



CAREERS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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OVERVIEW

Political science is the systematic study of politics and is fundamentally a study of power. Political science scholars and students focus on core concepts like authority, legitimacy, liberty, equality, citizenship, governance, and justice. Building on philosophical and theoretical foundations, political scientists are able to shed light on pressing questions about nationalism and globalization, the sources of political conflict, the outcomes of distributive justice, and the role of collaboration at all orders of governance from local to global.

The study of politics makes uncommon demands on one's critical faculties; in fact, it is the leading aim of political science to cultivate just this capacity for critical reflection. To be sure, the student of politics can expect to be asked to master a great mass of plain facts, with a view to explaining what makes bureaucracies work; how great powers rise and fall; what constitutes the difference between an effective public policy and a misguided one; how one designs an unbiased opinion poll; what factors shape international decision-making; and so on.

Perhaps it might be said that political science caters to every taste, from those preoccupied solely by the question of how one can rise to be premier of Ontario, to those whose chief longing is to glimpse the true nature of justice. Put less vulgarly, this suggests that the study of politics encompasses the entire range of human concerns in their full diversity. Aristotle went so far as to claim that political science is the "ruling science" insofar as it inquires not merely into this or that aspect of human affairs, but looks to the comprehensive order within which all human activities and practices are governed. It seems fair to say that the subsequent development of Political Science as an intellectual discipline has not left behind this ancient claim, but confirmed it ever anew.

Political Science graduates do not typically go on to become professional politicians. More frequently, they proceed to careers in law, journalism, the civil service and government-business relations.

Source: UTM Academic Calendar – [Political Science](#), UTM [Department of Political Science](#)

SKILLS AND QUALITIES

- **Communication** – present ideas and data clearly; mediate and negotiate conflicts; public speaking; and listen critically.
- **Research & quantitative methods** – interpret data; develop research designs and models; understand program and systems analysis; utilize survey research methods; and compare/contrast ideas and information
- **Analysis** – interpret issues and data; understand components of complex problems; offer relevant perspectives; and synthesize themes from complex issues.
- **Planning & development** – make projections; organize people/equipment/ideas; think logically; conceptualize and implement projects; and make decisions.

- **Knowledge of current issues** - understand the consequences of policy issues within and beyond Canada; apply political thought to global issues like justice, rights and the relationship between state and the individual

Source: UTM Career Centre Careers by Major – Political Science, Career Navigator – Political Science

CAREER OPTIONS

There are many different career options available for graduates of Political Science. Your degree provides you with a variety of intellectual and applied skills that are valuable in a range of careers. The wide variety of careers that graduates have moved on to is a reflection of the diversity of skills gained through an undergraduate program. Involvement in extracurricular, volunteer, and work experiences will also supplement your skills and focus them to a particular industry. Below is a sample of the types of positions graduates have gone on to.

Government:

- Public Policy Analyst *
- Financial/Economic Analyst *
- Social Policy Program Officer
- Foreign Service Officer *
- Immigration and Revenue Officer *
- Legislative Analyst
- Political Aide *
- Politician *
- Lobbyist *
- Diplomat
- Customs Officer
- Economic Development Officer *

Journalism:

- Editor *
- Press Officer
- Print Journalist *
- Publisher *
- Public Relations Specialist
- Television and Radio Journalist*

Private Sector:

- Budget Analyst
- Communications Officer
- Financial/Business Consultant
- Financial Planner *
- Human Resources Specialist *
- Market Analyst
- Researcher *
- Sales Manager
- Public Opinion Analyst
- Public Relations Specialist *
- Lawyer *

Note: career profiles for many of the above jobs are available in the Career Centre. Those marked with an asterisk (*) can be viewed using Career Cruising, a Canadian electronic career guide, which can be accessed under the 'Resources' tab on [CLNx](#).

Source: UTM Career Centre Careers by Major – Political Science

Political Aide

Job Description

Behind every politician, there is a team of political aides. These are the people who keep politicians organized and informed. As employees, aides are dedicated and energetic. It's their job to be well informed on political issues. They must also be quick to respond to emergencies. They research or analyze policies. They handle public relations and talk to the press. Some even act as personal secretaries to politicians. People in this career are essential to politics. But, they often go unnoticed by

the public. It's their job to keep politicians on schedule and on message. They also help their bosses win public support. Hopefully, that translates into votes on election day.

