

What can I do with a degree in Criminal Justice?

Criminal Justice.



What is Criminal Justice?

Criminal Justice examines the societal system and practices aimed at addressing and managing various aspects of crime, including policing, punishment, rehabilitation, and victim support. This multidisciplinary field of study encompasses roles within sectors such as policing, courts, corrections, and community initiatives, with the goal of promoting safety and justice within society.

Criminology, a component of Criminal Justice, explores the theories and sociology of crime with less emphasis on practical matters. In contrast, Criminal Justice extends beyond theoretical frameworks to scrutinise the entirety of the criminal justice process, encompassing laws, policies, and institutions within the system.

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

- Australasian Corrections Education Association www.acea.org.au
- International Corrections and Prisons Association <https://icpa.org>
- Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences <https://www.acjs.org>
- Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology <https://anzsoc.org>
- Social Service Providers Aotearoa www.sspa.org.nz
- The International Sociological Association www.isa-sociology.org

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/criminal-justice
- Job profiles on career websites like 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 Criminal Justice, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies. These skills can include:

- Acting ethically with vulnerable populations
- Knowledge of the legal context of criminal justice in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Comprehension of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi and responsibilities of criminal justice agencies
- Understanding trends and societal impacts of crime
- Problem solving and decision making adaptable to different contexts
- Research, interpretive and analytical thinking
- Critical self-reflection of yourself and others
- Self-management, resiliency and adaptability
- Planning and organisation
- Presentation ability; oral and written communication
- Leadership and relationship management
- Indigenous and cross-cultural awareness.

Applied Learning

Opportunities to apply your learning outside the classroom are available through internships and volunteering opportunities. These experiences deepen your skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge, and employability.

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 and technological literacy.*

*World Economic Forum: 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?

A degree in Criminal Justice could prepare you for careers in all aspects of criminal justice, in particular, roles within organisations such as:

- New Zealand Police – employs around 14,000 people who work from community-based police stations and large policing hubs. Explore opportunities in intelligence, policy analysis, communications, and crime prevention.
- Ministry of Justice – employs over 3,000 people delivering justice services. Opportunities range from operational services to coronial services.
- Department of Corrections – employs around 10,000 staff to protect the public and reduce reoffending. A diverse mix of frontline and office opportunities across prisons and community corrections facilities can be pursued.

Your degree is also likely to be applicable to:

- Criminal justice policy
- Restorative justice
- Courts and legal services
- Offender rehabilitation
- Social welfare
- Security and border control
- Defence forces
- Non-government and research and development organisations supporting criminal justice agencies.

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?'

Coronial case manager

- Keep the family of a person who has died informed
- Provide case management and administrative support to the coroners

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

Corporate advisor

- Develop strategic governance structures
- Manage risk and ensure compliance
- Build stakeholder trust through communication

Operations advisor

- Optimise processes for efficiency and cost management
- Develop strategic plans, integrate technology, and manage risks
- Foster teamwork, drive change, and ensure continuous improvement

Customs officer

- Inspect imported and exported goods
- Search ships and aircraft for prohibited cargo
- Assess security risks

Prison programme / rehabilitation facilitator

- Facilitate programmes that target a specific rehabilitation need for offenders
- Educate and instruct offenders to help them succeed post imprisonment
- Motivate prisoners to make positive changes

Police officer

- Attend and investigate crimes and accidents
- Help people in emergencies
- Gather and document evidence
- Educate the public

Police communicator, emergency call handler

- Capture vital information about an event
- Coordinate and monitor emergency response

Immigration officer / manager

- Examine documentation, such as passports
- Approve or reject entry into a country
- Arrange removal of immigration lawbreakers

Advocate

- Raise awareness, aid victims, and support reintegration
- Advocate for policy reforms and equity in the system

Youth justice manager

- Lead community-based youth justice teams
- Partner with whānau, iwi, police, youth workers, schools etc to solve youth offending
- Lead positive change in offenders and services

Court registry officer

- Serve court attendees and process files
- Handle administrative tasks related to court proceedings
- Support judicial personnel in managing cases

Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Coordinator / advisor
- Practice leader
- Research insights advisor / assistant
- Intelligence / information advisor
- Project manager
- Data analyst
- Probation officer
- Community work supervisor
- Family violence advocate
- Mental health worker
- Restorative justice facilitator
- File management support officer
- Client assistant.

Further study options

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

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



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



Charlie Boot

Graduate Research Insights Advisor,
New Zealand Police

Master of Criminal Justice
Bachelor of Criminal Justice

What have you been doing since graduation?

Since graduating I have been fortunate enough to begin working for the New Zealand Police in their Evidence Based Policing centre. The work has been challenging and extremely insightful, with plenty of opportunity to develop personally and work across a large array of projects.

What is a highlight of your career so far?

The highlight of my career so far is undoubtedly the opportunities presented to me through the New Zealand Police. Being able to work with a fantastic team and on world leading research that informs operational policing is an absolute privilege. I have the opportunity to travel, take internationally accredited courses and provide insight to contemporary criminal justice problems.

What are some of the challenges?

It was definitely a challenge jumping straight into the workplace from study and adapting to new styles of working. However, the BCJ and the Criminal Justice Master's program provided me with a fantastic set of practical and analytical skills that helped streamline this transition.

How do you hope your career will develop?

I am hopeful that this graduate role with the New Zealand Police will continue to develop my existing skill set gained from the Criminal Justice program and provide me with opportunities to make a difference in my communities. I am keeping an open mind to the future but I know that no matter where I end up, I want to make a difference in the Criminal Justice System. The New Zealand Police have an extraordinary array of job possibilities and I am excited to explore these as my career develops.

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

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

Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

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