Careers in politics & policy

- Do you want to make a political impact?
- Are you interested in social justice?
- Are you interested in how the security or defence policy of your country can be influenced?

If so, this could be the career for you, but what does working in this sector mean? This handout contains information and resources relating to careers in politics, government and policy. Like many of our sector handouts, the content is divided into three sections: Discover, Focus and Action.

**King’s CareerConnect**
[www.kcl.ac.uk/careerconnect](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/careerconnect)

King’s CareerConnect is our exclusive online career portal enabling students and recent alumni to engage with our services. You can access our vacancy board and search hundreds of part-time roles, placements, internships and graduate-level opportunities, as well as book one-to-one careers or application guidance appointments.

**Discover**
*This section contains resources that will give you an introduction and overview to the sector.*

Politics is about making decisions that define the policies that impact the country on party political lines. Policy, on the other hand, involves helping and influencing government(s) to make decisions about how to run the country. While working in government (national, regional or local) involves helping to deliver those policies. Roles in politics and policy vary greatly and include many sub-sectors at international, national, regional and local levels.

**What can I do with a politics degree – Prospects**

Learn more about career opportunities with a degree in politics.

**Parliament website**
[www.parliament.uk/](http://www.parliament.uk/)

Discover how Parliament works and what a career in the House of Commons, House of Lords or Parliamentary Digital Service might look like.

**Focus**
*Information for those of you starting to think that a career in politics and policy might be for you and who want to explore it in more detail.*

**Where can you work?** Here are a few options:

**Politics**
This involves working for a Member of Parliament (MP) or as a local councillor. You could also work as a Special Adviser to the government or within a political party, either in communications or another field.

MPs do, on occasion, take on individuals who contact them directly, particularly if you can demonstrate a reason for why you wish to work for them. Search for their contact details at [www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps).

Bear in mind that in addition to needing to meet the job’s specification, political parties will also want to see evidence that you share their values and aims, preferably in the form of tangible experiences. Therefore, it is worth looking at ways you can get involved with them before applying.

Standing as a SU (Students Union) rep is great experience and can boost job prospects. So, too, can writing and communicating ideas online, whether in a blog or through digital magazines.

**Government**
There are several different elements within government that are apolitical, both within the UK and abroad.

- The Civil Service offers a fast stream for applicants across a range of departments. [www.faststream.gov.uk/](http://www.faststream.gov.uk/)
- NGDP (National Graduate Development Programme) gives graduates two years in local government to influence policy, whether in social care, housing, education or the environment. [https://www.local.gov.uk/national-graduate-development-programme](https://www.local.gov.uk/national-graduate-development-programme)
- The Careers Group has teamed up with the London STEP programme to offer the London Councils Internship Programme, which is being run across several of London’s largest boroughs. [https://cossector.com/employers#london](https://cossector.com/employers#london)

There are also further opportunities, as a policy specialist for select committees and within HM Treasury. It is worth noting, there are equivalent schemes in other countries (see EU and Multilateral Organisations handout for more information).

**Local or national?**
Many people are attracted to the idea of national government, as that is where the ‘big’ decisions are made. However, local government can be a very rewarding career: at a local level you have more opportunity to directly impact on policy and create genuine change for people and communities.

**Policy Research**
The aim of this research is to set a strategic direction, as well as influence national agendas.

Think tanks are one option (see think tanks handout), along with research departments in charities. There are also research positions in unions, industry sector bodies (i.e. British Medical Association) and the private sector e.g. Barclays.
Here are several case studies of King’s students who are now working in policy roles within a broad remit of organisations. Although all have PhDs, this is not an essential criterion: https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/crsd/Careers-Beyond-Academia-Case-Studies.aspx

Public bodies are another way of influencing policy. Organisations include the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Care Quality Commission (CGC) who employ governance assistants and policy officers.

Finally, social research consultancies undertake research projects to investigate social issues, using different quantitative and qualitative research methods depending on the area of research. Firms include NatCen Social Research and Ipsos MORI (see www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/social-researcher).

Public Affairs
This role involves influencing policy, which is achieved by gaining access to government, in order to present the views of your client organisation. While simultaneously searching the horizon for what’s looming up ahead and what might require a timely response. There are several consultancy firms, including Grayling Political Strategy, Burton-Marsteller, Weber Shandwick and WestminsterPA.

Action
Resources which will allow you to take concrete steps towards achieving your career goals in the sector.

Look at the research being produced by the organisations that interest you. Follow them on social media, understand how they are funded, who they are hoping to influence and how their research will be used; reach out and meet them.

Consider, too, how you will demonstrate motivation: student politics, Think tank society or Policy Idol. Furthermore, remember to make the most of the numerous policy events happening at King’s and policy institute departments. Search policy events London in Eventbrite for hundreds of free events frequently hosted by prestigious organisations.

Perhaps more so than in any other sector, a detailed knowledge of the current political scene and any recent political, social or economic developments is crucial if you want to work in policy or any other political role.

Finding Vacancies
Here are just some of the sites where you may find graduate level opportunities and internships:

Working for an MP
www.w4mp.org
This site has vacancies and internships in all policy areas, including Parliament, pressure groups, campaigns and public affairs. It is a good starting point to see the range of roles out there.

The Civil Service Fast Stream
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service-fast-stream
The Civil Service Fast Stream, which includes several different schemes, takes on graduates across a range of departments, with the application process for the vast majority of them starting in October. Some departments, however, have their own graduate scheme i.e. the Treasury and Department for International Development, while others have direct entry into positions, such as Executive or Administrative Office.

Government Operational Research Service (GORS)
www.operational-research.gov.uk/recruitment/gateway/GORS support policy-making and strategical decisions across a number of different government departments and agencies.

Local Government Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) (see ‘Focus’ above)

London Councils Internship Programme (LCIP) (see ‘Focus’ above)

London Assembly
Jobs website with current vacancies, both within city hall and further afield.

PubAffairs
www.publicaffairsnetworking.com
A network for the public affairs, government relations, policy and communications industry. It is an excellent resource for graduates.

Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/public-affairs-consultant
Excellent resource for a career in public affairs. Offers advice on the duties and responsibilities of the role, as well as the working hours and salary.

Jobsgopublic
www.jobsgopublic.com
Search engine with thousands of job vacancies in the UK public and not for profit sectors.

EuroBrussels
www.eurobrussels.com
A service to help European affairs job seekers find listings of jobs in EU affairs.

Parliament
www.parliament.uk/about/working/jobs/
View and apply for job vacancies in the House of Commons, House of Lords and Parliamentary Digital Service.

European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)
epso.europa.eu/apply/job-offers_en
Search EPSO’s database for job opportunities in EU institutions or agencies.

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