

# CAREER VIEW

## MEDIA STUDIES

How do media impact on society and culture? How do we, as consumers and producers of media, influence their development and use? What role do governments, business, regulatory agencies and citizen groups play? How does social, collaborative and user-led media alter these various roles and relationships? These are the types of questions that the field of Media Studies seeks to answer.

Media are increasingly intertwined in our lives, whether they be traditional print or digital format. At an individual level, the media we use influence our behaviours, activities and beliefs in a variety of ways, which in turn shape our understanding of media and what we can do with them.

Media also play a role in communities, societies and cultures. We rely on media to learn about current events, for entertainment, to socialise with others, to share our thoughts and beliefs, as well as engage in political debates and social movements.

Media Studies examines the various forms of media and our interaction with them. Courses examine content and technology as well as policy and industries, media audiences, media technologies and media history. The goal of Media Studies is to understand what media are, the relationships between the various actors in a media environment – technologies, policies and regulations, producers, content and audiences – and the media's role in larger processes and fields such as government, finance, globalisation and representation.

Media Studies is also a highly practical discipline. One of the skills most prized in graduates by employers is the ability to adapt and use technology without being confused or overwhelmed. A knowledge of the current media environment, and the ability to quickly learn how to use tools to get an employer's message across, all help to enhance a graduate's employability.



### WHAT SKILLS DO MEDIA STUDIES STUDENTS DEVELOP?

Media Studies students develop capabilities in written and spoken communication, independent research, teamwork, and the critical analysis of

Career View explores how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities and to life/work planning. It includes graduate destination information and current employment issues. Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

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texts, practices and cultures. They develop **written and oral communication** skills through producing collaborative texts, reflective essays, blogs, group presentations, discussions and debates. These skills enable students to clearly articulate their own ideas, but also to work effectively, creatively, and productively with others. Students will often draw on creative **presentation skills**, that prepare them for learning to use video and publishing applications on the job. Students will be trained to assess media of all forms and the ways in which technologies influence behaviours, beliefs, culture and society and vice versa. Considering the ubiquity of media, **analytical skills** are increasingly important, and they are also applicable to a broad range of issues. Students are encouraged to **think critically** about issues such as ideology, power, representation and social understanding.

Media Studies involves seeking out information from a variety of sources to support a position or claim, test a theory, or illuminate a particular concept. These **research skills** are an increasingly important asset in a range of contexts beyond the university.

**Leadership and teamwork** are developed as students are encouraged to think and work independently while also designing and carrying out collaborative projects. Students will become practised at discussion and debate, but also consensus formation and finding mutual support.

## WHERE DO MEDIA STUDIES GRADUATES WORK?

While working within media industries is a goal of many graduates, media have become an integral element of all companies and organisations. The skills Media Studies graduates gain provide an opportunity to work in a wide range of fields and contexts.

**The media and cultural industries** are a rapidly growing and significant international market where Media Studies graduates can apply their skills and learn on the job. Media students also develop practical skills from volunteering, internships or additional study in design or film that can be useful in production and post-production. Media Studies graduates find roles in **radio, television and digital media**, or in fields such as journalism, entertainment or policy. Graduates are attractive to media organisations, entertainment production companies and a growing number of content providers. Graduates can also develop and disseminate their own media offerings on the multitude of platforms available.

Web development and digital companies employ online content developers and experience designers and the analytical skills learned from Media Studies, along with creativity and ability to apply ideas is a good skill base for these roles. Further learning in coding or design methodologies can be helpful.

Media graduates intending to work as editorial staff (reporters, sub-editors, editors) in the media may find an additional journalism qualification or experience helpful. It is possible to write content without an industry qualification.

Many Media Studies students have a strong interest in **advertising, marketing and public relations**. There are a variety of roles Media Studies graduates can undertake, from media specialists who plan and purchase advertising space/airtime, to writers and designers who develop and execute advertisements or entire ad campaigns. Media Studies graduates have been recruited into the Commercial Communications Council of New Zealand's graduate programme, where they are placed in advertising and public relations firms.

As media play a central role in society, many organisations have an increasing need for employees skilled in media analysis, development, social media advice and communication with their audiences. They will also contract media consultants and public relations experts when required, so graduates can also work for such consultancies, or progress into these kinds of roles once they have built up expertise and experience.

In the **public sector**, government agencies and ministries require skilled, media-savvy employees to guide the development of media policies and practices that ensure their organisations' interests are well represented in a shifting media landscape.

For students interested in politics, the press gallery and related matters, there are opportunities for internships and roles as media consultants, media liaisons, press secretaries and other government affiliated careers. Graduates have found employment in a number of organisations including The Press Council, the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Advertising Standards Authority, and the Office of Film and Literature Classification (the Classification Office).

Other possibilities include working for media-related government entities such as Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, the NZ Film Commission and NZ on Air or government-run cultural institutions such as Te Papa Tongarewa.

Media Studies also teaches students to have the ethical orientation and critical skills necessary to serve a wide array of audiences and communities, with an eye for social justice and equity considerations. Much like private and public sector institutions, **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**, charities and other such philanthropic organisations require skilled media experts to craft and distribute messages across media platforms, or act as media consultants and advisors, media liaisons, social media experts, editors or communications officers.

