

BLAVATNIK SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Annual Report

2024–25





As we navigate this emerging world order, now more than ever, we need public leaders who can steer with agility and wisdom, cooperating where they can, and seizing new opportunities to advance the lives of their population. I am inspired every day watching our community doing this – whether as teachers, researchers, students, or alumni public leaders – doing their part for a world better led, better served and better governed.

Ngaire Woods

Dean, Blavatnik School of Government

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A message from the Dean

I write in a world wrestling with highly unconventional US foreign policy. Since 20 January 2025 President Trump's administration has upturned global security arrangements and astonished its traditional allies by siding with Russia and North Korea in votes in the United Nations and questioning decades-long alliances. In the world economy a slew of new US tariffs or threatened tariffs is disrupting patterns of trade and investment and creating enormous uncertainty for business and for governments.



At the Blavatnik School of Government we are responding with alacrity. We are harnessing our extraordinary community of scholars and practitioners whose expertise on issues from cybersecurity to climate change, economic policy to global security, and international trade to new applications of technology, is enabling us to marshal new thinking, and rapidly to pivot our research and teaching.

We are using our convening power to bring together new coalitions of countries, communities, and leaders from the private and public sectors, regardless of political, cultural and ideological divides, to find new ways to cooperate in the face of new challenges.

Inspiring us at every turn are our students – both future and current public leaders – with their passion for public service and their desire to learn from one another.

This is what makes the Blavatnik School a particularly important place in this moment of rapid change and deepening divisions.

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As public service becomes more arduous in many parts of the world, I am encouraged by the number of our alumni who are running for office or serving in public institutions and bringing a determination to ensure that their community's voices are heard and that decisions made by governments reflect the values and needs of the people they serve.

In this last period, Pádraig Rice (MPP 2014, Public Service Scholar) was successfully elected as a member of parliament for Cork

South Central in Ireland. Florian Zarnetta (MPP 2022) ran in the German federal elections, and Keir Mather (MPP 2020, Political Leadership Scholar) won a seat in the UK general election and was named on the Times Young Power List for 2024, which highlights the 25 most inspiring people aged 30 and under in the UK and Ireland.

In public service our alumni are leading in powerful ways. Our Executive Public Leaders Programme alumna, Soraya Hakuziyaremye, was named as Rwanda's first ever female Central Bank Governor. Saul Musker (MPP 2018, Rhodes Scholar) was named as one of 200 Young South Africans 2024 for his work in the Private Office of the President of South Africa. Dr Courtney Howard (MPP 2022) was named Chair of the Global Climate & Health Alliance, and Joseph Ssentongo (MPP 2015) was appointed CEO of the Global Innovation Fund.

I could fill the pages of this annual report with news from our alumni across the globe. We are so proud of their achievements. As I look across the offices of Presidents and Prime Ministers and senior leaders in government across the world, I see Blavatnik School alumni serving on every continent, from Brazil to Japan, from Australia to Poland, from South Africa to Kazakhstan, and Kenya to Canada. You can read more on our website and on our blog at www.bsg.ox.ac.uk.

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New faculty and fellows at the School are helping us to drive collaborations across governments, business leaders, and



academics, identifying innovative solutions to meet the challenges of the day. This year we welcomed former Executive Vice President of the EU Commission Margrethe Vestager as one of the School's inaugural World Leader Fellows, and former prime ministers Jacinda Ardern and Rishi Sunak as Distinguished Fellows and members of our World Leaders Circle (see page 16).

We were delighted to welcome Philippa Webb to the School as a Professor of Public International Law, following a career straddling both academia and legal practice at the United Nations Headquarters, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Her interests span the fields of international disputes resolution, international criminal law and international humanitarian law, with a particular expertise in state immunity. She brings to the School a brilliant academic record and inspiring teaching with legal practice that has real-world impact.

A new initiative at the School focuses on the need for safe and secure cyberspace to address rising ransomware and AI-driven cyberattacks. Led by Professor of Practice Ciaran Martin, former Chief Executive of the UK National Cyber Security Centre, and Dr Brianna Rosen, the Oxford Programme for Cyber and Technology Policy (OxCTP) is focused on the intersection of AI and cybersecurity. Over the next two years the programme will explore how governments can collaborate with frontier AI organisations to protect advanced AI systems from cyber theft. The programme launched at an event featuring Richard Horne, CEO of the UK's National Cyber Security Centre.

