

A FUTURE IN
**INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES**





WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL STUDIES?

The increased global mobility of people is impacting the demographics of many countries and workplaces, bringing a rich diversity of people, cultures, languages, and perspectives.

Whether professionally, socially, or politically, organisations around the globe need employees who can develop successful relationships in today's world through communicating effectively and empathetically and demonstrating a high level of intercultural competence.

Courses in international studies teach students to interact comfortably in multicultural environments, think critically and creatively, and examine alternative methodologies and perspectives – all sought-after skills in the 21st century – in the financial, scientific, creative, or public sectors.

These skills are extremely relevant in New Zealand, especially in Auckland, which has the fourth most foreign-born population in the world. There are 150 different languages spoken in Auckland and the highest percentage of the world's Polynesian population. There is also a much higher Asian population in Auckland than elsewhere in New Zealand.

Are you curious about other cultures? Do you consider yourself a communicator and a conceptual thinker who enjoys new experiences and stepping outside your comfort zone? Would you like to engage effectively with people from a multitude of ethnicities and backgrounds on a daily basis? Then a career using international studies could open up many career options for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

21st Century skills – The 2023 World Economic Forum Future of Jobs report ranks the top 10 skills necessary for success in today's workplace. Employers report a greater focus on cognitive skills, reflecting the growing requirement for complex problem-solving skills in the workplace. The importance of resilience and lifelong learning is also clear in the list, as employers recognise the need for upskilling and change.

The top two desired skills are analytical and creative thinking. While second to analytical thinking, creative thinking is increasing in importance within the workplace as tasks become increasingly automated. Other skills employers want include resilience, flexibility and agility, motivation and self-awareness, curiosity and lifelong learning, empathy and active listening, and leadership and social influence. All these skills can be developed and enhanced through international studies.

Global conflict resolution – As worldwide tensions continue to become more complex, the ability of skilled individuals to broker peaceful solutions becomes ever more valuable. Public, private and non-government organisations (NGOs) all work in this evolving space, and peacekeeping activities and employment opportunities internationally are growing.

Security and trust – A monolingual public service and population limits a nation's security and capacity to have global influence. Consequently, those with language skills and intercultural competence are critical to building and establishing trust among nations.

Superdiversity Centre – The Superdiversity Centre for Law, Policy and Business is a multidisciplinary centre designed to maximise the benefits of the 'diversity dividend' arising from New Zealand's transition to a superdiverse society.

The centre researches and analyses key superdiversity trends and challenges and their impact on particular aspects of New Zealand's law, policy and business, as well as advising the government, business and NGOs about changes to law, policy or strategy required to adapt to a superdiverse environment. It will also provide support to government, businesses and NGOs as they transition to a superdiverse strategic context.

WORK SETTINGS

Graduates can find work in the following areas:

- National and international human rights organisations
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- New Zealand Customs
- Non-governmental community groups (NZ or overseas)
- Local government and businesses (especially those with international connections)

They generally work during normal business hours, but can sometimes work evenings and weekends.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Potential careers include business, diplomatic service (with relevant pathway/qualifications), health, the justice system, local authorities, media, national and international human rights organisations, police, public relations, service industries, social/community work, iwi and Māori organisations, Pacific public and private organisations, teaching, and translation and interpreting (with the relevant language skills and qualifications).

Following is a brief description of some potential job titles.

Foreign affairs officer – Includes writing briefing papers on political, economic development and trade issues, arranging official visits, hosting visitors, and attending international meetings or negotiations. Can include overseas postings requiring the ability to manage diverse cultural and social environments. Language ability plays a significant part in staff postings.

Immigration consultant/officer – Provides information about immigration laws, policies and procedures, assessing applications for residency or entry into New Zealand, interviewing applicants, issuing permits and visas, investigating breaches of immigration laws and advising on immigration policy and operations.

Project manager (NGO) – Oversees planning, implementation, and tracking of projects in policy, diversity and culture. Includes defining each project's scope, creating detailed work plans, organising resources, managing staff and volunteers, developing schedules, monitoring, implementing, reviewing, and writing reports on outcomes.