**Education.** Teaching in secondary schools is a rewarding career for graduates with a passion for media and communication and the desire to work with young people. Media Studies is included in the





secondary curriculum. Teaching at any level will require an additional teaching qualification. Teaching at university level usually requires a PhD. Media students can advance their research and teaching skills by undertaking a Master's or PhD degree. The creation of online learning resources is an exciting growth area, combining creative talent with skills in media production, instructional or learning design, research and writing.

**Self-employment.** Media Studies graduates can often be entrepreneurial and find they are well suited to self-employment or freelance work or operating as part of a business incubator. They contract their services to public sector organisations, regional and local authorities and to corporate, large, medium and small businesses, particularly as communications specialists and content developers.

Combining Media Studies with other subjects can also increase the range of opportunities available. Graduates have the critical skills and preparation necessary to work as media specialists for a wide array of employers such as hospitals, law firms and the hospitality, manufacturers and service industries.

## PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Belonging to a professional body provides students and graduates with the opportunity to make contacts, keep up to date with current industry knowledge and learn more about specific areas of interest. Some options include:

- Commercial Communications Council
- Journalism Education Association of New Zealand
- Marketing Association - Auckland and Wellington
- Media Communications Association - International
- New Zealand Writers Guild/Puni Taatui o Aotearoa
- SPADA - Screen Production and Development Association of New Zealand
- LinkedIn (including LinkedIn groups), Facebook and Twitter can also connect students and graduates to networking opportunities, industry-related events and job vacancies.

## GRADUATE PROFILES

### JOB TITLES

Following is a sample of job titles reported in graduate employment destination surveys. Some roles may require additional qualifications and training.

Account manager • advertising creative • advertising sales coordinator • assistant producer • broadcast monitor • communications advisor • community moderator • consultant • content developer • copy editor • creative team assistant • customer engagement • data analyst • editorial assistant • journalist • marketing assistant • media analyst • media researcher • media assistant • ministerial coordinator • policy analyst • project coordinator • public relations officer • publicist • reporter • research assistant • secondary school teacher • service designer • social media coordinator • software tester • user experience designer • web content adviser • writer



### Daniel de la Cruz

Test Engineer, Assurity Consulting



In my first year at university I was unsure which majors I wanted to pursue, so I picked a broad range of courses across Commerce and Humanities. I eventually decided on Media Studies because I found it fascinating seeing the connection between the media

I consumed every day and the media theories I was learning about in class. I also struggled a bit with written communication initially, and Media Studies really helped me build my confidence in this area.

I was particularly interested in digital media and the role technology has played throughout history in shaping the way media texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. From the three-minute format of contemporary pop songs as a manifestation of the phonograph's three-minute capacity, to the algorithm that dictates which YouTube video you watch next, it is undeniable that technology plays a key role in how we engage with the media. I think this is partially what drew me to working in IT, as the concepts I learned around digital media translate very well to this industry.

There are several skills I picked up studying media that have helped in my work as a software tester. The ability to not only perform critical analysis at a micro level, but also to take a step back and see the wider environmental context is hugely valuable in any area of testing. Research, report writing, and interviewing skills are also beneficial in many test disciplines such as test management and user experience testing. The most important thing is to maintain an understanding of the audience and how they think and behave, as just like the media, software testing is ultimately about the end-user.

At the start of my university journey I never would have expected that I'd end up working in IT, but I've since learned that your major doesn't necessarily have to dictate the career path you end up on. In my time working in testing, I have met people with a broad range of backgrounds including Law, Psychology, and even Classics. If you think Media Studies is something you might be interested in, I would highly encourage you to give it a try. You will most likely pick up transferable skills that can be applied to many industries along the way.

## Anna Thomson

Information Security Consultant  
Quantum Security Services



I studied a conjoint Commerce and Arts degree majoring in Information Systems, Management and Media Studies. Initially I started only with commerce as I was interested in business and technology. I saw this as a safe and credible path that would help me to secure a job when finishing my studies. However, after being so passionately involved in Media Studies at high school, I felt like I had left behind one of my important interests. It is worth knowing that Media Studies at university lives up to the name – it's a study. The course over all is theoretical and makes you think. Media Studies combines aspects of politics, society and technology and lets you explore the changes and similarities in theory over time. I picked up television studies courses, as I have always enjoyed textual analysis, but in the end found myself engaging more with media theory and culture/politics courses as they encouraged me to think in a way I had not done so previously.

Media Studies has helped me realise the power of the media within an information-rich culture and society. It has made me consider how not only the media can shape us, but how we shape the media. Even when watching “mindless” television or scrolling social media I find myself analysing the content I'm viewing and the message that's being shared and framed. I enjoyed being able to study my favourite TV shows and films or analyse news content to identify a deeper meaning or agenda that we may not realise.

In addition to critical thinking, Media Studies allowed me to develop my analytical, writing, and presentation skills. Currently as an information security consultant, my focus is in technology risk management. This may not sound like the go-to career for a Media Studies graduate, however every industry and organisation engages with the media and public audiences in some way. The media is everywhere – and understanding how people engage with it is very useful no matter what the career path.