On another research frontier, Professor Alan Stein is bringing together a collaboration to address the lack of rigorous research and policy on the effects of climate change on early childhood health and development, especially in the world's poorest countries.

To support this work the School has been awarded £2.5 million by the Wellcome Climate Impact Awards.

Professor Tom Simpson has been appointed as the second holder of the Alfred Landecker Professorship of Values and Public Policy, following the inaugural holder of the Chair Professor Jo Wolff. A political philosopher and ethicist, Tom has worked on the nature of freedom and extensively on trust, as well as pursuing projects in the ethics of war, themes which he will continue to focus on in coming years. He has been a core member of the School's faculty for some years, developing the Military Leadership and Judgment Programme, contributing extensively to executive education programmes on integrity in public life, and delivering award-winning teaching on the School's flagship degree programme, the MPP, as well as acting as Co-Director of the MPP for two years. Tom will take up the Alfred Landecker Chair later this year.

Joining us as a Visiting Professor of Practice, acclaimed barrister and human rights advocate, Amal Clooney, brings extensive global expertise and experience to the School community. She will be working with Professor Philippa Webb on technology and access to justice.

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As we navigate this emerging world order, now more than ever, we need public leaders who can steer with agility and wisdom, cooperating where they can, and seizing new opportunities to advance the lives of their population. I am inspired every day watching our community doing this – whether as teachers, researchers, students, or alumni public leaders – doing their part for a world better led, better served and better governed.

Ngaire Woods



156

Students

63

Countries

87%

Funded

MPP overview

Our three graduate programmes – the Master of Public Policy (MPP), the MSc in Public Policy Research, and the DPhil in Public Policy (PhD) – have developed a global reputation for attracting the very best, most inspiring citizens into public service.

In September we welcomed the MPP Class of 2024 – a record-setting year with 156 students from 63 different countries, 123 of whom are on full scholarships. Our cohort includes Uganda's leading climate activist; a legislator in the Zimbabwean Parliament who was the youngest MP at age 25; the face of France's environmental movement; the founder of 'Teach Us Consent', a huge campaign that mandated sexual consent education in Australia; a Pulitzer Prize winner from Myanmar; an award-winning tech entrepreneur who founded

a revolutionary emergency notification app that has aided millions of Afghans; as well as civil servants, doctors, engineers, lawyers, NGO founders, and more.

- Almost nine in ten students of the class of 2024 are receiving some funding to support their participation in the programme.
- 79% of students are receiving full scholarships and 8% are receiving partial funding.

Building a community

In 2024 we introduced an exciting new innovation to the programme: optional 'clusters' focused on sustainability, social policy, digital technology, and global security. These clusters connect generalist knowledge to specific issues, helping students apply the interdisciplinary insights gained from each core area to real-world topics they care about. The clusters meet monthly and feature a mix of guest speakers, career-focused sessions, smaller discussions, and field trips.

The clusters are building a collaborative community within the School, bringing together MPP students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other stakeholders around shared substantive interests.

Policy Report

The Policy Report (formerly known as the 'Summer Project') has been an integral part of the MPP since we welcomed our first students in 2012. On the course, students study how policy is made, implemented and evaluated, and then go beyond theory to practical application on a summer placement at a policy-focused organisation where they can apply what they have learned through the year to real-life challenges. The students then write a Policy Report reflecting their experience and policy interests.

This year's summer placements held a mirror up to the global nature of the MPP and the diversity of policy interests among the class, with our students spread over 31 different countries across 108 unique host organisations. Placements took place in:

- The United States Department of Agriculture Office of Tribal Relations, supporting the Director on sustainable economic development, food sovereignty initiatives and federal government-to-tribal diplomacy and relations.
- The Green Climate Fund in Songdo, South Korea, working in the Office of the Executive

Director with the Climate and Knowledge Management teams, supporting and learning about the fund's work to assist countries in Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Asia-Pacific to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- The Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs of the OECD in Paris, carrying out research on the global debt market and corporate governance in Asia.
- The UNHCR Multi Country Regional Office, supporting the Caribbean Protection Unit (CPU) and researching policy issues involving protection at sea.

