Careers in Government and Politics

This is one of the largest employment sectors in the UK and there are a huge range of roles available to graduates of all disciplines. This resource is not exhaustive (things change quickly in the political world!) but it should give you some good sources for further exploration and research.

Working in National Government

The Civil Service Fast Stream [http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk/]
The Civil Service Fast Stream takes on a number of graduates across a range of departments, with the application process for the vast majority of them starting in September or October. In addition, the Department for International Development has a 50 week graduate development scheme, which opens for applications in February.

Direct Routes into Government Departments [https://www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/]
Many government departments also offer graduate roles, internships and placements. FCO, GCHQ, HRMC, HM Treasury and MI5 all have their own graduate schemes outside of the Faststream programme. The new Civil Service Careers Website is a helpful resource covering all departments.

Local Government Graduate Development Programme [www.ngdp.org.uk]
A two year graduate placement in local councils across the country, this gives you the chance to research and influence policy at a local government level. Roles in local government are wide ranging, ranging from research, policy and strategy, to more operational management in areas such as waste management, traffic and transportation, social services and education. Many graduate entry-level roles are advertised on individual council websites and on a central jobsboard [http://www.lgjobs.com/]

Welsh Government [https://beta.gov.wales/vacancies]
Scottish Government [http://www.work-for-scotland.org/]
Includes a Graduate Training Programme and direct entry graduate level jobs

Working in Westminster

Working for an MP [www.w4mp.org]
Vacancies and internships in Parliament, pressure groups, campaigns and public affairs.

The Political Parties As well as advertising them through websites such as Working for an MP, parties do use their websites to allow candidates to access current vacancies and submit your CV to a pool.

Labour [http://www.labour.org.uk/pages/careers-volunteering]
Conservatives [https://www.conservatives.com/work_for_us]
Liberal Democrats [http://www.libdems.org.uk/work_for_us]

Individual MPs do also on occasion take on people who contact them directly, particularly if you can show a reason that you want to work for them specifically. Search for contact details at [http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps]

Bear in mind that in addition to needing to meet the job’s specification (as with any job) political parties will also want to see evidence that you share their values and aims, preferably in the form of tangible experiences. So if you think you may be interested in working for a particular party, it’s worth looking at ways you can get involved with them before applying.
Special Advisers  http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/creating-effective-ministerial-team
There is no formal recruitment structure for special advisers, but you may find this document useful, in that it outlines information about the role and the responsibilities. The Institute for Government (A Think Tank) also occasionally offers internships.

Public Affairs  
http://www.publicaffairsnetworking.com
PubAffairs is a network for the public affairs, government relations, policy and communications industry. The website includes job vacancies, career advice, and information on the work of lobbyists. There is also an area specifically for graduates under the “GraduateForward” tab which includes a graduate jobs board and information on courses.

Government Operational Research Service (GORS)  http://www.operational-research.gov.uk/recruitment/gateway/
GORS support policy-making and strategical decisions across a number of different government departments and agencies. They offer placements and summer internships (internships are advertised in January for summer start dates)

EuroBrussels  www.eurobrussels.com
Advertises policy jobs both in the UK and internationally.

Vitae Jobs  https://vitaejobs.co.uk/
Recently established public sector jobs board, with a number of Parliamentary, Government, Local Government and third sector roles advertised.

Commercial awareness
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. Listed below are a few suggestions, but it’s also up to you to find places to keep on top of the news, by finding sources applicable to your political beliefs and policy interests. It’s also worth finding these organisations and following them on Twitter; it’s a great way of receiving regular, more easily-digestible updates, and any vacancies offered are likely to be advertised on there.

Policy Library  www.policylibrary.com
Policy Library has a number of detailed pieces of policy research divided up into over twenty policy areas, making it easy to search for the areas you’re interested in working in. They are very academic and detailed, but if you’re really looking to increase your knowledge in a particular area then this is a useful site. The site also has a jobs board,

Policy Jobs (http://www.policyjobs.net) although the vacancies are viewable by subscription only.

Chatham House  https://www.chathamhouse.org/
Leading international affairs Think Tank, with a wide range of news and opinion pieces relating to international policy. A small number of jobs and (often unpaid) internships are listed under the “vacancies” section of website.