Political aides' tasks can vary quite a bit from day to day. They track current affairs. They keep politicians up to date on the issues. They draft legislation. Aides also write speeches and press releases, and respond to crises. Aides can have one area of expertise, or they can focus on many issues. It depends on their education and who they work for. For example, say an aide is working for the environment minister. The aide might be asked to research clean fuel. Meanwhile, an aide for the Minister of National Defence would track foreign politics. This is important in cases of violence or civil unrest in other countries.

All aides must have a strong grasp of politics. They need to be able to predict how people will react to current events and new laws. From time to time, aides also have to handle embarrassing situations. They may correct inaccurate stories about the politicians they work for. Good aides become trusted advisors. They often act as spokespeople for politicians. Their other duties include attending meetings and dealing with legislative staff.

Workplace

Political aides work for politicians in all three levels of government. They often interact with campaign managers, lobbyists, and researchers. Speaking with reporters and government officials is also part of the job.

Many political aides work long, irregular hours. Meetings are often held in the mornings and evenings. They must be able to work under stress and meet tight deadlines. Most aides work 9 to 11 hours a day, and 50 to 60 hours a week. Travel is usually a required part of the job. This is especially true for aides who work with politicians who hold elected office.

Core Tasks

- Conduct research into current political events
- Prepare briefs and update politicians on important issues
- Write reports, speeches, and press releases, and draft legislation
- Some provide advice on public policy
- May act as politicians' spokespersons

Attributes and Abilities

- Communication skills
- Knowledge of politics
- Organized
- Research skills
- Able to handle stress

Earnings and Education

Political aides usually have at least a bachelor's degree. Degrees in fields related to political science are the most common. History, economics, and journalism are also useful areas of study. Business or law degrees are other good options. Some aides have a master's degree.

This is a competitive field. It's important to get some experience as a volunteer or intern. Aides who work on election campaigns often have an advantage when applying for jobs. A government internship is also useful.

Aides who are just starting out can earn from around \$18,000 to \$30,000 a year. Earnings increase steadily with experience. After a few years on the job, aides can make between \$50,000 and \$80,000 a year or more. Those who work for high-profile politicians can earn more than \$100,000 a year.

It's important to note that jobs for political aides can be insecure. If the politician an aide works for loses an election, the aide is likely out of a job. As a result, junior aides tend to change positions frequently. They often compete to work with politicians whose careers are on the rise. However, politicians tend to have a core of trusted staff they build during their careers.

Public Policy Analyst

Job Description

Governments use public policies to achieve their social and political goals. At times, these rules don't align with what the public wants and needs, which can cause problems for society. Public policy analysts try to solve these issues. They create plans of action and suggest them to the government. They also study existing policies to find out if they are effective.

Policy analysts work on policies of all kinds. They might work towards the creation of a law to support renewable energies. Or, they might try to get more doctors trained to work in remote areas of Canada. They may even secure funding for police programs that reduce drunk driving.

Public policy analysts meet with politicians and government workers called civil servants. Analysts present the problems they find to these groups. Once they identify an issue, they do in-depth research on the topic. They gather all sorts of data from a range of sources. Then, they come up with options that they think will help solve the problem. They present these options to the senior-level government workers who will make the final decision. Analysts explain the pros and cons of each option.

Workplace

Most public policy analysts work for the government. Others may work for private consulting firms, advocacy groups, and think tanks

Think tanks are organizations that support policies in areas like social policy and economics. This type of support is called advocacy. These agencies are usually non-profit. Some think tanks do contract work for the government.

Some public policy analysts are self-employed. They work on a contract basis. They get projects from many companies, rather than working for one employer.

Analysts work mostly in offices. They can work alone or as part of a team. They spend most of their time reading and writing research papers. There can be pressure on them due to busy schedules and tight deadlines.