We are grateful to the many organisations and alumni who have so kindly hosted our students for their placements.



Our partnership with the Blavatnik School could not have been more timely, and impactful. Our work bridging science and policy across the globe is always open to brilliant young scholars, particularly those with interest in sustainable development, climate action, and matters of the environment. We hope to continue hosting students to support our search of research-driven solutions to complex global challenges.

Stockholm Environment Institute

DPhil and MSc

Seven new DPhil students and six new MSc students joined us this year. Our new DPhils are working on issues ranging from labour and behavioural economics in developing countries, to performance incentives and productivity in public services, to European investments in western Africa, to motivating policymakers working on humanitarian aid issues.

7

New DPhil students

6

New MSc students



Thank you to all those who have hosted our students for their Policy Report



"We are deeply grateful for our partnership with the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University, which has been invaluable in advancing our shared mission to transform higher education. By hosting their talented graduate students, we benefit from fresh perspectives and innovative thinking while offering them real-world experience in global education policy. This collaboration not only strengthens our work but also fosters the development of future leaders in the field. We look forward to continuing this impactful partnership in the years to come."

UNESCO Institute for Higher Education

"It is truly inspiring to see academic institutions begin to nurture students in master's programmes with hands-on experience, connecting classroom discussions to real-life cases and giving them exposure to decision-makers and other stakeholders. This approach will undoubtedly empower students to develop new soft skills and leadership abilities essential for their future work. Partnering with organisations, alongside strong mentorship from within the organisation itself, is key to shaping future leaders!"

UK-Med



"Collaboration with the Blavatnik School made available to us this intelligent, committed and dynamic student who actively participated in our work, making a unique and valuable contribution to it. In addition to her written inputs and her analytical research, she coordinated and delivered a well-received technical presentation at a successful online conference on Aid Effectiveness. Participants included senior political and academic figures from the Caribbean and Africa."

iDERA



"We had the pleasure of hosting a student from the Blavatnik School at the Economic Research Forum in Cairo, and the experience exceeded our expectations. She brought a fresh perspective and a strong analytical skill set that greatly contributed to our ongoing research initiatives. Her ability to engage with complex economic topics and collaborate effectively with our team showcased the high caliber of talent fostered by the Blavatnik School. This partnership not only enriched our work but also highlighted the value of engaging with MPP students who are eager to make a difference. We wholeheartedly recommend this programme to prospective host organisations looking to enhance their projects with motivated and skilled interns."

Economic Research Forum

SPOTLIGHT

Dr Flavia Galvani, co-director of the MPP



Dr Flavia Galvani was appointed as Co-Director of the MPP in 2024, working alongside Professor Tom Hale.

A Departmental Lecturer in Public Policy at the School, Flavia's research and advisory work focuses on social policy.

"My first internship was at the Ministry of Justice in Brazil. There I experienced two things that really shaped my professional interests: I saw how complex government actions were and how difficult it was to get things done; but I also saw the amazing impact when things go right. So I knew then I wanted somehow to be involved in public service."



Public policy is such a complex and dynamic field. It requires adaptability, a willingness to engage with different perspectives, and work with others.

What sets the MPP programme at the Blavatnik School apart from others?

"The big difference is that we are mission-led. And a guiding principle is the way our admissions team curate the cohort with our core values; of course, we require academic excellence, but these values are an equally important part that shape the type of people who come here, why they want to come here, and what they want to get from the MPP. Bringing open, curious, service-driven people together, sparking off each other with this vocation."

If there was one thing you would like every student to leave the MPP with, what would it be?

"Having the practical tools to be able to analyse policy and to make decisions in difficult and changing contexts, and with all the critical thinking that is embedded within everything we do. And feeling re-energised by the experience of the MPP, reigniting their sense of purpose and keeping the fire going with new ideas."

