Work Experience in Politics or Public Affairs

Introduction
Getting a rewarding job in politics is competitive. Employment in the political arena will require evidence that not only do you have a general interest in politics, but that you have some political experience and practical understanding of the political process and the diverse opportunities and roles within the political sector.

Relevant work experience will not only help you to develop this understanding and develop relevant skills, but will give you the opportunity to build your own networks – always useful when entering the political job market.

So what is relevant work experience?
This will obviously depend on the role to which you aspire, and you need to research the skills and experience for the different roles. However, to develop the understanding of how the political process works in practice it is useful to develop a breadth of experience.

Working with any of the following would be valuable:
- Trades unions
- Political parties
- MP/MEP
- Regional assemblies
- Public affairs consultancies
- Campaign work with charities/pressure groups
- Student/local politics
- Student/local media
- Think tanks
- Local government
- NGOs
- European Institutions

Finding opportunities
Some paid opportunities do exist, but unpaid internships/work experience opportunities are common. Many organisations do not advertise vacancies for work experience, but may respond to speculative approaches and networking. For this you will need a targeted CV and covering letter.

Useful starting points might be:
- www.w4mp.org – lots of advice and some opportunity listings
- www.electus-start.com/ – useful advice as well as some advertised internships
- www.publicaffairsnetworking.com – this can be used to search for vacancies, get advice and find out about free networking events
- www.parliament.uk/about/working/jobs/ - listing of parliamentary opportunities and also an email jobs alert function
- www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ - list of contacts for MPs by political party or region
- www.civilservice.gov.uk/recruitment/entry/undegraduates/work-experience - the Civil Service offers work experience, visits and a Summer Diversity Internship Programme http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk/the-different-streams/summer-diversity-internship-programme/
- You can search for Public Affairs companies on the Hollis PR directory at www.hollis-pr.com

The Public Affairs Company www.publicaffairsco.com offers unpaid work experience in Leeds
- www.ippr.org/vacancies/internships Institute for Public Policy and Research advertises internships in London and Newcastle, but does not accept speculative applications
- www.demos.co.uk/jobs_and_internships - Demos think tank recruits interns throughout the year
- www.fpc.org.uk Foreign Policy Centre has voluntary research assistant posts
- www.eldis.org – career vacancies from a selection of development organisations
- The Association of Professional Political Consultancies www.appc.org.uk - for links to websites
- www.guardian.co.uk/politics/page/2007/dec/20/1 useful list of Think Tanks (but note some links from this page may be out of date).
- www.do-it.org - search for volunteering opportunities nationally

Europe/International:
http://europa.eu/about-eu/working-eu-institutions/index_en.htm - traineeships and bodies in EU institutions including: European Parliament; Council of the European Union; European Commission; Court of Justice (fluent French required); Court of Auditors; European Economic & Social Committee; Committee of the Regions; European Investment Bank; European Central Bank; European Ombudsman

One month unpaid study opportunities also available at the European Parliament’s directorate for research.
- www.eurobrussels.com/internships.php – European Affairs Jobsite
- www.publicaffairslinks.co.uk/vacancies_eu.html - for Public affairs vacancies
- www.britishcouncil.org/connectyouth.htm - EU Youth in Action Programme for 18-25 year olds
- www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/internships.htm - internships with various UN agencies
- www.worldbank.org/ World Bank internships for postgraduates (search ‘internship’).
- www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/71157.htm NATO internship programme
- www.unicef.org/about/employ/index_internship.html UNICEF
- www.epo.org/about-us/jobs/vacancies/internships.html European Patent Office – includes variety of internships including law, international relations etc.
• www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/pers/vacancy/intern.htm Internships at International Labour Organisation
• www.zew.de/en/stellen/stellen.php3?modus=hiwi - Centre for European Economic Research
• www.oecd.org Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (search internships)
• www.eu.thinktankdirectory.org -for Think Tanks

**Voluntary organisations**
Join university campaigning groups such as Amnesty International, People and Planet etc. or the Students’ Union political groups to gain an understanding of how pressure groups work within the political system.

**Resources:**
*Politico’s Guide to Careers in Politics and Government*
*Who’s Who in Public Affairs* – directory of the key players interacting and working with the institutions of government

(both useful resources but please note publication dates when using these). Some major companies may have funding available for those doing unpaid charitable work – check their websites

**Please note:** The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. **Careers** cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites. Note: some internships offered in this sector may be unpaid. Before starting an internship you should be clear about the length of the internship, pay and conditions, what you will be expected to do, and what you will gain from the experience

**NGOs and Charities**

Learn more from others working in the sector:

• Overviews: [http://www.prospects.ac.uk/charities_voluntary_sector.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/charities_voluntary_sector.htm)
• ARTICLE: Look outside the box to start your graduate charity career. Lots of graduates like the sound of a career in charity, so creative job-hunting is the way to go. Intelligent research, making contacts and flexibility are crucial – read on for more advice. [http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/public-service-charity-and-social-work/288199-look-outside-the-box-to-start-your-graduate-charity-career](http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/public-service-charity-and-social-work/288199-look-outside-the-box-to-start-your-graduate-charity-career)
• ARTICLE: Volunteer your way to a graduate job. Support a great cause, meet new people... and get essential charity work experience that could lead to a permanent graduate job. [http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/public-service-charity-and-social-work/288223-volunteer-your-way-to-a-graduate-job](http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/public-service-charity-and-social-work/288223-volunteer-your-way-to-a-graduate-job)
• ARTICLE: How do I get a graduate job in a charity? All you need to find your first graduate job in charity/not-for-profit. Find out about salaries, types of job and employer, applications and the benefits of volunteering. [http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-](http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-
Find Opportunities

LINKS: For details of internships and experience:

- [http://www.w4mpjobs.org/](http://www.w4mpjobs.org/)
- For details of more than 2,000 charitable organisations, see:
  - [http://www.charityjob.co.uk/](http://www.charityjob.co.uk/)
  - [http://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk/jobs/](http://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk/jobs/)

Temporary and permanent charity positions are advertised through specialist recruitment agencies such as:

- Charity Action Recruitment
- Charity People
- Charity Works
- Prospectus

But don’t forget you can also approach organisations that aren’t advertising using a speculative application. Come to our next “finding work experience and internships workshop” to find out how.

- For careers advice and guidance, skills workshops on finding internships and work experience and more visit [www.uea.ac.uk/careers](http://www.uea.ac.uk/careers) 01603 59 3452