Institute for Public Policy Research  www.ippr.org
Progressive think tank with a focus on economic and social issues and how these effect public policy in the UK. A small number of vacancies and internships, which pay the London Living Wage, are advertised on their website.
**Multilateral/International Organisations**

Multilateral refers to multiple countries working together on international relations issues. Examples of multilateral organisations include the UN, the EU and the World Bank. Professionals work in a wide range of fields, including human rights, international peace and security, trade, global health, translation and interpretation, science and environmental affairs, and public communications. Multilateral organizations employ people with diverse backgrounds who can collaborate across cultures to solve common problems using issue-specific expertise.

Some of these organisations (including the UN) look to recruit from unrepresented countries which means that British and American applicants can be excluded. Dual nationality may be helpful. The majority of internships are unpaid and organisations generally can be specific about your level and stage of study as well as age. The UN in particular is very clear that doing an internship with them does not necessarily lead to a more permanent role at the UN but any experience would be seen positively by other organisations in the sector.

**Sample Employers**
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- Caribbean Development Bank
- European Union
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Organization of American States
- Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
- United Nations
- World Bank
- World Trade Organization

**Skills and Experience**

- Understanding of policy processes
- Functional expertise in areas such as: economics, sustainable development, peacebuilding, law, security
- Critical thinking
- Foreign language proficiency
- Strong communication skills, both written and oral
- Overseas experience
- Regional expertise – Masters level expertise is often a pre-requisite

**UN Opportunities**

- United Nations Volunteers: [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org)
- World Food Programme: [www.wfp.org/about/vacancies/internship](http://www.wfp.org/about/vacancies/internship)
- UNICEF Internship programme: [www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_internship.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_internship.html)
- UNICEF Junior professional officer programme: [http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_internship.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_internship.html)
- UN Development fund for Women: [www.unwomen.org/en/aboutus/employment/internship-programme](http://www.unwomen.org/en/aboutus/employment/internship-programme)
- UNHCR: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) > employment > internships
- World Health Organisation: [www.who.int/employment/internship](http://www.who.int/employment/internship)
- United Nations University: [www.ony.unu.edu/internships](http://www.ony.unu.edu/internships)
- International Labour Organisation: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org) > About > Employment > Internships
- UNESCO Internship Programme: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) > Join us > employment opportunities > programmes > Internship
- UNESCO Young Professional Programme: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) > Join us > employment opportunities > programmes > Young professionals
- United Nations framework Convention on Climate Control: [www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int) > Secretariat

**Internship Programmes**

- Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) > About Us > Work and study opportunities > Internship programme
- UN Junior professional Officer Programme: [www.jposc.org](http://www.jposc.org)
- International Organisation for Migration: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) > About Us > Work and study opportunities
> Internship programme
  • UN Junior professional Officer Programme: www.un.org/jposc
  • International Organisation for Migration: www.iom.int > About > Recruitment > Internships at IOM

Financial / Trade / Economic
  • World Bank Young professionals Programme: www.worldbank.org > Job seekers
  • International Monetary Fund: www.imf.org > About > Job Opportunities > Recruitment programs
  • African Development Bank: www.afdb.org > Careers > internship Programme
  • European Bank for Reconstruction and Development: www.ebrdjobs.com > Search and apply > Internships
  • European Investment Bank: www.eib.org / > About > Jobs > Working with the EIB > Internships
  • International Monetary Fund: www.imf.org > About > Job Opportunities > Recruitment programs
  • African Development Bank: www.afdb.org > Careers > internship Programme
  • Inter-American Development Bank: www.iadb.org > Research Fellowships > Young Professionals Program
  • Asian Development Bank: www.adb.org/site/careers/main
  • Black sea Trade and Development Bank: www.bstdb.org > Internship
  • World trade Organisation: www.wto.org / > WTO and You > Information for students > Internships
  • Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development: www.oecd.org/careers

Law / Security / Governance
  • International Commission of Jurists: www.icj.org > About > Internships
  • International Criminal Court: www.icc-cpi.int/EN_Menus/icc/Pages/default.aspx > Recruitment > Internships
  • The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe – internships and Junior Professional Officer Programme: www.osce.org/employment

EU
At time of writing the UK is on course to leave the EU in March 2019 and we are therefore uncertain about employment opportunities for UK nationals going forward.
For an outline of EU career opportunities and the selection processes see:
European Civil Service http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/job/index_en.htm

Political Risk Analysis
Political risk analysts examine the political climate and social conditions of a particular country, region, or market to determine the level of political risk. They provide information pertaining to government stability, crime levels, currency convertability, land rights issues, as well as other factors that would affect return on investment. Typically, analysts gather information pertaining to the area of interest, determine the causes, sources, and level of risk, and forward their findings to decision-makers. They also may provide solutions or offer recommendations for overcoming these risks.