How does the MPP adapt to changes in the public policy landscape, such as new technologies or global shifts in policy?

"We have an amazing faculty at the forefront of their fields and shaping the debates in these areas. Recently, we were joined by Professors Janina Dill, Philippa Webb, and Yeling Tan who are global thought leaders in global security, international law, and China. Our students also have access to an incredibly selective array of guest speakers who come to the School to share their experiences and insights in a very open and intimate way."

"But the core modules that we offer are quite foundational in public policy - political science, philosophy, economics, law and evidence - and those are the building blocks for analytical thinking. The policy areas that you can analyse and explore come on top of that. We provide the students with the opportunities to reflect on their own views and contexts."

What would you say to someone thinking of applying to the School?

"I would ask them: are you open to being transformed? The MPP is an intense, immersive journey that will challenge and shape you in ways you may not expect. To make the most of it, you should come prepared to work hard and bring with you a deep curiosity and genuine enthusiasm, ready to learn about anything and from everyone."



Shaping policy, advancing global debate

Our faculty continue to advise government and contribute to public debate across the board.

The new UK Government made several Blavatnik School appointments since 2024's general election. **Rachel Kyte** is the new UK Special Representative for Climate, and **Aaron Maniam** was appointed to an advisory panel to shape the UK Government's new digital centre of government.

Tom Hale was in New York for UNGA week, where he moderated a roundtable on what it would mean to

implement the Declaration on Future Generations to be adopted at the Summit of the Future. Tom then led Oxford's delegation to Baku for COP29. Tom and colleagues also launched the Climate Policy Monitor – an open access tool to assess and compare the ambition, stringency, and comprehensiveness of net zero regulations (see page 28). The study – which contributed insights to the UN Taskforce on Net Zero Policy report –

shows that regulations have surged worldwide but the implementation gap remains.

Tom has been pivotal in the Net Zero Stocktake 2024, revealing crucial gaps in emission reduction commitments across cities, companies, and regions. His analysis provides essential guidance for global stakeholders grappling with the complexities of the climate crisis.

Emily Jones hosted Ambassador Katherine Tai, former United States Trade Representative, for a special roundtable, and organised for the UK Parliamentary Committee on Trade to hold their roadshow at the School. Emily was invited to join UK Minister of State for Trade Policy Douglas Alexander to brainstorm on the government's forthcoming trade strategy.

Further afield, **Anna Petherick** and the Lemann Foundation Programme team presented their new report on leveraging equity and co-ordination in G20 health systems to Brazil's National Council of Health Secretaries.

Philippa Webb gave evidence to the UK Environmental Audit Committee, who are undertaking an inquiry on governing the marine environment, on the effectiveness of international treaties, international court advisory opinions and non-legally binding instruments in protecting the marine environment.

Ciaran Martin chaired a panel at the Munich Cyber Security Conference on the changing face of cyber security, while Ngaire Woods moderated a panel on the main stage of the Conference on safeguarding economic ties amidst rising protectionism.

Ngaire Woods chaired a UK Global Impact Review for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO), proposing the changes needed in the FCDO to better act as the UK's international delivery arm, and continued her bi-monthly

Project Syndicate column on the changing global order.

Pressing policy issues

Our faculty continue to work on solutions to pressing global policy issues, publishing in top academic journals, including *Science and Nature*, *The Lancet Global Health*, *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, *Public Management Review*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Review of Economic Studies*.

Noam Angrist and **Stefan Dercon** co-authored a major paper in *Nature Human Behaviour*, investigating policy failures in education systems across 50 countries. **Emily Jones** published in *World Trade Review*, exploring the challenges facing global trade governance in the wake of shifting geopolitical dynamics. And **Janina Dill's** paper in the *American Journal of International Law* argues the international community must refocus on restraining the Gaza war in the present, not just debating whether the thresholds for war crimes have been met.

Media coverage

On the media front, **Sir Paul Collier** was on *The Economist* podcast to discuss why progress in international development between 2000 and 2015 has stalled, and talked about his career and music choices on BBC Radio 4's *Private Passions*. **Robert Trager** appeared on Gavin Esler's podcast 'This is Not a Drill' to discuss the benefits and risks of AI.

