CAREER EDUCATION – WRITTEN Q&A

To accompany your 90 second video please complete the following Q+A. This will be made available alongside your video, should someone want to understand some further detail.

1. **What is your job role and organisation?**

   I work as an Analyst at RAND Europe, which is a not-for-profit research organisation that aims to improve policy and decision making through research and analysis. We are based in Cambridge in the UK and also Brussels in Belgium.

2. **What do you do in this job?**

   Working as an Analyst at RAND Europe involves a number of tasks and responsibilities, but primarily my job is to collect, analyse and interpret data and information to answer important questions for policy and decision makers. These questions are wide ranging, including: how can we provide timely and accurate information on international migration around the world? How can we most effectively improve the educational outcomes of pupils in schools across England? How can we make housing more affordable in Cambridge? How can we improve the quality of life of people living in Greater Cambridge? How can we best facilitate children's participation in political and democratic life across Europe?

3. **Why did you choose this career?**

   At school I always had a keen interest in maths and statistics. As I went through my studies and into my PhD, this translated into a passion for data and the role that this can play in improving societies and boosting the well-being of people and communities. Alongside this, from a young age I aspired to work in a role that allows me to have a positive effect on people's lives. Working as a policy researcher is a natural choice for me, as it is really where these two passions meet.

4. **What background education or training do you have?**

   At A Level, I studied Biology, Geography and Law. I then studied Geography at Loughborough University.

   At the end of my undergraduate degree, I then started a PhD in Human Geography also at Loughborough University, where I undertook research on the geographical trends and patterns on shared housing (Housing in Multiple Occupation – HMO).

5. **What has your career path been?**

   Once I finished my undergraduate degree at Loughborough University in the summer of 2015, my plan was originally to move back to London for work. I was then offered the opportunity to study for a PhD by the Geography department at Loughborough University, so I remained in Loughborough.

   Once I'd finished my PhD in the summer of 2018, I took on various short-term roles at Loughborough University, including University Teacher and Research Assistant. I spent around a year filling various roles on a short-term basis.

   Following this period working on short-term projects, I was looking for a research role on a more long-term basis, to provide exciting opportunities to use research and analysis to have a positive

influence on people, communities and societies. In August 2019, I accepted an offer to become an Analyst at RAND Europe, my current role. I wanted to work at RAND Europe because I saw that the organisation could provide those exciting opportunities to contribute to positive social and policy change through objective research and analysis.

6. **What does a typical day involve?**

   A typical day will likely involve the following:

   - Learn new things from carrying out research and analysis tasks, which may include working with and analysing large datasets to gather useful insights and information to answer important social policy questions, or carrying out interviews with key personnel with relevant knowledge and insights on a particular research topic among other activities.

   - Hone my writing skills by drafting research reports, summaries, briefs, blogs, slide decks or some other format to present the findings of our research activities to a range of audiences, including policy and decision makers, other researchers, other organisations with an interest in the research topic and lay audiences with an interest in the research topic.

   - Work with my colleagues to manage projects, including providing guidance to project team members on tasks, monitoring budgets and timelines to ensure that a project is progressing smoothly and to schedule, and meeting with our funders to discuss progress on projects and the next steps to answer the questions that the study has set out to answer.

   - Think creatively to write proposals to undertake new and exciting studies and answer some of societies most important and pressing questions. For example, recently I have been involved in writing proposals on how to more effectively identify and tackle online hate speech, and to analyse how small businesses across Europe have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. **What is your work environment like?**
   RAND Europe's Cambridge office is based just north of the city centre. My normal working hours are between 9am and 6pm, but there is flexibility with this. During the lockdowns due to COVID-19, I began to work remotely. Now, I tend to come into the office 2-3 times a week, and work from home for the rest of the time. This flexibility has been really useful during the difficult periods that have resulted from the pandemic.

   I work with very talented and kind individuals at RAND Europe, including researchers and others working in very important roles, such as providing support with managing and overseeing projects and proposals, advising on matters related to data protection and other legal issues, offering guidance on how to most effectively communicate our research to a wide range of audiences, and providing support with our day-to-day activities.

   I also work with interesting and skilled people from other organisations– usually the funders of our research, as well as collaborators with whom we undertake the research.

8. What aspects of your job are most challenging?

While social policy research can be incredibly rewarding, there is no guarantee that our work will influence policy. I have learned that to maximise the possibility for the work to have a positive impact, the research must address important societal and/or policy questions, the research itself must be robust, and the findings should be written clearly and for the right audience. After that, a little patience is also required.

9. Can you give an example of a project or piece of work that you have been most proud of?

A big part of my role is to analyse what works in improving educational outcomes for pupils in English schools. To do this, we frequently use randomised controlled trials or similar approaches to evaluate the impact of novel educational programmes that, for example, look to improve the maths or reading outcomes of pupils.

