

A Career in Academics

Careers in Academics

An undergraduate degree in International Studies or Political Science can provide the opportunity for a number of different careers in the field of academics. The field of academics encompasses a number of different areas, ranging from teaching to research, among many other things. While some areas require an undergraduate degree, others require further education and experience. The academic field is constantly changing and evolving as new studies are being conducted and discoveries are being made. Willingness to continually expand your knowledge and engage in new material is an important aspect of working in academics. Employment in the academic field can be a rewarding and fulfilling opportunity.

Research, Policy Analysis and Think Tanks

A career in the field of research and analysis is a constantly evolving job. These careers can involve many different aspects and each job will vary at the task required. In general, a research or policy analyst is required to conduct daily research on policies, and depending on the organization this can be on a federal or provincial level. The job also requires the ability to stay current on new research and studies that are developed. This is done through reading academic journals and published research projects. Staying current on other research is imperative, especially when developing governmental policies. A large portion of the job is committed to collecting and analyzing data, which is used to develop reports and major studies. With this data also comes the opportunity to publish papers and research for academic journals or department reports.

The minimum education required for a career in research is a university degree. Degrees in International Studies, Political Science, or Economics are most beneficial, but having a degree in a subject related to a specific research organization can also be an asset. Because areas for research and policies are so diverse, there are many opportunities for a variety of academic specializations. Many researchers acquire a Masters and sometimes a PhD in order to gain more knowledge in their area or to move up in their field. To become a senior fellow in an organization such as the Fraser Institute, a PhD is required as well as extensive experience in research and analysis. Higher education will provide a larger variety of employment opportunities available.

The average salary is around \$50,000 per year. However, the salary for a starting researcher will be significantly lower. For those with more education and experience, a salary can be well over \$100,000. Many university graduates enter the field of research and policy analysis through internships by various organizations. These internships are usually unpaid and can last from four months up to one year. However, internships are a great way to gain experience and quite often lead to a paid position within the organization. Most employment opportunities can be found on organization websites, which outline job details and the process required for application. A good source for finding policy jobs is the Policy Jobs website which lists current job opportunities by location (www.policyjobs.net). Some researchers also choose to work through contracts and are not employed with specific organizations. Wages for freelance researchers are very competitive and this type of employment allows for a greater variety in the type of work that is available.

Teaching at the University Level

Teaching at the university level also requires staying current on research and academic developments. One main aspect of teaching is conducting lectures and seminars on specific subjects. Keeping current on teachable subjects is necessary in order to teach the most up-to-date material to students. Along with lecturing, professors are also responsible for grading and evaluating student material and providing critical feedback on assignments. Professors also need to be available for student consultations and academic guidance. Teaching requires extensive time commitment outside of the classroom and a commitment to be available to students and fellow colleagues. Another aspect of teaching is conducting research in a specific field. Research can provide opportunities to publish articles and books, but it can also provide the experience necessary to move ahead in your career. Professors can also apply for grants which allow for more extensive research and sometimes provide perks such as research assistance or books.

The minimum education required to teach at the university level is an undergraduate degree. However, in order to move through the ranks toward a full-time tenured position, it is usually essential to have a Ph.D. in a particular discipline. Those with less than a PhD usually teach on part-time contracts at the rank of instructor or lecturer (North American terminology) or serve as adjunct professors. Full-time professors move through various ranks from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to Full Professor, or are attached to faculty as adjuncts. Qualifications for these positions also require levels of research, with those having done superior levels of research in the position of full professor. Starting out as an assistant professor is a great way to gain experience in the field while continuing to conduct research and gain status in the academic field. Professors with extensive education and research have the opportunity to move into academic administrative jobs, usually at the level of a Dean or President of a post-secondary institution.

An advanced graduate degree is beneficial to those who want to advance within an academic career. A Masters program is usually two years long and often requires a graduate thesis. A PhD program is usually a minimum of four years and includes graduate courses, comprehensive examinations in a discipline, and proposal approval followed by the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The PhD program requires a long time commitment and extensive research, but is incredibly beneficial for a long term career in academics.