Core Tasks

- Collect and analyze social, economic, and demographic data
- Identify policy issues and make recommendations
- Give presentations on the findings
- Attend meetings and negotiations
- Write letters and press releases, and prepare politicians for speeches and interviews

Attributes and Abilities

- Good marks
- Analytical
- Able to understand complex issues
- Communication skills
- Knowledge of current social, economic, and environmental issues

Earnings and Education

To become a public policy analyst, you need at least a bachelor's degree. Most analysts have at least a master's degree. You can get a bachelor's degree in subjects like public policy or political science. Or, you can study economics, sociology, or statistics. You can also choose to study law or international relations. Other subjects may be useful if they relate to the area of policy you want to work in. You can focus on topics like the environment or agriculture. Or, you can study health care or education.

Many universities offer master's degree programs in public policy. You can also get a master's degree in a related subject. Some public policy programs are interdisciplinary. In this case, you learn about policy as well as from professors in other departments.

If you speak fluent French, you may have a major advantage for getting hired in this field. This is especially true if you want to work for the federal government. In general, you should be well-informed about current economic, social, and environmental issues. Reading relevant journals or magazines regularly is a good idea.

Entry-level public policy analysts earn between \$45,000 and \$65,000 a year. More experienced analysts can earn up to \$100,000 a year. Those who move up to policy director positions can make over \$120,000 a year.

Public Relations Specialist

Job Description

Public relations (PR) specialists are experts in communication. They know how to persuade people to think or act a certain way. They develop strategies to improve the public image of a company or

person. They can also help sell a product or service. In some cases, they raise awareness about an issue or event. PR work requires strong oral and written communication skills. Specialists write and edit press releases, speeches, and documents for media kits. In some cases, they create content for clients' websites. They often speak directly with politicians and the media as well.

Specialists need to know as much as they can about their clients' industries. They research trends and issues that might affect their clients. They gauge the public's interest in certain products and services. They also stay on top of changes in government policy. Specialists use this information to help design PR campaigns. They may also plan special events and raise funds for certain groups.

PR specialists' goals vary from client to client. For example, specialists might be hired by a new coffee shop to attract customers. Another organization might want help boosting participation in a recycling program. A client may even ask them to persuade the government to change its advertising laws. Most people in PR focus on one area. Some work in employer-employee relations or lobbying. Others work in consumer affairs or community relations. Political "spin doctors" are members of one well-known specialty. They help politicians package their policies in a way that appeals to voters.

Workplace

PR specialists work for businesses, politicians, governments, advertising agencies, and PR firms. Some PR specialists work as freelancers. They do contract work for various companies.

Specialists work mostly in office settings. They spend a lot of time reading and writing. They also talk on the phone and attend meetings. They may have to travel to meet with clients and the media.

This career can be stressful. PR specialists are often hired to fix professional crises. They have to work on tight deadlines and remain calm under pressure. PR specialists should always act professionally and confidently. They should also look put-together and polished. That's why they usually dress in business attire.

Specialists work 9 to 10 hours a day, 5 days a week. At times, they have to work late nights or weekends. They should be available to deal with client emergencies at any time.

Core Tasks

- Help companies and individuals maintain good relationships with the public
- Design and manage publicity campaigns
- Write and edit press releases, newsletters, and other PR materials
- Plan special events, such as fundraisers
- Keep clients informed of changes in public opinion

Attributes and Abilities

- Creative
- Persuasive and decisive
- Problem-solving skills

- Able to multitask
- Enjoy planning and organizing

Earnings and Education

There are no strict requirements to become a PR specialist. However, this is a competitive industry. A good education can help you get ahead. Most PR specialists have at least a bachelor's degree. Programs in public relations are available at many colleges and universities. Entry requirements vary depending on the type of program. They range from a high school diploma to a degree or college diploma.

Many programs include an internship. This is a good way to get hands-on experience. You can also get a degree or diploma in a related field. Journalism or communications are good choices. You can choose to study politics, English, or business. In this case, it's a good idea to complete a PR program afterwards.

You can choose to get certified in the PR field. The Canadian Public Relations Society offers this option. You need 5 years of experience to apply for the Accredited in Public Relations (APR) designation. Getting certified isn't required, but it can help you advance in your career.

