



UNIVERSITY OF  
**BATH**

Institute for  
Policy  
Research



# Mid-career crisis or creativity? A decade of the University of Bath's Doctorate in Policy Research and Practice ([DPRP](#))

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# Abstract

[“How to get a PhD in a year without giving up the day job.”](#) This was the provocative title of a widely discussed blog posted in 2023 by Duncan Green, Senior Strategic Adviser at Oxfam.

This talk speaks to the implied demand for more flexible and policy relevant approaches to doctoral study, taking the first ten years of Bath’s DPRP as a case study.

# Issues

1. How best to extend doctoral study beyond training for academia to engaging with a wider range of careers?
2. How best to connect doctoral research more effectively to live problems of public policy and professional practice?
3. How feasible is it to do this through part-time mid-career doctoral study?
4. How to do this without compromising standards, and perception of this?
5. What innovation does this require in programme design, including periods of residency and overall duration of study?
6. Or is this all just too ambitious?

# Case study of the DPRP at Bath U.

PhD equivalent part-time professional doctorate

One of five prof doc programmes at the University

92 starters from 35 countries (nine yearly cohorts)

8 - early exits (with no qualification)

21 - ongoing in the 'taught stage'

12 - graduated with PGCert/Dip/Masters

41 - ongoing in the 'research stage'

9 - graduated with doctorates

# Programme structure

*Entry requirements*

Postgraduate qualification in a relevant field  
Three years of policy experience  
Selection – motivation, career plans, capacity to commit, potential to be supervised (but **not** a full research proposal, **nor** pre-committed lead supervisor)

*Taught stage (2-4 years)*

**Transformational Policy and Practice (yr1)**



**Policy Research Methods (yr1)**



**Optional policy units (yr 2/3)**

- Health
- Education
- Industrial Strategy
- Digitalisation
- International development
- Science and policy interactions
- Open 'reading paper'



*Research stage (2-4 years)*

Research skills training and thesis planning



**Research Thesis**

**Plus up to one year of suspension**

# Completed doctorates

**Seung-Jin Baek** (2020) The quest for inclusive sustainable development: economic growth, inequality and environmental interactions in the process of structural transformation of low-income countries (UN economist - 5 years to completion)

**Jeff Farrar** (2021) Incentives and disincentives to system-wide responses to public sector challenges in the UK (Chief Constable of Gwent Policy - 6).

**Sue Godt** (2022) Private global corporations and the SDGs: case studies of primary health and education provision in Kenya and Uganda (IDRC/aid manager - 7).

**Njahira Karanja** (2023) Values and technology in justice: an exploration of blockchain's transformative potential for case management in Kenya (UN lawyer - 8).

**Pensiri Ariyapruchya** (2023) When self-organization meets formalization: an institutional analysis of savings groups in Thailand (Government economist - 6)

**Margaret Satya Rose** (2023) Examining the normative-ethical orientation of modern public procurement governance systems (Practicing barrister - 7).

**Ahmed Aref** (2023) Family-focused social protection systems in the Gulf: is maternity being left behind? (Think tank researcher - 5).

**Ali Salman** (2024) Policy discovery through a complexity lens: case studies of economic reforms and policy practice in Malaysia and Pakistan (Think tank director - 7)

**Philippe Clerc** (2024) Breakthrough or buzzword? The uses and misuses of 'resilience' in the Syrian refugee response in Turkey (Oxfam/aid regional coordinator - 7)

# Conclusions?

1. How best to extend doctoral study beyond training for academia to engaging with a wider range of careers?
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