Tom Hale wrote for *Project Syndicate* and *New Scientist* about the United Nations Summit of the Future. He also talked to the *New York Times* about the Net Zero Tracker update, and to *La Tercera* about the importance of long-term thinking in addressing global challenges like climate change.

Max Roser made the case for setting a second, higher poverty line in the *New York Times*.

Brianna Rosen wrote for *Just Security* on the escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, driven by Iran's growing regional influence and Israel's military actions against Iranian targets.

Following high profile ICC arrest warrants, **Janina Dill** was highly sought after for her expertise, providing insights to *Die Zeit*, *The Washington Post*, the BBC, CNN, and ABC, amongst others, and wrote for *Foreign Affairs* on the Russia-Ukraine war. Janina was quoted in *Middle East Eye*,

L'Orient Le Jour and *DW News* on the legal aspects of Hezbollah attacks in Lebanon, and in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Reuters* about President Trump's plans for the forced displacement of Gazans.

Karthik Ramanna wrote for *ProMarket* about America's advantage in clean production, and **Peter Kemp** was interviewed for *Panorama* about the condition of rental properties in the UK. **Pepper Culpepper** spoke to the *Daily Telegraph* about the US administration's crackdown on the legal profession.

Ciaran Martin was the go-to commentator across numerous media outlets discussing cyberattacks, and **Stefan Dercon** spoke to the *Independent* and the *Financial Times* on the future of aid. **James Conran** was quoted in *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* about the German elections.



Government Outcomes Lab: driving public service innovation

At the Government Outcomes Lab (GO Lab), we're driven by one big question: how can governments, non-profits and private organisations work together more effectively to improve people's lives? From the corridors of Whitehall to grassroots initiatives in India, our international team of researchers, policy specialists and data experts are helping to reimagine how public services are delivered, turning evidence into action.

This year, we marked a significant milestone with the publication of *The Evolution of Social Outcomes Partnerships in the UK*, which reflects on fifteen years of practice since the launch of the world's first social impact bond at Peterborough prison. The report brings together perspectives from 25 experts across sectors and was launched at our flagship Social Outcomes Conference (SOC24), attended by 200 people in person and 800 online. Since then, it has been downloaded more than 1,400 times and distributed globally. Former UK Minister for Civil Society Nick Hurd helped us mark the moment by sharing his reflections on the importance of ambitious, cross-sector partnerships.

Our conference also featured a closing keynote from Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, who emphasised the need for more inclusive and community-driven public service reform. "English devolution has provided a bridgehead, but we're not so arrogant as to think we have all the answers," he said. His remarks highlighted the importance of collaboration in tackling shared challenges and building a fairer society.

It's not just the UK where our work is having an impact. We've hosted international workshops and exchanges with governments from Denmark, Canada, and Singapore, and contributed to global platforms including high-level discussions with the UBS Optimus Foundation and a UNESCO

and UEFA workshop on social impact investment in sport. These conversations have helped bring together global foundations, philanthropies, social investors and governments to explore more effective, outcomes-based approaches to tackling social and environmental challenges. On the sidelines of the Skoll World Forum 2025, we convened two events: the first, Re-imagining Collective Social Innovation in a Fragmented World, was co-hosted with the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and brought together over 80 participants; the second, a roundtable with the ShikshaLokam Foundation, marked the launch of our partnership on research into how governments can enable grassroots social movements. This work is helping consolidate learning on collective impact in education and informing how different sectors can work together to drive systemic school improvement.

We also reached an important milestone in our data work. Our INDIGO Impact Bond Dataset, now featuring 300 projects, has become the world's largest open-access dataset on impact bonds. "This is truly a product from the community of practice, to the community of practice," says our Senior Data Steward, Juliana Outes Velarde. Built through collaboration with practitioners globally, INDIGO is helping decision-makers move beyond isolated examples and towards collective learning.





Our commitment to learning with others continues to shape much of our work. One of the ways we're putting this into practice is through our global research initiative on early childhood care and education, supported by UNICEF's Education Outcomes Fund. This initiative brings together a wide network of researchers, policymakers and practitioners to explore how outcomes-based finance can improve access to and the quality of early education.

