

Visit to Foreign Policy Centre 5th October 2006
Jeff Riley (SOAS) and Jon Harle (UCL)

Who funds FPC?

Income is from diverse sources. Customers include individual members, businesses, and government departments

The type of research

FPC produces research that is related to and reflects its political roots. It is less associated with more academic research that automatically strives for a 'balance' between conflicting perspectives. It is also concerned with providing material in such a way that helps to ensure it gets adopted. For example, its research on Turkey and the question of Turkey's EU accession reflects the fact that the FPC considers Turkish accession to be an important stage of the EU's development. The material it produced on the issue included recommendations on how this accession could be achieved. Similarly, its research on EU reform was *practically* concerned with finding a way forward for the EU after the derailing of the constitution adoption. Shorter term projects, such as a recent two month research project on conflict diamonds, are undertaken alongside longer term projects, such as a commission of leading figures which meets several times a year to discuss European reform.

While it does not measure its success in the achievement of specific policy aims it does aim to influence policy debates, communicating its message through publications and events. These could range from seminars at party conferences or in Parliament. One seminar on the role of business in Africa at the Labour Party Conference brought together Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development, a senior Rwandan Minister and a representative from Nestle.

Corporate members make use of the FPC's expertise for different reasons. Some want to influence the policy debate, while others want to communicate their own message. The FPC is interested in helping different groups – from NGOs to government – to understand the role of business in policy, and to gather feedback from these groups.

Research Programmes

Understanding Iran; Change in Latin America; Civility Programme for Middle East reform; Democracy and Development ; Europe; Public Diplomacy; China and Globalisation; India and Globalisation; The Future of Russia; Energy; Transatlantic Relations.

After an internship

FPC help and encourage their interns produce the material that will help them establish their credibility in the policy research world. This could involve publishing an article or a pamphlet for example. This could happen during or shortly after their internship. On the basis of this they may well be employed either directly by FPC (though it has a small staff), or as a researcher in other organisations or as a freelance Research Associate. FPC uses freelance Research Associates to help on a ad hoc basis with specific programmes and the Associates use the work to continue building up their profile and networking in the sector. Other interns have gone on to work in NGOs and think tanks, particularly those in Europe.

Alex Bigham – how he got there

Alex works for FPC as a researcher and communications officer. He studied at SOAS and knew from early on he wanted to work in the policy area. He was involved with the Labour Party and was volunteering at Labour Party HQ during the 2005 election campaign. Previously he has worked with Patricia Hewitt MP and David Lammy MP. The latter is also an ex SOAS student and had encouraged Alex to apply for the FPC internship.

Internship Programme

Compared to a more academic oriented Research Institute or think tank, FPC is more likely to have interns who aren't at Masters level, though typically interns have varied academic profiles. As with other internships in the sector they will look for applicants with a balance of general skills and an interest in the research programmes on offer. Event organisation is a major part of an intern's role and skills and experience in that area would be useful. Internships generally last between 3 and 6 months and are unpaid.

While FPC is more clearly politically aligned (on the Left) than more traditional think tanks it is not exclusively for political activists from a particular political tradition. One intern, for example, had been previously working with the office of Douglas Hurd, the senior Conservative. Its political origin, however, does attract applicants who have a more specific engagement with large 'P' politics as well as those with a good general understanding of the political world.

*"The Foreign Policy Centre is a leading European think tank launched under the patronage of the British Prime Minister Tony Blair to develop a vision of a fair and rule-based world order... The Centre runs a unique **internship programme** - one of Europe's best routes for new graduates into the foreign policy arena, which has already been offered to 70 graduates over the last five years"*

Notes from the Intern case studies available on the site www.fpc.org.uk

Roles include

Assistant to Press and Editorial Director

Global Britons Intern

European Programmes Assistant

Director's Assistant – "research and writing as well as the day-to-day coordination of the Director's affairs"

Communications intern – "promote and publicise the Centre's work and putting together and assisting the editing the Centre's newsletter"

Terms and conditions – internships last between three and four months, are unpaid though lunch and travel allowances are given.

Advantages

Variety – from analysis of the media in contemporary Iraq to soliciting MPs views on migration. Typically you will work on three to four projects at once.

Exposure to VIPs – the small core of staff means that interns get to deal with the senior people that the institute works with

Making Contacts – through things such as 'brainstorming' sessions and through organised conferences interns are making contact with people who could be important in future job applications. The centre is a forum for debate and interaction between different groups eg government, academia, NGOs, business community and media. The centre staff are also a good source of information and advice and are generous with their time.

Tasks – divided typically between administrative tasks and intellectual tasks. The former include envelope stuffing, visiting the print shop, chasing conference invitations. The latter could be producing material for press releases and research papers and being involved in brainstorming sessions to generate ideas. Others include writing book reviews, compiling statements on 9/11 prepare and write policy brief on reforming EU governance. Fundraising – for example targeting organisations who might fund seminars, projects.

Range of work – the small core of staff means that interns are depended on not just for admin work but substantive projects – eg research, working with VIPs

Attending events and conference and even some overseas trips – one intern, for example, went as a rapporteur to Brussels

Peer Support – other interns work with you and it's a chance to share experiences and advice

Qualifications typically taken by Interns

BA History, BSc Government, BSc International Relations, MA International Relations, MA Social Anthropology, MPhil International Relations

Subsequent Roles – Researcher, Institute of International Relations, Prague; intern BBC Washington; Intern UN, Geneva; Research Officer, WaterAid India Programme, New Delhi;

Europe Programme Assistant, British Council Brussels; Assistant to the All Party Group on Third World Debt

Jeff Riley – SOAS Careers Service.
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More Employer Studies like this are available in the book, 'Getting Into Development' published April 2006. Buy a copy online at www.careers.lon.ac.uk/output/books or call in to your university careers office.