For the next steps in my career, I want to get involved with information security and information privacy. In conjunction with my Information Systems major, Media Studies has helped me to consider how our data is used online. Specifically, the ways in which algorithms can determine what we are exposed to and how this can shape our beliefs.

## Joseph Hendren

Content Specialist  
Inland Revenue



I took Media Studies in high school and absolutely loved it. I knew that when I started university I wanted to keep on doing similar things and working towards a job in some kind of media-related field.

Initially I started with a double major in Media Studies and Film with a minor in English Literature, but after a year I realised the only parts of English I was really enjoying were the parts studying media - that was a pretty big tip off that Media Studies was the right choice for me.

The breadth of knowledge I picked up from the variety of Media Studies courses, has helped me in every job I've had so far. I was always encouraged to pursue the areas I wanted to research, but also forced to really think about how any of those things worked, why they were important, how they could be challenged and how I could use them to challenge myself. I most enjoyed finding the significance in things that might not look that important from the outside - whether that's surveillance on social media, pop music, or one of the three different essays I wrote about The Simpsons.

I went straight from completing my BA(Hons) in Media Studies to being a University teaching assistant in that subject. In my current job as a Content Specialist, initially, my role focused a lot on writing. I was taking in a lot of information, looking for the pieces that are most important to the people who need to read it, and rewriting it in a way that makes that information as clear, concise and easy to digest as possible. However, I'm also applying those skills to areas other than writing, taking the same principles and using them in video editing, some light audio engineering, even a little bit of web design. Being able to work across all sorts of different media while keeping the focus on conveying the most important information is something that I picked up a lot from my Media Studies degree.

## Sophie Johnson

Governance Manager (West Yorkshire)  
Co-op Academies Trust



I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Media Studies because they were my favourite subjects at school. Media Studies encouraged me to consider the structures behind the media that shape the kind of media products we see and use. It taught me how to think critically about the media texts and interfaces I was using, and this has made me much better at strategic and analytical thinking. My Master's thesis looked at how we still think about "family photos" as if we're all crowding round a photograph album on grandma's sofa, even when we're sharing images over the internet using products designed by massive media companies. I have also completed additional courses in project management and Te Reo Māori, both of which are vital for people working in the New Zealand public sector. I have also applied what I have learned outside of work, as I've volunteered with several charities and been a trustee for a micro-finance charity.

I always knew I wanted to work in the public sector because, as my tutorial mates will confirm, I believe in fairness and social justice. I had a number of part-time jobs at university while I was studying, including tutoring for Media Studies courses and as an electronic note-taker for Disability Services. This note-taker role led to my first job out of university as a Hansard Editor at Parliament. I was able to quickly research topics in detail and make sense of the debates in the House. My next role was a Senior Ministerial Coordinator, liaising between a ministry and the Minister's office. I then moved on to managing governance committees for a government department, taking meeting minutes and providing strategic advice on transparent decision-making.

I've now taken those skills overseas and moved to England, where I'm a Governance Manager, leading a team supporting school governance in underprivileged areas. The school trust I work with follows co-operative values and focuses on social responsibility, equity, and fairness. It's a challenging role, but it feels like I'm making a real difference already and being in England means there are so many opportunities to travel and see new places. Let's just agree to not talk about the quality of the coffee here.

## Dr Natàlia Ferrer Roca

Adjunct Professor  
Department of Organization,  
Business Management and  
Communication  
University of Girona



At the University of Girona, my research is interdisciplinary, focusing on media policy, the role of cultural industries on destination branding and tourism communication. I am also an independent researcher and advisor having worked with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU, Geneva) and the Government of Catalonia for the Catalan Audiovisual Commission. Alongside those roles I am Associate Director (Research) of The Place Brand Observer and co-founder of The Sustainability Leaders Project.

I'm originally from Girona, a small city between Barcelona and France. For my undergraduate degree, I decided to study Journalism at the Autonomous University of Barcelona because I wanted to understand the world and help people understand it too. In my last year, I found a great teacher in Media Policy who helped me develop a strong interest in that area. Therefore, a year later I ended up doing a Master's degree in Communications Policy at Westminster University in London.

I've always had a 'thing' about New Zealand, ever since seeing a beautiful movie as a child. My partner was looking to do a PhD and was fortunate to get a PhD scholarship at Waikato University. We were based in London, so we made the move from London to Hamilton, which was a huge culture shift but we loved it! Coming from the small Catalan nation with our share of repression, I identified closely with iwi Māori in the region.

I began to consider also undertaking a PhD and pursuing an academic career. I looked around for supervisors and found an ideal PhD opportunity at Victoria University of Wellington, focussing on the political economy of the feature film industry in New Zealand. I found that a great balance to all the mental work while studying was the gym on campus, especially yoga. So, after I had completed my PhD I trained to be a yoga teacher.

One of the most important skills I developed during my PhD is the ability to make sense and neatly summarise huge amounts of information in a short time. My response has been to anyone – especially business owners – who might consider me 'overqualified' for having a PhD for a role is: "I'm actually just more efficient!"