Work in political risk management is varied. If you pursue this field, you may find yourself working for international organisations, financial companies, rating services, oil companies, consumer businesses or companies that sell political risk information. You can also work in the political risk divisions of large consulting and insurance companies or within Credit, Fixed Income, or Equities at a large bank.

How to gain experience/internships
If you're interested in this field, it's helpful to develop accounting and financial skills as well as an understanding of the political process. Internships are strongly recommended for a career in political risk analysis, especially if you're looking to work at a financial institution.
Try to arrange work shadowing and longer placements or internships as this can help you to decide on your career choice and is a real advantage when applying for jobs. See our resources on networking and speculative applications for more advice. See our list of sample employers below for organisations that might have internships.

Many individuals interested in political risk analysis see the need to focus on a particular angle that will create a pathway to their career. If you’re interested in a Banking context, take courses in Economics. If you would like to specialise in a particular region, work hard to become an expert on its politics, culture, and economy. If you know that your languages are rusty then think about experience that will help you brush up. You will probably need to be proactive and make speculative applications to organisations that you are interested in and networking in order to get your foot in the door. An up-to-date profile on LinkedIn would probably also be helpful for this reason.

How to get a graduate level job

Obtaining a job in political risk analysis is by no means a straightforward undertaking. Whatever you choose, you will likely need to create the building blocks of your career through a careful mix of postgraduate training, experience, skills and networking.

Successful analysts are people who can apply their knowledge to understand new and complex situations. They hail from all sorts of backgrounds. Analysts usually have degrees in business or international relations or have worked in intelligence, law, journalism or law enforcement. Furthermore, banking experience is useful to those seeking employment at a financial institution. All applicants must have strong research and analytical skills. They need to be good decision-makers and able to communicate well. Potential employers are looking for ‘intelligent risk takers’ who are well-informed and keep abreast of current events. They also want individuals who can write concise and coherent reports.

Language skills are an asset but not a requirement in the field. Some positions may expect you to know a particular region inside and out so you are able to decipher a balance sheet, understand a country’s economic workings or provide insight into its politics. However, other positions will focus on several areas of the world and therefore do not expect you to be a specialist.

Useful Background Information

- Association of Professional Insurance Women
- Federation of European Risk Management Associations (FERMA)
- Global Association of Risk Professionals (GARP)
- Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA)
- Risk World
- Society for Risk Analysis (SRA)
- Project Point assess your own risk taking abilities!

Public affairs

If you are interested in working in the political sector but you want to expand your options beyond working in the Civil Service, consider public affairs. Public affairs practitioners tend to work ‘in house’ for a large company, as an advisor for a political consultancy working with a number of clients, for a trade association or union, a political or issues-based organisation or for a government agency. Other related roles can be found in Think Tanks and NGO’s, political parties or in central government, working as lobbyists, with pressure groups and with different commissions.

Within consultancy alone the range of jobs is enormous and perhaps the best way of finding out about the diverse roles is to do a preliminary job search and see what you can find. There is no such thing as a typical employer or a typical post in public affairs. Most consultancies are relatively small, which means that posts come up fairly infrequently and you may need the flexibility to take on many roles. Several of the larger PR agencies
have specialised public affairs or government relations divisions. In 1994 there were 5 public affairs firms, now there are 70.

In general a public affairs consultant tends to make the link between companies or independent organisations and the government. They use their knowledge of political processes to give advice to their clients. Public affairs consultants are required to keep up-to-date with current trends in politics, and read about policy decisions as and when they happen. They are responsible for communicating this information to their clients (some large companies have their own staff involved in public affairs). They have to be able to react quickly in any situation to build strategies for influencing public figures. The job may involve a lot of writing (composing press releases or newsletters) as well as emailing clients to keep them informed. It may also require some travelling to conferences and political events to build networks. It’s useful to be aware that the work of public affairs consultants, lobbying, is controversial and on the political agenda.

- The Public Affairs Networking website has a very good Public Affairs Guide and profiles of people working in the industry in the UK and EU.

- The Prospects website also has a useful profile of a public affairs consultant.