The salary of a professor can vary significantly, based on education, experience, and amount of research conducted. The starting salary for a university professor at most universities is around \$50,000 to \$60,000. The average wage of an associate professor at a public university is about \$80,000 while those in administrative roles can earn up to \$120,000. Professors who are involved in research projects may also earn extra money on the side when doing work for research organizations. The application process is similar for most universities. Jobs are often posted on university websites and usually outline the process needed to apply. In general, applications should include a curriculum vitae, an outline of research plans, copies of any publications, and letters of reference.

Miscellaneous Job Opportunities

The field of academics is very broad and therefore encompasses a number of different employment opportunities. One of these opportunities includes teaching English abroad. Most schools require either a university degree in any subject or a TESL (teaching English as a second language) certificate. The majority of schools overseas work through recruiters, who are in charge of interviewing and hiring applicants, and taking care of issues such as acquiring working visas, flights, and other necessities. ESL schools provide competitive wages and benefits. Upon entering a contract (usually a minimum of one year), schools will usually pay for a teacher's flight, accommodation during employment, and wages of up to \$3500 per month. Employment opportunities can be found online, via ESL websites set up by recruiters. The application process involves an interview, an information session, and training.

Other employment opportunities in the field of academics can be found within schools, both secondary and post-secondary. Many schools have travel study programs or outreach programs that require planning and preparation in countries around the world. These jobs involve building contacts and communication with people and organizations in different countries. They also involve educating and preparing students and staff to travel to these areas. The average salary of this type of job is between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year. Employment opportunities can be found on school websites, though they may not be as easy to find as teaching positions. A university degree in a related field is usually required, but often extensive experience can replace education requirements.

Professional Profiles

Mark Rovere – The Fraser Institute

Mark Rovere is a Policy Analyst at the Fraser Institute. He works in the department of Health and Pharmaceutical Policy Research which involves conducting research on Canadian Health and Pharmaceutical Policy. Mark holds an Honours Bachelor Degree and a Masters Degree in Political Science from the University of Windsor. As a Policy Analyst, Mark is responsible for maintaining updated files on health and pharmaceutical legislation on provincial and federal levels. He also keeps updated on new research and studies by collecting academic journals on a weekly basis. Using new studies, academic research, and quantitative analysis, Mark makes contributions to his department's reports, newspaper releases, and major studies. Through his position at the Fraser Institute, he has also been able to co-author a number of papers.

One of the benefits of working at the Fraser Institute is the ability to meet with other analysts to discuss books and articles by prominent philosophers and economists. Mark also has the chance to work alongside senior fellows who have contributed significant information and research to Canadian public policies and is able to be mentored by his senior colleagues. There is little risk involved in Mark's job at the Institute, but writing articles and papers does open up the possibility for criticism by other scholars. However, the network of colleagues and the peer review process gives Mark confidence when releasing research publications to the public.

His interaction with Fraser Institute reports during his education prompted Mark to pursue a career in the field of research and policy analysis. He started with the Fraser Institute after finishing his graduate degree, through a four month internship program.

This internship led to the opportunity to take on a full-time position at the Institute. The biggest commitment to his job at the Fraser Institute is the commitment to deliver quality work based on the Institute's mission. Having a passion and interest in the work that he does ensures that he stays committed to producing quality, well-researched work. (The views and opinions represent those of Mark Rovere and not of The Fraser Institute.)

Jon ImBeau – Pacific Academy Outreach Society

Jon ImBeau is the Director of Service Projects for the Pacific Academy Outreach Society (PAOS). PAOS service projects include the Kibaale Project and the Timothy Centre, both located in Uganda, East Africa. The Kibaale Project encompasses the establishment and direction of a community centre in rural Uganda, which houses education facilities, community development projects, a child sponsorship program, and a medical clinic. The Timothy Centre is an upcoming project which will be responsible for providing teacher training and leadership courses for Ugandan professionals as well as building a secondary school and accommodations for visiting teams. Working out of Pacific Academy private school in Surrey, BC, Jon is responsible for a number of different tasks each day. One major aspect of the job is communication, with donors, those traveling to Uganda, and the staff in Uganda. Jon spends a lot of time answering emails and phone calls, but also has a lot of meetings with people outside of the office in order to spread awareness and to educate people about the projects in Uganda. The job also involves some administrative work, such as finance and budget work, as well as dealing with management issues or conflicts in Uganda. Before entering this position with the PAOS, Jon was a pastor for 13 years. It was his work with missions at his church that led him to this job.