Some PR specialists work full time for one employer and earn an annual salary. Others are freelancers. They get contracts from several companies. Some freelancers are paid a set fee for each project they complete. Others are paid an hourly rate or a monthly retainer.

Most entry-level PR specialists make between \$25,000 and \$45,000 a year. Those with more experience can make up to \$100,000 a year. Some specialists can make over \$100,000 a year. Income depends on several factors, such as education and experience. In the PR world, reputation is everything. Experienced specialists with a track record of success earn the most. Location and employer affect income as well. Those who work in large cities earn more than those in other areas. Corporate employers pay more than non-profit agencies.

Source: Career Cruising

GAINING EXPERIENCE AND FINDING WORK

ON-CAMPUS OPPORTUNITIES

On-Campus Opportunities Booklet

Check out the [On-Campus Opportunities booklet](#) to view a list of some of the ways you can get valuable experience on campus.

Work Study Positions

The [work study program](#) provides eligible students with an opportunity to work on campus during the academic year and gain experience. Many departments use this program to hire UTM students during the Fall/Winter and Summer terms.

Research Opportunity Program (ROP)

UTM's [Research Opportunity Program \(ROP\)](#) allows undergraduate students to gain valuable research experience and earn a course credit by participating in a faculty member's research project. Courses are held during Summer and Fall/Winter terms.

Part Time and Volunteer Positions

- Attend the annual [Get Experience Fair](#)
- Check out our binder with detailed information on volunteer opportunities; available in the Career Centre
- Learn about the [Co-Curricular Record \(CCR\)](#), which can help you find opportunities beyond the classroom and have your skills and experiences captured on an official document; go to the [co-curricular database](#) to find out how you can get involved

Student Organizations

Joining any student club or academic society at UTM is a great way to gain valuable skills and expand your resume. To view a list of current clubs and societies, visit the Centre for Student Engagement's [website](#).

Source: UTM Career Centre Careers by Major – [Political Science](#)

OFF-CAMPUS OPPORTUNITIES

Internships, Summer, Part Time and Volunteer Positions

- Login to [Career Learning Network \(CLN\)](#) and click on *Jobs* to access current postings advertised to UofT students
- Attend the annual [Get Hired: Summer and Full-Time Jobs Fair](#)
- Consider taking an [academic internship course](#) through your department
- Check out Government of Ontario - [Job Programs for Youth](#)
- Review our Internships, Summer Employment Programs, and Summer Job Search [tip sheets](#)

Full Time Positions

- Login to [CLN](#) and click on *Jobs* to access current postings advertised to graduating students and recent UofT grads. Note: You must attend the "Now That I'm Graduating, What's Next?" workshop to gain access to these postings.
- Attend the annual [Get Hired: Summer and Full-Time Jobs Fair](#)
- Check out our list of [industry-specific job boards](#)

Sample Job Postings

The following are samples of opportunities that have previously been listed on the Career Centre Online (samples have been edited for length):

Job Title: Program Coordinator - Adobe Youth Voices

Position Description:

Are you a person who enjoys challenges and making a difference in the world? Free The Children is the largest network of children helping children through education in the world. Founded by international child rights activist Craig Kielburger, Free The Children has an established track-record

of success, with three nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize and partnerships with the United Nations, and Oprah's Angel Network.

Free The Children seeks a Program Coordinator who will coordinate a cutting-edge youth engagement program. The program resides within the Youth Programming Department, which develops and implements programming that engages youth and educators in learning and action in support of Free The Children's community development work overseas. This program will engage students using cutting-edge multimedia and digital tools to communicate and share their ideas, and to explore and comment on world issues.

