

# CAREER VIEW

## PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

What are the most effective ways of reducing poverty? How can we protect New Zealand's natural resources, while improving the quality of people's lives? What is the role of non-governmental organisations in modern societies? How can young entrepreneurs be best helped to start up new 'green businesses'? What impacts do user fees have on health services use and health status? How will societies address climate change challenges in the 21st century and beyond? If you're interested in the answers to these questions and many more, a career in Public Policy or Public Management could be for you.

**Public Policy** looks at the process of making decisions within and across governments. It considers how policy challenges (like those above) are placed on the political agenda and how strategic interventions and policies are formulated, with inputs from citizens and organisations, to resolve those issues. Then, once the political decision and legislation concerning the appropriate policy has been made, Public Policy studies examine how that policy is implemented. Policies also have to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that they achieve their desired objectives. Policies are often made under uncertain conditions, and when circumstances change, policies may have to adapt.

**Public Management** is important for understanding wider public policy processes and aspects. Public Management is about putting government policies into practice. It ensures that the machinery of government operates efficiently and effectively. It is also concerned with wider ideas, such as the public interest; public goods; strategy and performance; leadership; accountability; integrity; and public value. Public management skills are highly relevant for the day-to-day running of government ministries, operational departments such as prisons or social housing, and public-private partnerships.

### WHY STUDY PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT?

**Policy Analysis for Advice:** policies are often designed when undesirable societal phenomena have already occurred (e.g. there are too many fatal accidents caused by drink driving; smoking has been identified as a public health hazard). Whenever there are

signs that developments are likely to have negative implications for people, nature or the economy, decision-makers may also design policies to prevent such problems from occurring in the first place (e.g.



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preventing water pollution and dangerous levels of climate change).

To address such challenges, policy analysis engages in a series of analytical activities, such as investigating the evidence base for the policy challenge and identifying the people likely to have an interest in the problem and its potential solutions (stakeholders). Other activities involve formulating policy objectives and desirable outcomes, as well as the criteria for evaluating possible policy options. The policy analysis process includes the development of policy options and choosing among policy alternatives based on the selected criteria.

In modern societies, policy analysis processes include input from the public and organised groups to enrich the quality of analysis and create the support needed to implement policies. The trained policy analyst is also skilled in building relationships and engaging effectively with the public. He/she uses facilitation skills to help people understand one another and reach agreement about how they may address policy challenges. Policy advice involves the formulation of policy recommendations that are underpinned by persuasive and analytically sound arguments as to why particular policy interventions would work better than others.

**Policy Research** provides evidence for the development of policy. It examines what policies have worked and for whom, and which have not delivered the expected outcome. It asks questions like ‘what have been the factors influencing Maori socio-economic disadvantage?’ or, ‘do longer prison sentences reduce crime?’ Policy research often requires investigation of an issue from many different disciplines such as sociology, economics, law, or socio-psychology, sustainability science, biology etc.

**Evaluation and Monitoring** involves identifying key targets and doing data analysis to determine whether key targets are being met. Evaluation can be focused on processes, e.g. when it’s important to ensure that the policy was implemented in the correct manner; or it could be an outcome evaluation, checking to see whether the result of the policy achieved what was expected and desired. Evaluation can also assess the wider impact of policies, beyond the expected outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation typically involve both quantitative and qualitative methods. Evaluators often have some statistical training, though many evaluations are qualitative in nature.

**Public Management** offers an increasingly wide range of career options. Whereas traditionally it

was associated with jobs in government ministries and departments (especially senior public servants), we now know that studying Public Management opens up opportunities in a range of sectors: local government; voluntary and third sector; NGOs; etc. It is also an excellent supplement to those looking for careers in public law, as all public servants need to know about the constitutional requirements, inter-relationship between departments, ethical stances and managerial relations with ministers and the Cabinet.

**Multi-disciplinary approach:** Public Policy draws upon the skills, frameworks and techniques of many disciplines. Policy analysts and policy advisers often work in teams across a variety of government departments and ministries in order to address an issue. For instance, policy in regard to fishing quota or marine reserves will require knowledge from the biological sciences, from international law of the sea, from economic analysis of regulations and geography. Policy on child development requires not just knowledge gleaned from developmental psychology, but also education and possibly the economics of human capital.

Courses in Public Policy are therefore very helpful complements to discipline based programmes. Some excellent combinations include Public Policy together with Law, Economics, Social Policy, Politics, Environmental Studies, Geography, Psychology or Education. Public Management has a natural affinity with generic Management courses, Information Management, Marketing, Accounting or Law.