Though not always required, a degree in International Studies would be an asset to a job in this field. Jon believes that being educated on a country and its political situation is crucial, as well as being aware of current development issues and practices. Knowing how to form partnerships and create networks is also necessary in this field. Dealing with people, especially long-distance can be both rewarding and frustrating and budgeting can be difficult in a charitable organization. Jon also acknowledges risk in his field, such as job security in a charitable organization and political or cultural instability in a country like Uganda. Another aspect of the job is commitment. In his job, Jon is committed to traveling on short notice, to building friendships in Uganda beyond working relationships in order to build trust, and committed to be fully dedicated to his job.

Beth Kelleher – ESL Teacher (ECC – South Korea)

Beth Kelleher taught English as a second language in South Korea for two and a half years. She got her job through a recruiter, who walked her through the application process and took care of flight arrangements. Beth was responsible for teaching six to ten classes each day to students between the ages of six and seventeen. For each class, a half page lesson plan based on the curriculum was required. During her first six months, this took about an hour to prep for each class, but after six months she was able to prepare for each class in about 15 minutes. Weekly responsibilities included keeping attendance records, marking assignments, and offering ongoing feedback to students. Each month, Beth had to submit an evaluation and progress report for each student. When she first

started her job, these monthly reports took about ten hours. By the end of her time there she was able to complete them in about three hours.

There are a number of positive aspects of this job. Beth loved interacting with the students and staff. Interacting with the students and local staff fostered an environment of cultural exchange as well as building mutual respect and appreciation. The opportunity to learn Korean was also a benefit of the job and Beth took extra language classes in the evening to better learn the language. Another positive aspect of the job was the opportunity to live and work abroad, and get to know another culture. Teaching ESL also provides the opportunity to impact the students' lives and make a difference. On the other hand, there are a few negatives that come with the job as well. One is being away from family and friends for an extended period of time. Beth found it difficult to keep in touch with loved ones because of the time difference. Daily living also requires a lot more patience in a foreign country because it is difficult to effectively communicate. There are also a lot of cultural differences to adapt to.

Teaching ESL requires a great deal of commitment. Time commitment is crucial, especially since most schools require a contract. Beth signed a one year contract with her school and had the opportunity to renew her contract after one year. The school then pays for your flight out there, but part of the contract requires you to follow their schedule and teach according to their plans. Getting out of the contract occurs at the costs of the teacher, not the school and a flight home is not covered. The job also requires a commitment to education, and Beth spent a lot of time outside of school studying and learning the language. It also requires a commitment to your students, preparing lesson plans and keeping the students interested.

The salary for teaching ESL varies between countries and schools. Beth's starting wage was \$2500 per month and she was given free accommodation during her contract. However, most teachers do get raises and each time a contract is renewed, salary goes up. By the time she finished her final contract at ECC, Beth was earning over \$3000 per month. It was a great way for her to pay off her student loans and save up money for the future. Schools require teachers to have a university degree or a TESL certificate in order to teach. Beth went to Korea with a university degree and while teaching she got her TESL certificate, though it wasn't required. Beth found teaching English in South Korea to be a fulfilling and rewarding job.

Appendix One

Research and Policy Websites

The Fraser Institute: www.fraserinstitute.org
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: www.policyalternatives.ca
Institute for Research on Public Policy: www.irpp.org
Frontier Centre for Public Policy: www.fcpp.org
Policy Jobs: www.policyjobs.net

University Employment Websites

York University: www.yorku.ca/acadjobs/
UBC: www.hr.ubc.ca/faculty_relations/careers/

Graduate Program Websites

School Finder: www.schoolfinder.com
UBC: www.politics.ubc.ca
SFU: www.sfu.ca/internationalstudies/graduate.html
York University: www.yorku.ca/web/futurestudents/graduate/programs/Development_Studies/

Miscellaneous Job Opportunities

Teaching ESL abroad: www.daveeslcafe.com
Secondary School Employment: www.paoutreach.net/pages/overseas/overseas_home.htm