Skills and Qualifications:

The interested candidate to the position will require the following skill set:

- Possess a Bachelor's degree, preferably in Political Science, Economics, International Development/ Relations, or other relevant education
- Sound understanding of social media and multimedia tools
- Strong project management skills, with relevant experience
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to work with a wide variety of stakeholders
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Ability to multi-task and prioritize varying workloads in a fast-paced work environment
- Powerful work ethic, both as a team member and as a self-starter
- Self-motivated, creative and a strategic thinker who is willing to take initiative
- Proficient in the use of Microsoft Office Suites (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Publisher)
- Passion for social change, with a sound understanding of human and children's rights issues at local, national and international level
- Excellent organizational and inter-personal skills
- Proactive attitude, self-motivation and enthusiasm to develop a plan and carry out projects and programming to conclusion
- Resourceful, self-motivated and energetic

Responsibilities:

The Program Coordinator is responsible for the successful implementation of the program. The position reports to the Special Programs Manager, Assistant Director of Youth Programming and the Director of Youth Programming. Responsibilities include:

- Managing a large program with diverse partners and audiences
- Developing and implementing the program plan
- Establishing relationships with key stakeholders within the Canadian and American educational systems
- Developing and distributing program materials
- Securing and liaising with program participants, ensuring that all information, deadlines and project information is communicated in order to carry out the program successfully
- Organizing the logistics and planning of training in-services
- Supporting participants throughout the duration of the program, providing mentorship and troubleshooting

- Ensuring that program implementation is being carried out as intended, new learning is incorporated, and that targets are being met
- Program evaluation and reporting, steering the measurement of program elements and analyzing data for internal and external reporting

Position Title: PIRS Internship Program

Position Description:

- Spend a year on Parliament Hill and watch history in the making?
- Have a unique opportunity to apply your skills in the parliamentary environment?
- Gain valuable work experience from an unparalleled perspective?
- Contribute to the work of Parliament?
- Be a part of a team that works with Senators, Members of the House of Commons and parliamentary committees and associations?
- Apply your education/knowledge as you research and analyze topics across a range of public policy issues?
- Work side by side with experienced analysts with expertise in various fields?
- Participate in the parliamentary process?
- Learn more about emerging policy issues and our parliamentary system?

The Library of Parliament offers a paid internship program in its Parliamentary Information and Research Service (PIRS) that is open to Canadian university students who have graduated this year. Each year, four interns with specific subject specializations will be selected for the twelve-month program (September to August). This is your chance to have a front-row seat on the legislative process of the federal Parliament. Successful candidates will have the opportunity to gain work experience in the policy and legislative process in Canada from a parliamentary perspective as valued members of Parliament's principal research service. Under the supervision of senior staff, the duties of interns include:

- assisting analysts and research assistants in handling research responses to questions from parliamentarians, committees and associations;
- participating in committee work as part of the research team directly assisting a parliamentary committee;
- assisting analysts and research assistants in preparing studies on public policy topics relevant to federal parliamentarians.

Qualifications

Have completed a Bachelor's degree in 2009 in either Economics, Environmental Studies, Science, or Political or Social Science at a Canadian university; or be enrolled in a Canadian law school program (LL.B/LL.L) and have successfully completed their first year; have a strong academic record; have an interest in Parliament and the public policy process; be objective and non-partisan; possess good interpersonal skills; ability to communicate orally in both official languages is essential.

Position Title: Trade Policy Analyst

Description:

The Canadian Sugar Institute, the national association representing and advocating for Canada's sugar

industry, is seeking a full-time trade policy analyst. The position reports to the President and is located in Toronto, Canada. As trade policy analyst you will analyze and report trends and developments in international sugar markets, policies and trade in relation to trade policy issues affecting the Canadian industry. You will write reports and briefing papers and organize meetings and other communications to advance CSI policy positions. You will act as a resource to association staff, members and allied groups and provide advice and assistance to the President in communications to government and other audiences.

The position requires skills in economic/policy analysis, statistical and information management, advanced use of information technology as well as accurate and effective oral and written communications to various target audiences. Knowledge and understanding of international trade agreements, policy issues and the Canadian government and political process are integral to the position. Working from a small, professional office, the successful candidate must demonstrate the ability to effectively manage many complex tasks concurrently and be a team player at all times. A high degree of professionalism, strong interpersonal skills and initiative are essential to success in this position. Some travel is involved.

Qualifications:

Candidates must have relevant academic training at the undergraduate level, preferably at the Masters level, in trade policy, economics, political science, or a related field in agricultural economics, business, law or other relevant discipline. Preference will be given to candidates with work experience in a similar role in a trade association, government office, legal firm, etc. Strong communications skills in English are essential, and fluency in French is desirable.

