover letter, and transcripts. The experience listed here should be repeated in the resume (though more concisely).

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Dear Hiring Manager,

I'm applying for the GS-486-12 Research Ecologist position at the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Ogden, UT. I qualify for this position with the following education and experience:

I have a bachelor degree in Ecology from the University of Arizona with the appropriate courses outlined below. I have a PhD in Ecology from the University of Montana.

I have 21 months (Jan. 2019 - Sep. 2020) of full time experience as a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Montana, Bozeman. This is equivalent to a GS-11 by meeting the specialized experience outlined below.

Basic Education requirements (45 total semester hours in biological sciences)

**12 Semester hours of ecology:**

University of Arizona

Spring 2016

3 - ENV 234 - Wildlife Ecology

3 - FOR 324 - Forest Ecology

Fall 2016

3 - ENV 235 - Wildlife Ecology II

3 - FOR 426 - Riparian Ecology

**15 Semester hours in physical and mathematical science**

University of Arizona

Spring 2015

3 - MATH 202 - Introduction to Calculus

3 - PHY 101 - Introduction to Physics

Fall 2015  
3 - MATH 205 - Calculus II  
3 - ENV 306 - Statistics for Biologists  
Spring 2016  
3 - FOR 375 - Forest Hydrology

**18 Semester hours in biological sciences**

University of Arizona

Spring 2015  
3 - BIO 202 - Introduction to Biology  
Fall 2015  
3 - BIO 203 - Biology II  
3 - ENV 306- Statistics for Biologists  
Spring 2016  
3 - FOR 250 - Dendrology  
Fall 2016  
3 - ENV 355 - Soil Ecosystems  
3 - ENV 422 - Landscape Genetics

GS-11 specialized experience

*Conducting the full cycle of scientific research related to developing new knowledge about relationships between wildlife and their habitats using quantitative methods, and the responses of wildlife populations to natural and human caused disturbances. This must include identifying research topics, defining study objectives, organizing and conducting the research, interpreting the results, and presenting the findings in the form of reports, demonstrations, manuscripts, and other appropriate technology transfer activities)*

**I developed a study to look at the response of mule deer to roads. This involved designing the experimental design, planning and doing field work in the summer of 2018, and analyzing the results using mixed effects models. It resulted in 1 conference presentation (Brown et al. ESA 2020) and 2 publications (Brown et al. 2020 and Brown and Wilson 2020).**

*Providing quantitative analysis of forest and woodland landscapes and associated wildlife and their habitats using spatial metrics, statistical analysis (including statistical modeling, bioinformatics or artificial intelligence related to natural resources)*

**Two studies (Brown et al. 2020 and Brown and Wilson 2020) used mixed effects statistical models to estimate mule deer habitat preference to different landscapes (forest, grassland, shrubland) with respect to roads.**

**I was also a co-author on one study (Morales et al. 2020) where I assisted in using landscape metrics of habitat heterogeneity to study habitat preference of wildlife sage grouse.**

Disseminating research findings at conferences or scientific meetings and publishing results in peer-reviewed journals.

**I presented at one conference (Brown et al. ESA 2020) and had three peer-reviewed publications (Brown et al. 2020, Brown and Wilson 2020, Morales et al. 2020) during this postdoctoral position.**

Regards,  
Melanie Brown

## C: Example experience qualification letter #2

Below is another qualification letter example for this announcement:

<https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/566670800>

Here the applicant has a bachelor degree plus several years experience as a GS-9 to qualify for a GS-11 position. The announcement doesn't list specific courses required, so there is not a need to list education except for the degree attained. Specialized experience should still be detailed to help the HR Specialist know exactly how you qualify for the position.

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Dear Hiring Manager,

I'm applying for the GS-401-11 Fish and Wildlife position in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Newport, OR. I qualify for this position with the following education and experience:

I have a bachelor degree in Ecology from the University of Arizona with the appropriate courses in biology and natural resources. See attached transcript.

I have 3 years (Jan. 2018 - Present) of full time experience as a GS-9 Biologist for the U.S. Forest Service in Silver City, NM with the following specialized experience.

*One year of specialized experience equivalent to the GS-09 grade level in the Federal service that demonstrates your ability to conducting moderately complex biological or ecological investigations to determine the impact of various land and water development projects upon endangered species and their habitats;*

**I helped develop the Environmental Impact Statement for two logging operations in the Gila National Forest and their effect on endangered minnows.**

*negotiating alternative actions or mitigation measures, etc.;*

**I helped implement plants for riparian buffers as mitigation in the logging operations.**

*developing habitat conservation or restoration projects;*

**I coordinated with a district forester to prioritize areas for post-wildfire restoration seeding after the 2019 Big Peak fire.**

*servicing as a technical advisor on the Endangered Species Act for other staff, government agencies, land owners, private interest groups, etc.;*

**I provided guidance on logging near riparian zones and its impacts on endangered fish in the Santa Fe National Forest and Lincoln National Forest for their National Forest Plan revisions.**

*preparing biological portions of environmental assessment/impact statements or comprehensive resource planning reports;*

**I helped develop the Environmental Impact Statement for two logging operations in the Gila National Forest and their effect on endangered minnows.**

and implementing federal environmental laws (i.e., Endangered Species Act, specifically Sections 7 and 10; Clean Water Act; Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act; National Environmental Policy Act), regulations, and policies involving natural resource issues.

**In 2020 in collaboration with my supervisor I wrote the updated Gila National Forest Plan section on riparian zones and their effect on clean water and endangered fish, and how they should be managed during future logging and grazing activities.**

Regards,  
Ellen Harris