

AUT

A FUTURE IN  
SOCIAL  
SCIENCES





A photograph of three young people in a casual setting, possibly a cafe or a modern office. On the left, a young man with short brown hair is partially visible, looking towards the center. In the middle, a young woman with dark hair tied back is smiling and looking towards the right. On the right, a young man with short brown hair is smiling broadly, looking towards the camera. He is wearing a black puffer jacket over a black t-shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing large windows and indoor plants.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL SCIENCES ABOUT?

A society is a group of people – a relatively simple concept. Members of the group are connected by shared use of locations and resources and connected by interpersonal relationships – not so simple! The many benefits of living and interacting with other people are inevitably accompanied by problems or issues that may harm some members of society or the environment.

The social sciences, encompassing sociology, politics, economics and other disciplines, examine and explain human functioning on a variety of interlocking levels – from individual behaviour, family and group processes to the functioning of communities, organisations, governments and entire societies.

Social scientists carry out research and analysis, design policy changes and implement strategies and systems to resolve, minimise or remove societal problems and to improve the functioning of groups, communities and societies. The skills and knowledge gained through studying the social sciences are also highly valuable and complementary to other disciplines such as in business, communications and law.

Are you fascinated by people, communities and societies? Do you love interacting and communicating with others and want to do something to help people? Are you motivated to contribute to positive social change? If so, a career in social sciences could be just the thing for you.

## OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

**High employment** – A survey in the UK found a higher proportion of social science graduates were in employment 3 to 4 years after graduating than graduates of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) or arts/humanities.

Source: What Do Social Science Graduates Do? Campaign for Social Science, UK

**Long-term success** – US research has found that the liberal arts (humanities, arts in social sciences) prepare graduates for long-term professional success. Key findings indicated workers with humanities and social sciences qualifications earned more at peak earning age (56–60 years) on average than those who majored in professional or pre-professional fields.

A higher proportion of social science graduates end up in managerial and senior official roles than graduates of STEM or arts-humanities subjects.

Source: How Liberal Arts and Sciences Majors Fare in Employment: A Report on Earnings and Long-Term Career Paths 2014

**Funding impact** – Although there is growing demand overall for community and social services, government funding priorities and community concerns are changeable. Graduates need to be aware of current issues and government initiatives in order to identify the best places to seek work.

**Specialist knowledge** – Postgraduate study in social sciences and policy studies provides students with specialist knowledge that is valuable for policy analysis. In New Zealand, demand for policy analysts is expected to keep rising with employment growth of around 2.7% per year expected until 2018. Source: MBIE Occupational Outlook 2015

### Administration/management/human resources/employment relations

Administration officer, human resources consultant, management trainee, industrial relations consultant

### Media/Communications

Writer, editor, publications assistant

### Politics/government

Government administration officer, advisory officer, youth worker, policy analyst, politician, diplomat (often with appropriate postgraduate qualifications)

### Research/academic

Social science research, research assistant, university lecturer (with appropriate postgraduate qualifications)

### Business

International trade representative, business or marketing consultant, retail manager, social entrepreneur

### Defence/protection services

Police officer, customs officer, immigration officer, armed services

### Information management

Customer service supervisor, information manager

## CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Here is a sample of the diverse range of roles on offer.

### Community development advisor (local council) –

Includes development and implementation of community development strategies, programmes and projects to enhance community health safety and well-being. Establishes, influences and manages relationships with communities, service providers and support agencies. Accesses funding support, prepares and manages budgets and work plans. Identifies and establishes community partnership opportunities.

**Policy analyst (government agency)** – Includes advising government on effectiveness of current agency policies and analysing economic, environmental, industry and social issues and identifying sector trends and issues. Works with agency staff and other government and non-government agencies to develop sound, cost-effective policy options. Assists in development of legislative and regulatory instruments. Maintains effective relationships with Māori, sector representatives, research providers, local and central government and non-government agencies.

**Researcher, Immigration New Zealand** – Includes conducting accurate research into Country of Origin Information (COI) about the political, social, cultural, economic and human rights situation in countries of origin. May include reasons development and current awareness services.

## WORK SECTOR & ROLES

An undergraduate degree is a starting point for a range of jobs throughout the social sector, public service and private sectors. The level of entry and opportunities available to graduates are influenced by the level of qualification and the range of disciplinary studies combined into the degree. Possible sectors and roles include:

### Community/social/health/education

Community development worker, aid and disaster relief worker, community programme coordinator, secondary teacher (with additional appropriate high school subjects and postgraduate teaching qualification)

**Co-ordinator of volunteers, events, health and safety (healthcare sector)** – Develops, coordinates, delivers and evaluates policy, procedures and practice. Trains and manages volunteers, forms collaborative relationships with community and external agencies. Facilitates presentations and speaks to diverse groups.

## SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Social sciences graduates develop strong critical thinking skills, highly capable of understanding and analysing situations and providing sound options for positive change.