## WHERE DO PUBLIC POLICY GRADUATES WORK?

Public Policy graduates work in public, not-for-profit and private sectors. Many of the policy analysis skills are similar to those of business, particularly strategic management. Although the context differs, the skills of public and private sector managers overlap significantly. Many private sector firms want to know how to influence government policy, or what the implications of public policy are for their firms. Depending on the nature of the business, issues range from employment relations and health and safety to trade, environmental and resource management factors among others. Many not-for-profit or voluntary sector organisations have their own public sector policy, research or lobbying functions and consultants can be called in to an organisation at any stage of the policy process.

Policy Analyst and Advisor roles are one of the most



commonly sought after roles, and encompass a range of roles, skills and aptitudes that include:

- policy analytic skills that reflect the context/lens of the mission, values, objective of the organisation
- policy research skills
- working collaboratively with a wide range of organisations and the public to design effective and equitable policies
- facilitating multi-stakeholders interactions for conflict closure and consensus building in policy settings
- effective presentation skills and written communication skills (journals/newsletters/blogs/media releases/research reports)
- an ability to prioritise and work under pressure
- an ability to work independently and to be self-managing

**Central government:** Each government department advertises for and appoints its own staff. Vacancies are advertised as they come up, however some departments participate in annual Graduate Recruitment Programmes organised through university careers services. Departments with a particular emphasis on policy development and who recruit at the graduate level include, but are not limited to: *the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Justice, the Inland Revenue Department, the State Services Commission, the Department of Labour and The Treasury.*

Students who take courses in Public Policy will have learnt how to analyse policy and develop policy options. They will understand the relationship between Cabinet, the Minister in charge of a portfolio and the public servants. They know about the different policy instruments or ways that the

government can achieve its objectives. They also understand the complex ethical and constitutional arrangements in managing public sector organisations and comprehend the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi.

**Local government** has policy and/or strategy units that carry out research, provide policy advice and formulate policies across a broad spectrum. Policies set out how a local government body such as a city or district council operates or interacts with the wider community. The policies are approved by the elected members of the organisation. A Council-approved policy is a statement of position on an ongoing or recurring matter, issue or problem. Its purpose is to direct any response, future action, or inaction. "Policy frameworks set goals and direction for a broad range of Council activities and tend to influence how and what Council activities are delivered. They are integrated into related Council decisions, planning, operations and procedures, e.g. Sustainability Policy; Ageing Together Policy. Tactical policies identify what the Council will do in a specific or recurring set of circumstances. They may have operational procedures associated with them. Some tactical policies may be the result of statutory requirements, or they may have been developed to provide guidance to staff on operational issues or to make clear to the wider community the Council's position on a specific issue, e.g. Dog Control Policy; Gambling Venue and TAB Venue Policy." (Christchurch City Council website).

**Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** in New Zealand are numerous and small. However they do employ people to policy/research/advocacy roles. For example *Mana Ririki – Maori Research* undertakes and commissions research that informs practice, and promotes kaupapa Maori approaches to Maori child maltreatment. A key aim is to develop an evidence-base for policy-makers and providers – and stimulate public debate with their findings. *The Public Health Association* takes a leading role in promoting public health and influencing public policy. *The Salvation Army* employs a small number of staff in its Auckland based Social Policy and Parliamentary unit. Public Policy along with Economics or Law would be an ideal combination for these roles that involve data analysis, research, and analytical and problem-solving skills. The organisation has close links with other niche NGOs such as Fair Trade, Lifewise (housing) and Stand Against Slavery (human trafficking) that employ people in advocacy roles.

**Political parties**, including Minister's offices, also carry out a significant amount of policy research and development.

**Private sector:** Corporates and multinational organisations often recruit through university careers services for policy and business analysts, researchers, management trainees and other roles. Selection is highly competitive especially when open to all degree disciplines. Companies that are considerably affected by government policy decisions have roles suitable for the skills and knowledge of public policy graduates. For example *Air New Zealand* has a Government Affairs team and the Fletcher group of companies that are considerably affected by government policy decisions have roles suitable for the skills and knowledge of public policy graduates. *Fonterra* runs a two-year long graduate programme that gives graduates experience across the organisation. Public policy graduates may apply for the Business Programme and eventually move into a junior role in a general business team such as Trade and Strategy that liaises with government, human resources, project management and others. *Powerco* has suitable roles in its Government and Regulatory team as well as in their Legal and Commercial teams. Powerco looks for academic qualifications, professional memberships, previous work experience and the soft skills - good communication, collaborative working and thinking outside the box.