Position Title: Public Policy Analyst

Position Description:

Join one of Canada's leading business associations and influence public policy at all three levels of government. The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association (CRFA) represents one of Canada's largest private sector employers and an industry that generates \$59 billion in annual sales. CRFA is seeking an experienced policy analyst to undertake rigorous issue analysis, develop persuasive arguments and write clear, concise reports and presentations in support of the association's government affairs objectives.

Qualifications

- Technical knowledge of policy development, (design, implementation and evaluation), government operations and government decision-making.
- Strong public policy research skills.
- Superior writing skills and ability to translate complex or technical issues into plain language.
- Excellent planning and organizational skills and ability to work under tight deadlines.
- Proven ability to logically assess policy arguments & apply analytic skills to complex, multifaceted issues.
- Familiarity with government publications and documentation.
- An understanding of the interests of small and medium and large businesses.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook.
- Post-secondary degree in political science or related field

- 1-2 years related job experience: Municipal, provincial or federal government experience, in particular, would be an asset.
- The ability to speak and write in both official languages would also be an asset.

Source: UTM Career Centre Careers by Major – [Political Science](#)

FINDING WORK

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews are a great way to connect with professionals in a career area of interest and gain valuable insights about a particular career, company, or industry that would otherwise be difficult to find in books or online. Check out our [tip sheet](#) to learn more.

Alumni Profiles

Check out our [Alumni Profiles](#) page with submissions from UTM grads to find out how their experiences have affected their career direction.

Events

Attending career panels, networking events, employer info sessions, and career fairs is a great way to meet professionals and learn more about careers, companies, and industries. Login to [CLN](#) and click on *Events & Workshops* to see what's coming up.

Student Organizations

Join a student club or an academic society at UTM to meet like-minded people, explore your interests, and make valuable connections. To view a list of current clubs and societies, visit the Centre for Student Engagement's [website](#). Some organizations you may consider are:

- Debating Club at UTM
- Political Science & Pre-Law Association
- UTM Global Brigades
- UTM Students' Union

Professional Associations

There are many benefits of becoming a member of association(s), such as developing a network of contacts, learning about industry trends, accessing industry-related job postings, and stating your affiliation on your resume. Some associations related to this major are:

- [Canadian Political Science Association \(CPSA\)](#)
- [Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers \(PAFSO\)](#)
- [International Political Science Association \(IPSA\)](#)

Source: UTM Career Centre Careers by Major – [Political Science](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American Political Science Association – Careers in Political Science

<https://www.apsanet.org/PScareers>

TalentEgg - What Can I Do with My Political Science Degree?

<https://talentegg.ca/incubator/2011/08/02/what-can-i-do-with-my-political-science-degree/>

Top Universities - What Can You Do with a Politics Degree?

<https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/careers-advice/what-can-you-do-politics-degree>

CareerProfiles - Legal, Criminal Justice & Law Enforcement Careers

<https://www.careerprofiles.info/law-enforcement-careers.html>

Robert Half - 2017 Salary Guide for the Legal Profession

https://www.roberthalf.com/sites/default/files/Media_Root/images/rhl-pdfs/2017_salary_guide_roberthalflegal.pdf?elqTrackId=a689fbefa22741a1bba96ad5833cd562&elq=d71fcf266609407f9627cdadf21f9fb6&elqaid=2855&elqat=1&elqCampaignId=

Canada's Top 100 Employers for Young People

https://www.canadastop100.com/young_people/

Ontario Internship Program

<https://www.internship.gov.on.ca/mbs/sdb/intern.nsf/LkpWebContent/ePublishedHOME>

UNA-Canada's International Youth Internship Program (IYIP)

<http://www.unac.org/iddip>

The Ontario Legislature Internship Program

<https://www.olipinterns.ca/>

Public Service Commission for careers in the federal government

<http://jobs-emplois.gc.ca/>

Canadian International Development Agency

https://www.who.int/workforcealliance/members_partners/member_list/cida/en/

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/>