Science Policy

Introduction
Are you interested in the direction in which stem cell research should proceed or the use of nuclear fuel? Are you interested in where research funding goes and how it is allocated? Do you want to influence the shape of future education in the sciences or help to ensure that politicians and civil servants have an accurate grasp of the science behind their policies? If any of these appeals to you then you may be interested in a career in science policy.

Science policy is a broad and growing area, and the kind of work you would be doing would very much depend on the role and organisation for which you work. You may be writing briefings on news and policy issues, analysing or developing the policies of an organisation or responding to external consultations on behalf of your organisation. You may be involved in promoting public engagement with science, developing research briefings to influence policy makers or developing policies on the future of science education.

From a career perspective, there are different levels of engagement in policy issues. Many researchers are involved in policy work alongside their research careers, by joining policy committees on professional societies. Others decide to move into policy work full-time and develop a new career direction.

Where does the work take place?
You may work for the policy unit within a company or organisation, or you may work within a specific think tank or policy organisation. People working in science policy usually work in one of the following areas:

- Academia
- Think-tanks
- Government departments or agencies
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Private organisations

The large scientific institutions, such as The Royal Society and The Institute of Physics have separate policy related departments, as do some of the big research organisations.

What makes a good policy specialist?
The ability to communicate complex scientific ideas in a concise yet thorough way is central to this type of work. There is a lot of collaboration with other professionals so diplomacy, negotiation and rapport building are all important communication skills required. Another key skill is the ability to combine scientific rigour with an awareness of broader issues; the combination of detail and big-picture thinking to draw conclusions and formulate advice.

How to get in
Get your feet wet – get involved in policy debates and forums, at university, organised by societies and institutes, or online. Take an active interest in current policy debates. It is also possible to apply for internships or ‘fellowships’ which can provide exposure to the policy arena.

Science Policy in Government
Government departments acquire and use scientific research and advice in order to make policy decisions and formulate future strategy. Departments commission research from external organisations including universities, research council institutes, the NHS and other public sector bodies, private consultancy firms and learned societies such as The Royal Society.

BBSRC – Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
www.bbsrc.ac.uk/about/vacancies.aspx
The BBSRC is one of seven government-funded Research Councils that work together as Research Councils UK (RCUK). Their website advertises entry level positions within the organisation, and also links through to vacancies at individual institutes.

POST - Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology
www.parliament.uk/post
POST exists to advise MPs on science and technology issues pertaining to government legislation and policy. POST has six permanent science advisers and also offers three month fellowship schemes to PhD students looking for policy experience. It is also possible to get internships with POST but these are fairly limited in number and may not always be available. Applications should be made at least six months before the proposed start of the internship. Science advisers at the Parliamentary office of Science & Technology (POST) generally have a postgraduate level qualification in science (a PhD) and some prior experience of science policy work.

Sciencewise
www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/
A programme funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, (BIS) Sciencewise aim to improve Government policies relating to science and technology.

Other sources of science policy work
Babraham Institute
www.babraham.ac.uk/vacancies-training/vacancies
A research institution with a focus on cell and molecular biology, studying how infections and different treatments...
vary depending on age. Their website advertises postdoctoral research opportunities.

The Beckley Foundation
www.beckleyfoundation.org/2015/03/recruiting/
A charitable trust that campaigns for drug policy reform based on scientific research. Opportunities are available to support the foundation in these aims, largely in areas of policy support and communication.

The Campaign for Science and Engineering
http://sciencecampaign.org.uk/?page_id=5833
CSE are a pressure group aiming to improve the scientific health of the UK. Entry level jobs and internships suitable for anyone considering a career in policy are advertised on their site.

Green Science Policy Institute
http://greensciencepolicy.org/jobs/
The Green Science Policy Institute’s mission is to promote the responsible use of chemicals. Their website advertises various policy-related roles, although as a US-based institute, the roles are based there.

Save the Children
https://jobs.savethechildren.org.uk/vacancy/find/results/
An international NGO that promotes children’s rights and provides relief in developing countries. They advertise roles in Advocacy and Policy.

Society of Biology
www.societyofbiology.org/careers-and-cpd/careers/employment/searching-for-jobs
A registered charity, the Society of Biology aim to be a unifying voice of biologists working not just to promote various policy issues, but also to promote the value of science both economically and in the education sector. Their careers page has useful advice on the sector, as well as links to related jobs boards.

Sense about Science
www.senseaboutscience.org/
SOS is a charitable trust that seeks to address common misconceptions about science in an attempt to reduce the amount of so-called ‘Bad Science’ in the public domain. As well as offering entry level jobs, they look for freelancers to assist with things such as media briefings and publication editing. Website has information on volunteering and working for the organisation.

Wellcome Trust
www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Public-engagement/index.htm
The Wellcome Trust are a global charitable foundation that offers funding to various research projects. Up to £10 million is offered every year through their Engaging Science grants, which supports projects that specifically encourage public engagement with their scientific engagement.

Research and Academia
Progress Educational Trust
www.progress.org.uk/objectives
Through research in embryo/stem cell research, assisted conception and other related areas, they attempt to advise and influence on related policies. Opportunities to volunteer and complete a postgraduate internship are advertised on their site.

Economic and Social Research Council
www.esrc.ac.uk
The ESRC is the UK’s largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues which support independent, high quality research.

King's PhD program in Social Science, Health & Medicine
www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/sshm/study
Cumberland Lodge:
www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk
The Cumberland Lodge is an educational charity that organises conferences on social issues, moral questions and matters of spiritual and ethical interest, with a particular emphasis on engaging young people.

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