**Consultancies** employ high-achieving graduates, although prior work experience and a double degree may be preferred. *Castalia - Strategic Advisors*, an advisory firm that specialises in governance and regulation of infrastructure services employs graduates in the following roles – analyst (zero-three years experience); senior analyst (two-six years); manager (three plus years). Castalia looks for candidates who: work things out in a logical and structured way; have at least a basic knowledge and application of microeconomic concepts; are well informed; have a good general knowledge of history, geography, politics and current affairs; produce clear, concise written work and speak articulately and confidently; have skills/experience using analytical techniques such as: financial analysis and financial modeling; economic cost-benefit analysis; econometrics; linear programming. *Motu Economic and Public Policy Research* employs graduates as research analysts who primarily assist Senior Fellows in the completion of research projects, carrying out research and disseminating the findings. The ideal person for Motu has an advanced degree, Master's or higher, in an analytical field and might be thinking of doing further study at PhD level. *Allen + Clark*,

a policy and regulatory specialist firm, recruits exceptional candidates who have an economics degree as well as public policy. Consultancy firm *MartinJenkins* provides public, private and not-for-profit organisations with evaluation and research, public policy, organisational design and business improvement services, among others. They employ public policy experts who are ready to tackle challenging and diverse issues.

**Universities** are excellent places to work for graduates who enjoy transmitting knowledge and skills at an academic level and who wish to continue research. Graduates considering an academic career require a PhD and a record of publication to be competitive for junior positions.

**Unions:** large unions employ policy analysts, researchers and advocates. Policy analysts in unions will spend considerable time analysing issues in depth and breadth, researching and writing submissions to influence legislation, preparing reports, giving briefings and consulting widely with membership, staff and other relevant stakeholders.

## WHAT SKILLS DO PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT GRADUATES HAVE?

The study and practice of Public Policy demand high standards of intellectual honesty and rigour; graduates therefore develop higher-order thinking skills that include:

**Conceptual thinking:** the ability to work with intellectual constructs and explore hypothetical scenarios.

**Abstract reasoning:** the ability to make logical connections between ideas and formulate conclusions.

**Critical analysis:** evaluating information and identifying what is pertinent to the issue.

**Strategic planning:** being able to think a situation through and anticipate a range of consequences.

**Judgement:** gathering relevant information and making effective decisions.

**Creative thinking:** mentally engaging in a series of 'what if' propositions during the process of developing policy options; being able to extrapolate effectively from the known to the unknown.

**Flexible thinking:** being able to let go of one line of reasoning and develop another.

**Communication skills** are fundamental to work in the policy area. These include clear, succinct written

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communication; oral fluency - the ability to express concepts simply and concisely using appropriate language that carries the flow of ideas; listening - the ability to attend to the substance of what is being said, including the emotional context, and to summarise content accurately; presentation credibility - the ability to inform and explain to others in a persuasive and professional manner. Non-verbal communication is an important aspect of presentation credibility.

**Relationship building:** the ability to develop enduring and constructive alliances with people across all social, political, economic and ethnic groups.

Other skills Public Policy graduates develop include the ability to:

- develop and follow a line of astute and logical argument
- research information
- absorb and retain detail
- process complex and abstruse information
- identify areas of conflicting interests
- maintain a solution-focussed approach to issues
- understand the techniques of statistical and economic analysis
- apply understanding of political, statutory and regulatory processes to specific issues
- evaluate work tasks and balance priorities
- work under pressure and meet deadlines

These skills enable graduates to carry out work tasks itemised in job descriptions. Graduates with additional qualifications may also offer skills in, for example: law, econometrics, demographic analysis, social research and marketing.

### JOB TITLES

Listed below is a selection of typical job titles. Some jobs may require prior experience or additional qualifications:

advocate • analyst • assistant advisor • business analyst • campaign coordinator • community services manager • economic initiatives manager • human resources advisor • lobbyist • manager strategy and planning • operational policy adviser • planner • policy adviser • policy analyst (junior and senior) • policy and development manager • policy researcher • policy research manager • programme or project manager • public sector liaison • public sector manager • regulatory advisor • research advisor • researcher • senior policy analyst • strategy and planning manager.

### Hamish McConnochie

Analyst  
MartinJenkins



I became interested in studying Public Policy after being employed at the Real Estate Agents Authority one summer. The job made me more aware of public policy, which I had always been curious about on account of my interests in politics and media, but which I had never considered pursuing as a degree.

