What can I do with a degree in Political Science and International Relations?

Career planning: what do I need to know?

Knowledge of yourself is important for career decision making. Start by looking at your personal goals, abilities, values and interests to explore study and career options that are relevant to you. Some of these may change over time, so it is important to self-reflect and evaluate your career on an ongoing basis.

What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, customer-focus, cultural awareness, and teamwork. With technology and globalisation changing the nature of society, skills such as resilience, problem solving and adaptability are valuable at work as well as in life.

How can I develop these skills?

- Some skills are developed through your degree
- Extra-curricular activities can help, for example getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work, or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities. Whether it is undertaking an internship, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group — these activities will enhance your employability.

What else should I know?

The career options in this brochure are examples only and the list is not exhaustive. Some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional work experience. Some pathways and degrees have a recommended school background. Find more subject details at www.canterbury.ac.nz/subjects/pols

If this brochure does not answer your questions, talking to an expert such as a career consultant can help you to identify the next steps in your career decision making journey.

What is Political Science and International Relations?

Are you interested in making a difference to the world around you? Does the future of Aotearoa New Zealand’s democracy interest you? Does news about politics and elections in other countries capture your interest? Are you concerned about major issues in international politics and international security? How about issues such as human rights, health, environment, foreign policy or conflict? Do you want to critically analyse these questions and pursue a career based on your interest? If so, you should study Political Science and International Relations.

Political Science is often called the study of who gets what, where, how and why. Political scientists use a variety of theories, ideas, tools, and methods to conduct an independent and informed study of our communities.
What skills have UC graduates gained?

Through their degree in Political Science and International Relations, graduates develop a valuable set of skills that are transferable to a range of careers. These include:

• Political analysis
• Understanding the ways that laws and economic policies are developed
• Interpretive thinking
• Thinking critically, creatively and challenging ideas
• Logical and quantitative reasoning
• Understanding globalisation and its effects on our politics and economy
• Policy formulation and analysis
• Understanding international relations, international law and diplomacy
• Problem solving skills adaptable to differing contexts
• Oral and written communication
• Research and computing.

Opportunities to apply your learning outside the classroom are available in this subject, through internships and field trips. These experiences deepen your skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge, and employability.

Where have UC graduates been employed?

Political Science and International Relations students gain skills that can be applied in a wide range of exciting careers within politics and in areas such as law, business, education and journalism.

Recent UC graduates have been employed in:

• Aotearoa New Zealand government agencies such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Health, Economic Development, Defence, Environment, and Justice as well as the Treasury, Te Punu Kōkiri, Immigration New Zealand, Parliament, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of Treaty Settlements, and the Security Intelligence Service
• Iwi and Māori governance bodies for example Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu
• Regional councils
• Tertiary institutions
• International agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
• Not-for-profits like St John and the Red Cross
• Private companies in banking, insurance, media, legal, finance, recruitment, and education sectors
• Public and private organisations in other countries such as Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

For more examples of employers who recruit UC students and graduates go to
http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/recruitingemployers

AT A GLANCE

353k

the public sector employs 14.4% of the total workforce in New Zealand (353,500)*

50

countries that Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff work in around the world

What jobs and activities do graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs. See some examples below.

Note: Some of the jobs listed may require postgraduate study. See the ‘Further study’ section.

Policy analyst / advisor
- Identifies and investigates issues and opportunities eg, in society, law or governance
- Interprets existing policies and consults with stakeholders or briefs in leaders
- Prepares and presents reports and recommendations for policy development

Governance manager / support officer
- Supports and advises appointed leaders such as councillors or members of parliament
- Ensures compliance with public sector and/or local government legislation
- Manages many relationships and interactions

Parliamentary officer
- Keeps and maintains records
- Assists in the development of policies
- Prepares reports and recommendations to support senior members

Executive Assistant / legislative aide to an MP
- Liaises with constituents, other politicians, the media, lobbyists, community groups
- Awareness of local, regional, national and international issues, and drafts materials
- Promotes the politician’s work

Immigration officer / manager
- Examines documentation such as passports
- Approves or rejects entry into a country
- Organises the removal of people who have broken immigration law

Communications / media advisor, journalist
- Develops information, media and communication strategies
- Researches, writes, edits and produces content for various audiences and mediums

International aid worker
- Manages and assesses projects
- Supports long-term development
- Evaluates responses to emergency situations

Advocate
- Advises and represents individuals, groups or a cause
- Examines and drafts contracts
- Provides relevant information to clients

Diplomat
- Promotes Aotearoa New Zealand’s interests overseas
- Reports on affairs and develops foreign and trade policies
- Liaises with local authorities and negotiates agreements with other countries