Policy analyst – Analyse information assisting in the development, interpretation and review of government or industry policies. Involves identifying issues, including ethical, legal and political, to research, analyse, develop, interpret and review. Includes advice and recommendations for speeches, correspondence, Cabinet papers and reports.

SALARY GUIDE

Salaries vary according to role, industry and region. The starting salary range is based on public sector rates because many international studies graduates enter government and public service roles.

	Salary (per year)
Graduate starting salary range (public sector)	\$52,000-\$70,000
Five years+ ranges	\$75,000-\$130,000+

This information was accurate at the time of publication (early 2025) and should only be used as a guideline.

Keep up to date with salary data by visiting websites, including:

Prosple Graduate Salary Guide

nz.prosple.com/on-the-job

Careers NZ

careers.govt.nz/jobs-database

SEEK

seek.co.nz/policy-analyst-jobs

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Global competence – Defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as ‘the capacity to analyse global and intercultural issues critically and from multiple perspectives, to understand how differences affect perceptions, judgments, and ideas of self and others, and to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with others from different backgrounds on the basis of a shared respect for human dignity.’

Some of the skills required to be globally competent are:

- Ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures or countries
- Empathetic comprehension of other people’s thoughts, beliefs and feelings, ability to see the world from other perspectives
- Skilled in adjusting thoughts, feelings or behaviours to fit new contexts and situations
- Analytical and able to think critically to scrutinise and appraise information and meanings
- Ability to communicate in more than one language

General skills

- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Problem-solving
- Flexibility
- Research
- Ability to work collaboratively
- Organisation and time management skills

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Curious about how people interact across cultures
- Interested in the world around you
- A bridge builder or cultural ambassador
- Show tolerance towards cultural differences
- Demonstrate intercultural competency and cultural intelligence

THE AUT APPROACH

International studies combines well with a double major in social sciences, economics, psychology and criminology. It is also a good additional major for students from non-arts faculties such as business, engineering or science. It also works well as a single major with minors in language and conflict resolution.

International studies is also a very useful major or minor for any students wishing to develop expertise in cross-cultural awareness.

A final-year supervised work placement (WIL) is mandatory in the final year. Placements, which can be done in New Zealand or overseas, are in real-world businesses, not-for-profit organisations, and entrepreneurial ventures.

Recent placements include Auckland Council, Red Cross Refugee Services, VisionWest Community Trust, the Department of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry for Ethnic Communities.