During my studies I enjoyed learning new concepts and how to apply them, as well as meeting people such as past students who returned to be tutors after applying their Public Policy major skills in a practical sense in the workplace. The lectures and tutorials, which suited in-class discussions and debates on policy issues, were also of benefit. Since graduating, I have tutored a 200-level Public Policy course at Victoria and enjoy passing on knowledge I have gained through work and study.

The Public Policy major gives you a lot of skills that will be useful in any line of work, such as the ability to identify the cause and symptoms of a problem and determine the consequences of an intervention and its wider impact. I found that the assignments assisted in the development of my writing skills, as there is a need to explain complex problems both clearly and succinctly.

When I left university I looked for a job in the policy field and went on to work in the public policy service line at MartinJenkins – a public sector consultancy firm. This sees me work with a number of different public sector (as well as non-government and private sector) clients on a range of issues. This has been positive in terms of my professional development, as it has allowed me to continue to develop a broad range of skills.

I think a Public Policy degree is a real asset for the future. The role of government will be increasingly important with challenges such as climate change confronting people. That will require new minds, new ways of thinking, and new skill sets. I think it's also a good complementary major for students doing Taxation, Finance, Law, Economics or Political Science – where government is an important player in those studies. A greater understanding of the policy process can only enhance the knowledge of students studying those majors.

**Carly Soo**

*Policy Analyst  
Ministry for the Environment*



When I started at university I had a preconceived notion of what I wanted to do and study. However, within a year I had changed my degree three times and went through four different majors. I stumbled upon Public Policy by chance and found that I really enjoyed studying real issues through an institutional and theoretical lens.

Public Policy gave me the freedom to explore areas I was interested in. For example, I was able to focus my studies on environmental issues and also pursue my interest in media and broadcasting policy. This is great if you are as indecisive as I am.

What I enjoyed most about studying Public Policy was the variety of approaches and the opportunity to draw on many disciplines in order to understand problems and find possible solutions. I was able to combine my interests in the social sciences, economics, law, and politics. Using contemporary examples really grounded my studies in the real world and meant I could apply my skills in a pragmatic way.

The most important skill I gained during my studies was critical and analytical thinking. Public Policy provides you with a way to analyse problems drawing on evidence from lots of sources to understand problems, to come up with solutions and effectively convey recommendations to the relevant audience.

My studies led me straight to my current role as a Policy Analyst at the Ministry for the Environment. Part of my Honours year (I have a Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) in Public Policy and Economics and a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies) involved an internship at a government department, which was one of the most valuable experiences during my studies. I was able to apply theoretical approaches to what I was learning beyond the classroom. This introduced me to the realities of policy making in a real-world context.

I found studying Public Policy an interesting, intellectually challenging, relevant and practical major. I would recommend Public Policy as a major to anyone interested in a career in the public service, although it certainly does not limit you to this area.

**Tom Pettit**

*Senior Research Advisor  
Wellington City Council*



I decided on a career in policy because that's where people are trying to solve the big issues. After spending some time in the private sector focused on marketing and business, policy seemed a bit of a change in gears. That said, it is ultimately work with great purpose and responsibility so I felt it was where I could make the most positive difference.

The aspect of my studies I most enjoyed was writing my thesis. At no other time in your life do you get to choose what you will do for an entire year, who will supervise you while you do it and how you will interpret it. It was incredibly satisfying to hand it in at the end and the journey to get there was really enlightening.

I gained a much deeper understanding for looking at issues from every angle. In the private sector you often have to just jump in knee-deep and find a way through. Policy work is much more considered and thorough, requiring attentiveness and methodical ways of operating.

I ended up in my current work immediately after I finished my studies, as a result of some of the work I did on my thesis. It is important to make the most of your time getting a Master's degree as it gives you the best opportunity to experiment and find work that is both satisfying and engaging.

Whatever you decide to study, enjoy it. If you're thinking about policy, experiment - try a summer internship at a ministry or local government body to see if it is right for you. There's no better way to test if something is right for you.

### **Kalolaine Vaipuna**

*Policy Analyst  
Ministry for Primary Industries*



I decided to enrol for a Master of Public Policy programme at Victoria University after moving to New Zealand from Tonga. I had an undergraduate degree in communications and had been working in Tonga when we implemented Tonga's economic reforms. That was where I became interested in public policy.