**Specific knowledge:**

- Cultural diversity and individual human development and behaviour
- People, institutions and their relationships
- Processes of social change
- Relevant human rights, health, citizenship and educational legislation
- Knowledge of community, social assistance and family support agencies

**Skills:**

- Collect, analyse and critically evaluate information
- Competent at quantitative and qualitative research
- Question assumptions and make reasoned arguments
- Deal with complex issues holistically on individual, cultural and societal levels
- Effective verbal communicator
- Strong communicator, particularly in writing
- Confident with ICT, numeracy and statistics
- Ability to problem solve for complex situations
- Good project management, teamwork and collaborative skills
- Well organised, with good planning skills

## PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Curious about the world
- Ability to think broadly
- Interested in confronting social problems
- Cares about social justice
- Ability to engage with people from various cultures and lifestyles

## FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Further study is available at postgraduate level, including the Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Postgraduate Certificate in Arts, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts, Master of Arts (in Human Rights), Master of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy. Research areas include demography, politics, government and governance, community development and engagement, gender and ethnic rights, ethics, equity and social justice.

## SALARY GUIDE

Due to the large range of possible roles and industries in which a social sciences graduate may work, it is not feasible to cover all salaries – but here is a sample.

	Salary
Policy analyst	New graduates: \$37,000–\$50,000  2 years’ experience plus: \$50,000–\$75,000  Senior/principal adviser: up to \$150,000 (more in finance, economics, commerce fields)
Community development advisor	\$40,000–\$60,000
Research analyst	\$40,000–\$70,000 (average \$55,000)
Volunteer manager/coordinator	About two-thirds of volunteer managers are in paid employment; one third are unpaid.  Median annual salary (fulltime, paid roles) \$40,000–\$60,000

Sources: Occupation Outlook 2015; State Services Commission, Human Resource Capability; payscale.com; Smith, K.A., Cordery, C. and Dutton, N. (2010) Managers Matter, Victoria University of Wellington.

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication (late 2015) and should only be used as a guideline.

### THE AUT ADVANTAGE

AUT’s strong multidisciplinary approach gives social sciences graduates hands-on, experientially-based skill and knowledge to take into employment.

All third year students do a compulsory 150 hours of voluntary work placement.

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

Registration is not required for social scientists; however other roles may require registration, certification or professional membership.

Note: A social sciences degree does not open doors to social work roles (which do require registration). A specialist degree or postgraduate qualification in social work or applied social services is usually needed to become a registered social worker.





## JANET AKAI

Youth Connections Administrator; Arts, Community and Events Unit, Auckland Council

Communications & Research Administrator, Cook Islands Development Agency New Zealand

Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences

"I work as a youth connections administrator at Auckland Council. Our aim is to help youth – young people between 16 and 24 – into employment, training or education. I'm constantly engaging with the local community – passionate people who want the best for our youth.

I also attend and help with community events focused on youth employment, such as the Young at Hearts Awards hosted by ATEED where I presented a spoken word poem and the Domino's Jobs Day that allowed young people to have 'on the spot' job interviews.

My role also involves attending meetings with local boards, schools, the Ministry of Social Development, Youthline and other services, sharing ideas on how to encourage youth to seek out opportunities. Another key focus for me is operating the Youth Hub, an online system that helps young people from high school into university, training or employment.

Awesome opportunities can pop up, like working for a day in a collaboration design team to look at better ways employers can engage with young people and vice versa.

I have also recently taken on a casual position as communications & research administrator for the Cook Islands Development Agency New Zealand (CIDANZ) where I had been volunteering. I handle their social media accounts, attend Cook Islands community events and document success and share it with the wider community. I love being able to use my skills this way."

## EMPLOYER COMMENT

"A youth connections administrator needs strong verbal and written communication, a high level of computer literacy and a good team attitude. Janet has these and also contributes a lot to the team with her digital abilities and creative innovation.

Graduates looking for employment need to demonstrate a good work attitude and the ability to work with other people. They need to be keen to participate and learn, and have the ability to transfer their learning into something concrete for their job and organisation."

**Dyan Takao**

Youth Connections Programme Lead  
Mangere – Otahuhu Otara – Papatoetoe



## USEFUL WEBSITES

**Do good jobs** (vacancies at organisations working to create social and environmental change)  
[www.dogoodjobs.co.nz](http://www.dogoodjobs.co.nz)

**The NZ Social Science Hub**  
[www.thehub.sia.govt.nz](http://www.thehub.sia.govt.nz)

**New Zealand Government jobs**  
[www.jobs.govt.nz](http://www.jobs.govt.nz)

**Volunteering New Zealand**  
[www.volunteeringnz.org.nz](http://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz)


**Auckland Council jobs**  
[www.careers.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.careers.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the study of social sciences or the Bachelor of Arts, please visit our website [www.aut.ac.nz/soc-sciences](http://www.aut.ac.nz/soc-sciences)

### FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: [www.aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://www.aut.ac.nz/enquire)  
[futurestudents@aut.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@aut.ac.nz)


 @AUTFutureStudents

### CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information:

0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

[www.aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://www.aut.ac.nz/enquire) | [studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz)

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

### EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For other Future Career Sheets visit:

[www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets](http://www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets)


For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through


<https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>


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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