Networks - why and how to use them

Networking is particularly important and can help you succeed with your applications. If you have been in contact with someone working for the organisation then you have extra information to assist you with your application. Use social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook to connect with organisations. Alumni can make extremely useful contacts, giving you an “edge” with your applications and interviews.

How to gain experience/internships

- Whilst at university, involvement with political parties or other kinds of student politics, debating, and student publications will give you a good grounding in current affairs, communication and information.

- Involvement in societies or the Students’ Association can give you experience of organising, teamwork, leadership and communication but they can also give you a chance to be involved in student issues and this is particularly relevant for jobs in Public Affairs.

- Have a look at the following websites for internships:
  - EthicalCareers.org
  - Working for an MP: http://www.w4mpjobs.org/

- Many placements or internships are not advertised - draw up a list of organisations you’d be keen to work for and send off speculative applications:
  - The website Public Affairs Networking has a list of organisations which regularly recruit graduate trainees. Have a look on their websites for any information about internships or speculative applications.
  - Public Affairs Networking also has lists of public affairs consultants, EU consultants and Think Tanks.
  - Public Affairs Links has a directory of the key public affairs firms around the world.

- Offer to volunteer in MP/MSP/MEP offices. If you support a specific political party, assist your local candidate or work in their national communications team. Use websites such as Find Your MP to identify people to contact.

- Fleishman Hillard, the largest Public Affairs consultancy in Brussels, occasionally has relevant internships in its Brussels office. These provide an opportunity to see how public affairs within the EU works across a wide range of sectors.

How to get a graduate job in Public Affairs

- Your job search strategy in public affairs will test all the skills you will need to be successful in the industry itself. You may have to think creatively about your approach to job hunting and be prepared to be persistent. Networking and making speculative applications will be important as many opportunities
in this area are not advertised and may evolve through volunteering. Any contacts you make will be invaluable and by gaining you can begin to make these relationships. Consider the suggestions in How to gain experience/internships above.

- Have a look at the following websites:
  - The Public Affairs Networking website has a list of organisations which regularly take on graduates and a list of recruitment consultancies
  - Euro Brussels: European Affairs jobs
  - I.E. Lobbying: Directory for European Public Affairs
  - PolicyLibrary: Jobs, research & events listing, also includes European think tank directory
  - PoliticalJobs: International intern job listing
  - Public Affairs Links: Site with advice, jobs and links relating to the UK lobbying industry
  - Public Affairs Jobs HQ advice on how to find jobs, how to network effectively, and how to prepare for interview for lobbying and policy jobs
  - Working for an MP Also includes think tanks, lobby groups etc.
  - University of London’s Job Portal
    https://careersportal.royalholloway.ac.uk/employerConnect/jobSearch.html?execution=e1s1
  - Guardian Jobs
  - Some large private sector companies including Anglian Water and RBS periodically offer graduate corporate affairs/communications schemes which include public affairs

General public affairs-related careers information

- Public Affairs Networking: Network for public affairs practitioners with very useful careers advice
- Public Affairs Links: Comprehensive information about careers in lobbying
- Public Service: The information portal for the public sector
- Types of work profiles on the Prospects website:
  - Public Affairs Consultant
  - Politician's Assistant
  - Government Social Research Officer

**Think Tanks**

Think tanks engage in research and advocacy in different policy areas. The main areas are social policy, political strategy, political risk, the economy, the environment, science or technology, industrial or business policies and military advice. They are usually identified with particular positions on the political spectrum; left, right, green, and liberal. Though some think tanks do in-depth research into social and economic affairs, the focus is on the political and policy implications. They are not overtly 'campaigning' organisations, rather their purpose is to influence public policy and debate rather than directly campaign for policy changes. In order to do this they use the media and direct contacts with politicians, civil servants and other organisations in the policy community to disseminate their work. They generally initiate their own work and seek funding for it rather than working on contract to public or private bodies (though some work may be done at the behest of ‘friendly’ political parties). They are generally funded from charitable and corporate sources and most are relatively new organisations with over half having been established since 1980.

