

# What can I do with a degree in Human Services?

# Human Services.



## What is Human Services?

Human Services is a discipline in the social sciences that involves analysing, critiquing and debating the contexts, activities, structure and organisation of human service organisations and professions.

Human Services includes a diverse range of organisations and services across a number of areas, such as social policy, research, education, health, community development, sport and fitness, youth development, aged support, animal welfare, international aid, housing, justice, police, mediation and welfare.

At UC, Human Services undergraduate courses can be chosen to critically explore and understand one of five areas of study: healthy lifestyles, crime and deviance, local and global communities, work and organisations, and youth worlds. These pathways/streams of study can help shape students career direction.

## Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

### Examples of professional bodies

- Social Equity and Wellbeing Network  
<https://sewn.org.nz>
- Social Services Providers Aotearoa Inc  
[www.sspa.org.nz](http://www.sspa.org.nz)
- Ara Taiohi [www.arataiohi.org.nz](http://www.arataiohi.org.nz)
- Research Association New Zealand  
[www.researchassociation.org.nz](http://www.researchassociation.org.nz)

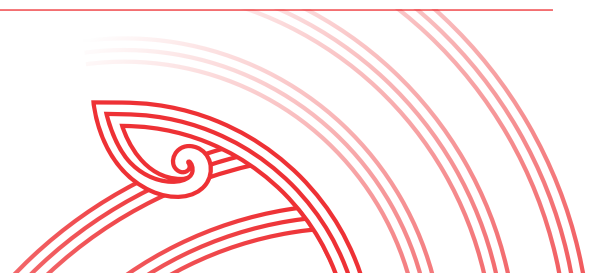
## Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

### Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at  
[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/human-services](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/human-services)
- Job profiles on career websites like  
[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.





## What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Human Services, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies. These can include:

- Understanding the influences on contemporary society
- An awareness and appreciation of diversity
- Practical application of social theory
- Advanced oral and written communication skills
- Thinking critically and creatively, and challenging ideas
- Interpretive and analytical thinking
- Problem solving skills
- Synthesising and presenting information
- Research and computing
- Time management, planning and organisation.

### What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability are important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, technological literacy, AI and big data.\*

\*World Economic Forum: [www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills)

### How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

## Where have graduates been employed?

Human Services graduates work in government agencies, private and not-for-profit organisations, and community service agencies.

Human Services courses are designed for students wanting to pursue careers within fields such as:

- Research
- Education e.g. Ministry of Education
- Policy and governance e.g. City councils
- Government ministries, departments and related agencies e.g. Oranga Tamariki | Ministry for Children, Department of Internal Affairs, Whānau Ora
- Management and administration
- Law and safety e.g. NZ Police, Department of Corrections, Community Probation Service
- Health e.g. Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand
- Community and youth development
- Social services and advocacy e.g. Ministry of Social Development
- International aid organisations
- Environmental development
- Animal welfare
- Aged support
- Third sector work (non-governmental and not-for-profit) e.g. Comcare Charitable Trust, NZ Drug Foundation.

## What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

### Youth worker

- Keep young people informed and supported
- Nurture relationships with youth and their networks
- Support adolescent parents
- Plan activities and connect to resources

### Social researcher

- Design and develop research projects e.g. around social issues such as housing or poverty
- Use a range of methods to gain insight and analyse findings
- Write and disseminate reports

### Policy analyst / advisor

- Identify and investigate issues and opportunities e.g. in society, law or governance
- Interpret and consult on existing policies
- Prepare reports and recommend changes

### Probation officer

- Manage and supervise offenders
- Make offender risk assessments to identify the chance of recidivism and suitability for parole
- Monitor access to services and programmes

### Community corrections officer

- Provide pre-sentencing assessments and assesses parole suitability
- Monitor those on parole or under supervision
- Provide access to services and programmes

### Regional coordinator

- Administer groups or services in a region
- Run events and develop member's confidence
- Build connections with people and agencies

### International aid worker

- Manage and assess projects
- Support long-term development
- Evaluate responses to emergency situations

### Disabilities officer

- Provide support services to people with intellectual and physical disabilities
- Enhance their quality of life
- Organise leisure activities, trips and socialising
- Assist with day-to-day jobs and routines

### Police officer

- Attend crimes, disturbances or accidents
- Respond to emergencies and keep the peace
- Gather and document evidence
- Educate the public on security issues

### Research analyst / advisor, market researcher

- Organise and conduct research
- Develop and test theories, interpret results
- Write reports, make recommendations and publish research

### Human resources advisor

- Advertise vacancies and recruit staff
- Advise on workplace policies and procedures
- May oversee activities such as staff development, health and safety, pay and reward

### Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Administration officer
- Alcohol and drug clinician
- Customs officer
- Community support worker
- Communications and events assistant
- Grants writer and administrator
- Housing facilitator
- Legal aid debt officer
- Teaching assistant
- Police officer.

## Further study options

Human Services graduates can progress into an honours, master's or PhD in the subject. These degrees provide advanced research and writing skills and allow the chance to specialise. Advanced study can also lead to an academic career.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study)

## How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience, therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

### Career planning checklist

#### Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

#### Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

#### Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

#### Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: [www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers)



## What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: [www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories)



### Awhina

Ngāti Kahungunu

Acting House Supervisor, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne, Australia

Bachelor of Arts in Human Services and Māori and Indigenous Studies

### What motivated you to study Human Services?

I have always enjoyed working with people and have always wanted to help people. When I was at primary school I would volunteer my lunch time to the disabled unit at the school, taking the kids into the playground or playing with the kids in the unit. So, choosing Human Services felt natural.

### How has your degree helped with your chosen field?

My BA in Human Services and Māori and Indigenous Studies has been a major part in getting my foot in the door and being able to broaden my experience and share my knowledge. I have worked in the disability sector in Christchurch, Brisbane and now Melbourne since graduating.

Overall, the degree gave me the confidence to go out into the big world and apply the knowledge I had to my job. I believe my degree was the key to successfully securing my positions over other candidates. My career is flourishing and I am currently looking to move up to Operations Manager one day in the near future before I am 35 years old!

### Can you tell us a little bit about your current job?

My position as Acting House Supervisor involves managing a community residential unit with six residents that require disability support along with the staff that work with the residents. The CRU is run 24 hours so we require two staff on at all times. I manage up to 12 staff and ensure that the residents are receiving a quality service and living their lives the way they choose with the support of staff.

## Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: [careers@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:careers@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers)

### Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

## Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support)

### Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: [futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz)

### First year students – contact:

Kaitoko | First Year Student Advisors

T: +64 3 369 0409

E: [firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

### Continuing students – contact:

Toi Tangata | Arts

T: +64 3 369 3377

E: [artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/arts](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/arts)