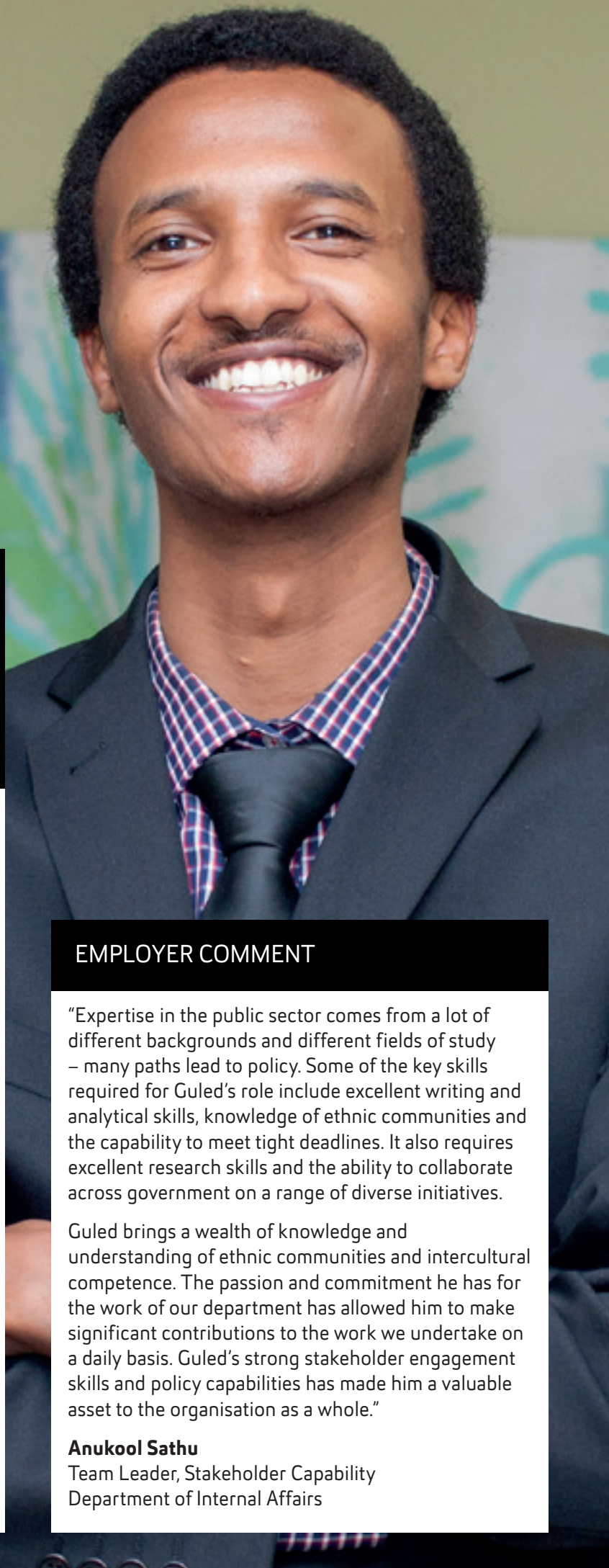


FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

There are postgraduate options, including master’s and PhD study. Students interested in postgraduate options are encouraged to discuss this career option with the Head of School.

RESEARCH

Staff research specialisations include intercultural communicative competence, decolonial studies, comparative politics and political theory, sustainability, human rights, and conflict resolution.



GULED MIRE

Diversity and Inclusion Policy Analyst, Department of Internal Affairs (DIA)

Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and Criminology

Master of Arts in Policy Studies student

"I've always wanted to gain a deeper understanding into intercultural competence and its importance for maintaining social cohesion in rapidly increasing multi-cultural societies such as New Zealand. I was working in Canada and knew I was going to move to New Zealand, so I researched online to find the most relevant degree and discovered the International Studies option at AUT, which had a strong focus on inter-cultural competence.

Upon graduation, I worked as a teaching and research assistant at AUT before securing my policy job at DIA, where I provide advice and analysis on issues relating to ethnic diversity and inclusion. I also support work programmes, write general correspondences and attend external meetings representing the department. I have recently developed a diversity and inclusion framework that we hope will assist other government agencies to leverage and understand the benefits and complexities associated with ethnic diversity and inclusion.

I really enjoy the variety of the work, particularly the opportunity to support the development of ethnic communities and New Zealanders. I'd like to develop my career in policy, and I'm now completing a Masters in Policy at AUT. Whatever happens, I want to continue doing meaningful policy work that allows me to contribute to the betterment of society."

EMPLOYER COMMENT

"Expertise in the public sector comes from a lot of different backgrounds and different fields of study – many paths lead to policy. Some of the key skills required for Guled's role include excellent writing and analytical skills, knowledge of ethnic communities and the capability to meet tight deadlines. It also requires excellent research skills and the ability to collaborate across government on a range of diverse initiatives.

Guled brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding of ethnic communities and intercultural competence. The passion and commitment he has for the work of our department has allowed him to make significant contributions to the work we undertake on a daily basis. Guled's strong stakeholder engagement skills and policy capabilities has made him a valuable asset to the organisation as a whole."

Anukool Sathu

Team Leader, Stakeholder Capability
Department of Internal Affairs

USEFUL WEBSITES

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

mfat.govt.nz

Super Diversity Centre

[linkedin.com/company/superdiversity-institute-for-law-policy-and-business](https://www.linkedin.com/company/superdiversity-institute-for-law-policy-and-business)

World Economic Forum

weforum.org

Iwi and Māori organisations

tkm.govt.nz

Ministry of Pacific Peoples

mpp.govt.nz

Office of Ethnic Communities

ethniccommunities.govt.nz

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about studying international studies and the Bachelor of Arts, visit aut.ac.nz/international-studies

For other Future Career Sheets visit:

aut.ac.nz/careersheets

EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS


For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through elab.aut.ac.nz/

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: aut.ac.nz/enquire

futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

 @FutureStudentsofAUT

CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

aut.ac.nz/enquire | studenthub@aut.ac.nz

CITY CAMPUS

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