**Finding Think Tanks:** Full listings and resources for Think Tanks can be found at:

- [www.gotothinktank.com](http://www.gotothinktank.com)
- [www.worldpress.org/library/ngo.cfm](http://www.worldpress.org/library/ngo.cfm)
- [www.policylibrary.com](http://www.policylibrary.com) (click on world think tank directory)
- [www.policyjobs.net](http://www.policyjobs.net) – research and policymaking jobs from around the world

Here is a list of Think Tanks categorised by area of focus:
International affairs defence and security

- The International Institute for Strategic Studies
- Royal United Services Institute
- Chatham House
- Royal Institute for International Affairs
- Centre for Defence Studies

Democratic government

- The Constitution Unit
- New Local Government Network (NLGN)
- Institute for Public Policy Research

Development

- Institute of Development Studies
- International Institute for Environment and Development
- Overseas Development Institute

Economy

- Catalyst
- Centre for Economic Policy and Research
- The Centre for Economic Reform and Transformation

Ethnicity and equality

- Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations
- Commission for Racial Equality
- European integration

- The European Policy Centre
- Centre for European Reform
- Centre for European Policy Studies

Work and employee relations

- The Work Foundation
- The Institute for Employment Rights

Finding Think Tanks

Full listings and resources for Think Tanks can be found at:

www.gototinktank.com  www.worldpress.org/library/ngo.cfm
www.policylibrary.com  (click on world think tank directory)
www.policyjobs.net – research and policymaking jobs from around the world

What roles are there? The majority of Think Tanks are quite small (even some of the bigger ones only have 40 employees) therefore, there are not many vacancies at any one time. Some organisations only employ experienced researchers on contract work. There are several tiers of research positions in think tanks. The most common entry point is at Research Associate or Junior Researcher level. Most Research Associates are hired with
a Master’s degree and about five years of research experience. Next are Senior Associates, typically DPhil level researchers with several years’ experience. Many of these think tank employees are also affiliated with a University, often in a part-time teaching capacity. About half of these researchers come from academia, while the other half is promoted from within the think tank. These researchers can progress to become Senior Fellows or Research Fellows and are appointed because they hold outstanding credentials as nationally (and sometimes internationally) recognised experts in their field.

What skills do I need? Team working, networking, excellent written language and research skills, a keen interest in public policy, current affairs or a specific strand of the think tank’s work are essential. At the level of Junior Researcher desk-based research and talking to people will be central but you will probably also have to do a lot of your own administration. Most employers expect prospective entrants to have detailed knowledge of research techniques which may be acquired by taking a taught Masters in social research methods or obtaining a research degree in a particular area. The work of Think Tanks utilises a wide range of research methods and involves extensive dissemination activities. Academic research is often used by Think Tanks, including rigorous and sophisticated quantitative and qualitative techniques such as surveys, mapping exercises, interviews and focus groups. In-depth knowledge of an area central to the organisation’s work can be crucial. Many Think Tank websites include staff profiles; it is useful to look at these to see how current think tank employees have reached their particular positions.

Any tips?

Be political If you are interested in having a future career in party politics it is beneficial to think about the fit between the Think Tank you are working for and the views of the relevant party. Previous experience of working for a Think Tank which is against the views of the political party you apply to work for will raise some cynical questions at interview!

Have integrity As with all jobs, you are likely to be more engaged and therefore more successful if you agree with the philosophy of the Think Tank so it is worth considering this when preparing to apply.

Do your homework A good first step is to check the individual company website for relevant job vacancies. If there aren’t any publicly advertised, send a ‘speculative’ CV and cover letter tailored to the individual Think Tank.

Think laterally ‘To get your foot in the door’ it could be worth considering administrative jobs within a Think Tank, e.g. - Demos runs separate media, communications, and audio/visual internship programmes. With small staff numbers you may well become involved on a wider scale and have good opportunities to network.

Network! A London student once got an interview at a Think Tank through chatting to the person sat next to them on a train who happened to be recruiting an intern! Obviously this is very lucky – but keep your eyes, ears and mind open for opportunities.

What skills Do I need – and where do I get them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key attributes/skills needed for the role</th>
<th>Where you could develop these skills or attributes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The analytical skills to analyse complex problems</td>
<td>These are most likely to be developed and evidenced from your academic studies, especially any dissertation or research projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to communicate with excellence, through listening, speaking and writing, and to persuade</td>
<td>Presentations within your course, and debating and mooting experience. A student representative role is also likely to offer opportunities to develop these characteristics. Volunteering, work experience and internships will also offer opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research skills</td>
<td>Developed through your academic studies and any relevant work experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language skills</td>
<td>Improve your fluency in second or third languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/Commercial Awareness</td>
<td>Follow current affairs, research target companies, constituencies, issues</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Updated October 2018*