In my time at RAND Europe, we have evaluated several educational programmes in this way. I am particularly proud of this type of research as it is intellectually stimulating and has the power to positively impact the lives of many pupils across the country. For example, we found that an early years reading programme had a positive impact on children's language skills, and it has since been rolled out to over 6,000 schools across the country by the Department for Education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. How do you hope your career will progress?

As a passionate policy researcher, I hope to continue to develop my research and analysis skills further and utilise these skills to answer important social policy questions and, in doing so, improve the lives of people and communities. I also hope to take on more leadership responsibilities as my career progresses, mentoring colleagues and supporting them in their development.

There are a range of different organisational sectors that researchers and analysts operate in, including central government, not-for-profit research organisations, charities and think tanks, and universities.

Please see a filled example below.

LAWRENCE MORRIS – Q+A

1. **What is your job role and organisation?**

   Policy and Programme Manager, Cambridge Ahead

2. **What do you do in this job?**

   Working in policy you use findings from research and analysis to advise government, think tanks or businesses about best practice.

   In my case I work for Cambridge Ahead, which exists to support, contribute to, and influence local and national decision making to make Cambridge a great city. We organise research and gather evidence about things like transport, housing, city planning and education. We then use this research to highlight the opportunities and needs of the region.

   In my role I manage and oversee this programme of work. I also analyse these topics and think about how government policy or decision making at both the local and national level might be improved in order to ensure the city is as successful as possible in the future.

   Cambridge Ahead is a membership organisation, made up of many large employers in the region. So it is important to make sure I am working closely with them to understand their priorities and points of view as I go about my work.

3. **Why did you choose this career?**

   I have always been passionate about doing a job where I feel I am making a positive difference in relation to real issues that affect everyone's lives. As I went through school I found myself interested in politics and the big issues which governments have to address. Working in policy you have to understand and develop appropriate responses to some of the most complex questions that we face as a country and society.

   It's my job to think about how we help make housing more affordable in one of the least affordable cities in the country, how we ensure Cambridge continues to create jobs and opportunities for young people and how we make the right decisions to move toward Cambridge becoming a sustainable and net zero city in the future.

4. **What background education or training do you have?**

   I did A-Levels in English Literature , History and Politics – choosing these subjects based on what I would most interesting and enjoyable.

   I went to University and did a BSc in Government /Politics and later returned to University to study for an MSc in Public Policy.

5. **What has your career path been?**

   I left school in 2011 and went to University for 3 years. During my last year of University, I came across a management trainee graduate scheme run by the Local Government Association which I thought looked really interesting and aligned well with my degree. On the graduate scheme I joined Cambridgeshire County Council where I worked for around 3 years.

After working for few years, I decided to return to University to study for an MSc in Public Policy. Whilst I don't think this was essential for my chosen career path, I felt it greatly improved my knowledge and skill set and positioned me well when applying for jobs in the policy space.

I then worked for about 18 months in a role related to accelerating the delivery of affordable housing before moving to my current position at Cambridge Ahead.

6. **What does a typical day involve?**

A typical day might involve:
- Meeting with Cambridge Ahead member organisations, either 1 to 1 or in a group setting to discuss a project or policy area.
- Conducting desk research and analysis around a particular topic.
- Drafting a policy briefing or consultation response.
- Checking in with team members and other organisations we are working with to ensure that a project is progressing smoothly and to schedule.

7. **What is your work environment like?**

My job is office based. I work in a small immediate team of five people but with a wide network of individuals who are employees of Cambridge Ahead member organisations and other partners who we work regularly with.

My job allows for a good balance between time spent on my work, which I enjoy, and time spent outside of work with friends, family and playing sport which is my main hobby. There is a good amount of flexibility to my schedule without rigid start and finish times as long as I am delivering against the requirements of the job.

The working environment, size of the team and flexibility will vary notably across different policy roles depending on the organisation you are working for.

8. **Can you give an example of a project or piece of work that you have been most proud of?**

I am passionate about the importance of a city providing housing for residents of all ages and income groups. This is key to supporting individuals health and happiness and ensuring we create a cohesive and productive city.

I proud of the work we have done to demonstrate the housing affordability challenge which exists in Cambridge. Through research we have shown that almost half of households living in the Cambridge travel to work area on middle income earnings levels would struggle to live in the City itself. We've articulated the importance of housing growth keeping up with employment growth in the city region and providing a diversity of homes across different house types and tenures.

9. **What aspects of your job are most challenging?**

Working in a policy role can be rewarding but also frustrating at times. Policy change can take months or even years to occur and is rarely sudden and absolute but rather gradual and incremental. You have to enjoy the work you do, be resilient and understand that change doesn't always happen overnight.

10. **How do you hope your career will progress?**

As I progress in my Policy career, I hope that I will able to move into positions of increasing leadership – being the primary individual responsible for setting the policy direction of the organisation I am working for.

There are a range of different organisations sectors that you can work for in a policy role, from local and central government, think tanks, charities, membership organisations and the private sector.