I enjoyed my studies. All the practical experience and knowledge that the lecturers and other postgraduate students brought to the course were invaluable. We learned a lot from one another and also laughed a lot because people were often blunt about their experiences.

Doing my Master's gave me the ability to think more critically about issues. At Master's level you can't just regurgitate what you have learned. I also learned to look at issues through policy frameworks. Through endless presentations I developed my ability to present confidently and learned to field feedback and questions from around the room. That builds your confidence and also makes you realise you don't know everything, which is the value of having different experiences in the same room. There were quite a few courses about policy in developing countries and I was able to talk and add value to discussions from my Pacific experience.

I was still studying part time for my Master's when a Policy Analyst role in International Fisheries Management came up. The fact that I was completing a Master's in Public Policy at Victoria and could research and ask the right questions while preparing for my job interview (skills acquired at Victoria) contributed to my being considered the best candidate. It has been an awesome career move.

To students who are enrolling in Public Policy or considering it, I'd advise - speak up and ask questions even if you don't have much experience. Also be prepared to network with people on the course because some of them are policy managers and could be important further on in your career when you need something from another government department. The lecturers have useful work contacts as well. You don't need to be a subject matter expert - policy analysis skills are transferable so you can move around in the public service or even overseas.

### **Ross Wood**

*Adviser  
State Services Commission*



I have a strong interest in politics, which is what brought me to Wellington, the seat of government. The opportunity to look at societal issues really fascinated me but I also wanted to be able to apply my interest in a practical way. I enrolled for a Bachelor of Commerce in Public Policy, alongside a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Modern Languages. Now, having completed an Honours degree I am doing a Master's in Public Policy.

The Master's is course based so you can do it alongside work commitments - it gives me the chance to think more theoretically about the work I am doing in the day-to-day role and also to hone my policy skills. In my job I advise on workforce related issues across the public service, issues such as diversity and workforce planning.

During my studies I enjoyed having the freedom and learning skills to think really deeply about society's big issues, while being provided with the tools to start thinking about solutions. Having an analytical understanding to assess problems and solutions is excellent and I think the knowledge could be applied more widely than the public sector. Furthermore, the broad research methodology skills, especially in both qualitative and quantitative enquiry, have been really valuable.

I was very lucky through the Honours course to do an internship with the Porirua City Council's community development team. I had the chance to develop further skills in a practical and applied setting. Through Victoria I also had the opportunity to do a summer research scholarship on innovations in Christchurch following the earthquake. It was a great chance to get relevant experience in an exciting policy area, and helped me into my current role. I began my Master's a month after starting my job. I find that continuing to study Public Policy enables me to develop the practical skills I use day to day, which will no doubt add value to my career in the public sector.

I'd advise students to give Public Policy a go. The degree not only gives you the chance to think about and analyse societies' big issues, but it's also very versatile with a wide variety of applications.

## PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AT VICTORIA

Victoria draws on its capital city location, and the close proximity of Rutherford House to Parliament and government departments, by being the only university in New Zealand that offers an array of undergraduate, postgraduate and post-experience courses in Public Policy and Public Management.

The School of Government offers an undergraduate major in Public Policy that is available under both the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) degrees. The majoring requirement includes introductory courses in politics and economics, specialist courses in policy analysis, public management and public economics. Courses on environmental policy, development policy and social entrepreneurship are also offered.

A degree in Public Policy provides an excellent starting point for employment within central government, local or regional government, crown entities, not-for-profit organisations, policy consultancies, corporations active in policy-making and implementation processes, and industry associations. It is useful to supplement the multi- and interdisciplinary Public Policy major with discipline-based study in a related area such as Politics, Social Policy, Law, Economics, Human Resource Management, Environmental Studies, Development Studies or Management.

A Graduate Pathway programme has been designed for those who have majored in Public Policy and related disciplines seeking to undertake postgraduate study.

For graduates with several years' work experience, there is three-year (part time) Master of Public Policy (MPP) programme and a linked Master of Public



Management (MPM) programme. The Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas in Public Policy and Public Management are smaller qualifications which can serve as stepping stones to the MPP and MPM, as well as being qualifications in their own right. These programmes can be taken full-time or part-time. Courses are interactive, and cover law, politics, economics, policy analysis and public management, along with courses on evaluation and sector specific issue based courses.

The School is the New Zealand part of the Australia/NZ School of Government, teaching a Master of Public Administration (Executive) to senior public servants in both countries.

The PhD in Public Policy is a research degree which can be completed part-time or full-time.

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