Export / customs coordinator
- Specialises in domestic and international markets or laws
- Inspects or coordinates mail, imported and exported goods
- Administers documentation and ensures adherence to the law

Research analyst / advisor / assistant
- Organises and conducts research
- Develops and tests theories, interprets results
- Writes reports, makes recommendations and publishes research

Entrepreneur and CEO
- Develops an idea, product or service
- Gets involved in a start-up
- Offers services as a freelance/consultant

Entrepreneurship and innovation are an increasing part of the working landscape. Get started at www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers/Entrepreneurship/getting_started.shtml

UC Careerhub
UC students and alumni can find details of internships, scholarships, job vacancies and employability tips at www.careerhub.canterbury.ac.nz

What professional bodies and organisations can people link to?

As they progress in their studies and into a career, students and graduates often join professional bodies or organisations relevant to their area of interest. These organisations often provide regular communications and offer the opportunity to network with others within the same community.

- New Zealand Political Studies Association www.nzpsa.com
- Australian Political Studies Association www.auspsa.org.au
- New Zealand Studies Association www.nzsia.co.uk
- International Political Science Association www.ipsa.org

Social media networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter can provide avenues to keep up-to-date with industry knowledge, networking opportunities, events and job vacancies.

Why do further study and what are my options?

Postgraduate study can facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability. It is important to determine which, if any, further study will help you in your future career.

Political Science and International Relations graduates can undertake further study from honours through to PhD-level, which can lead to a career in tertiary teaching and research. UC offers a Master of Policy and Governance, and a Master of International Relations and Diplomacy. Many Arts graduates go on to study teaching, journalism or management.

www.canterbury.ac.nz/courses

Useful links

UC Careers, Internships & Employment www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers
UC School of Languages, Social and Political Sciences www.canterbury.ac.nz/arts/political
Careers New Zealand www.careers.govt.nz
New Zealand Political Studies Association www.nzpsa.com
State sector jobs www.jobs.govt.nz
Josh Toohey

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Chinese
Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Diplomacy and International Relations
Master of Science in Contemporary Chinese Studies, University of Oxford, UK
Analyst, Stroz Friedberg, UK

What motivated you to study?
I have always been interested in exploring how our world operates, and saw Political Science and Chinese as the way to do my exploring. Political Science takes an academic route to understanding the world we live in.

What did you enjoy most?
I enjoyed the close relationships between academic staff and students. All my lecturers had infectious enthusiasm about their disciplines and came from varied backgrounds, giving useful insights into both professional and academic life.

How has your study prepared you for the workforce and other opportunities?
After graduating I did an internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My time at UC directly prepared me for that work in terms of the content I learned in my degree as well as with general writing and analytical skills. My course at Oxford also utilised my undergraduate studies in International Relations, Political Science and Chinese language.

What sort of career are you after?
Ideally I want to make the world my workplace. I was able to study in China through UC’s Summer School Programme. That helped me to understand different ways of thinking and a different society first-hand. Learning a language is much more than just learning vocabulary.

What advice do you have for students who are considering study in your degree area?
I would really advise having a chat to a lecturer or a current student. Also, if you are hesitant with course choices, I would recommend giving it a go in first year. I studied a wide range of courses before deciding on my double major in second year.

Read more online
Read Josh’s full story about his university experience on our profiles site. UC alumni like Josh make a difference in varied ways around the globe. To find out where Political Science and International Relations graduates are now visit

www.canterbury.ac.nz/profiles

The information in this brochure was correct at the time of print but is subject to change.

More information
UC students seeking study advice.
Department of Political Science and International Relations
Te Rāngai Toi Tangata | College of Arts
The Department of Political Science and International Relations at UC is recognised for its strength of research, teaching and mentoring networks, field trip teaching, and real-world problem solving.
T: +64 3 364 2631
E: artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz
www.canterbury.ac.nz/arts/political

Anyone seeking careers advice.
Careers, Internships & Employment
Te Rōpū Rapuara
CIE offers intending and current students and recent graduates a wide range of services, including individual career guidance, seminars, career resources and student and graduate employment opportunities.
T: +64 3 364 3310
E: careers@canterbury.ac.nz
www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers
UCCareersEmployment

Prospective students seeking study advice.
Student Liaison
Te Rōpū Takawaenga
Student Liaison provides intending students with information about the university system in general and the courses, qualifications, support and facilities available at UC.
Ōtautahi | Christchurch
T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)
E: liaison@canterbury.ac.nz
Tāmaki-makaurau | Auckland
T: 0800 UCAUCK
E: auckland@canterbury.ac.nz
Te Whanganui-a-Tara | Wellington
T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748) ext 93231
E: wellington@canterbury.ac.nz
www.canterbury.ac.nz/liaison