In the UK we've co-produced research with individuals who have experienced homelessness in Kirklees, examined the impact of social care outsourcing through a Nuffield Foundation-funded study, and continued our work with the Treasury on evaluating labour market interventions. Through our policy briefings we're helping civil servants think differently about how government can be more joined-up, long-term and preventative.

We're also deepening our understanding of how public services can be better coordinated through more relational, multilateral partnerships. Our research into relational contracting explores how more flexible and collaborative models might help overcome challenges in complex policy areas ranging from defence procurement to AI adoption. As a result of our Fellows of Practice programme, we've partnered with Public Digital, a transformation consultancy, to further examine how innovative contracting approaches can support better outcomes for citizens.

Whether supporting a local authority to experiment with new approaches, building global datasets, or convening conversations across sectors, GO Lab's work remains grounded in the belief that collaboration, transparency and practical learning are key to improving how public services are delivered. We look forward to continuing this work in the year ahead.



We're helping civil servants think differently about how government can be more joined-up, long-term and preventative.



Law cannot make up for the lack of political and moral courage of leaders who refuse to apply it.

Global security

Earlier this year Professor Janina Dill, the Dame Louise Richardson Chair in Global Security, gave her inaugural lecture highlighting the urgency of and challenges to securing the globe by means of law.

As armed conflicts across the world multiply and escalate, international law seems as relevant as it seems ineffective in addressing these challenges. In the lecture, Janina asked, can international law de-escalate conflicts and protect civilians?

“It is almost impossible to fathom the soul-crushing inhumanity of life in a war zone. The non-contingent reality of war is incompatible with the minimally flourishing dignified human life, and yet to understand this staggering catastrophe as a crisis of global security and to articulate political solutions, we must adjust the concept of security that prevails in scholarship and government.

“Law is our only hope for global security, conceived as I propose it should be. It is the only means through which to pursue global security, yet international law, particularly the rules tasked with preventing and constraining armed conflict, face their own crisis, a crisis that makes international law less able to discharge its urgent task, less functional as a means to pursue global security. The task of strengthening international law then is an urgent security concern, one I will suggest we all have a role to play in addressing.”

Janina, who is also Co-Director of the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict (ELAC), undertakes research concerning the role of law and morality in

international relations, specifically in war. In one strand of research, she develops legal and philosophical theories about how international law can be an instrument of morality in war, albeit an imperfect one. Another research agenda concerns the attitudes of conflict-affected populations.

At the School, Janina teaches modules on the moral and legal permissibility of violence, on global security and on international politics more generally.

“When research and public engagement leave me hopeless about the ability of law to appropriately engage leaders in consistency that do their utmost not to see what is before them, I retain the joy of teaching students who will inhabit these processes in the future and who will hopefully bring the virtue, character and courage to redeem the hope that law provides yet for global security.”

Janina is also a regular contributor to worldwide media on issues concerning the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza and other matters of international law where it relates to global security.

Scholarships

“The scholarship helped me to continue to create better communities in my country, Myanmar. Thanks for giving me the best chance to study at Oxford University.”

Min Min (MPP 2022, Burma Scholarship)

Better leadership and governance are aspirations of every community, country, and region of the world.

It requires attracting the most brilliant individuals into public service, offering them an education from leading academics that is inspiring and offers a global focus, which translates into better practice and more informed government.

We work hard to ensure that finances are never a barrier to studying with us here in Oxford. Individuals, organisations and foundations have made vital contributions to our vision by providing scholarships or bursaries for our students, enabling the next generation of public sector leaders to fulfil their potential.

By funding academic posts and research, and by supporting partnerships, our professors and researchers, many of them leaders in their fields, are examining how to transform education systems, combat corruption, create successful public-private partnerships, diversify economies, and more.

We are grateful too to our growing community of senior global practitioners including alumni who generously give their time as professional mentors to our MPP students or as policy advisors to our MSc students, helping to steer the next generation of public leaders with integrity at the heart of all they do.

To all of those who give their time, wisdom and funding to support our vision, **THANK YOU.**

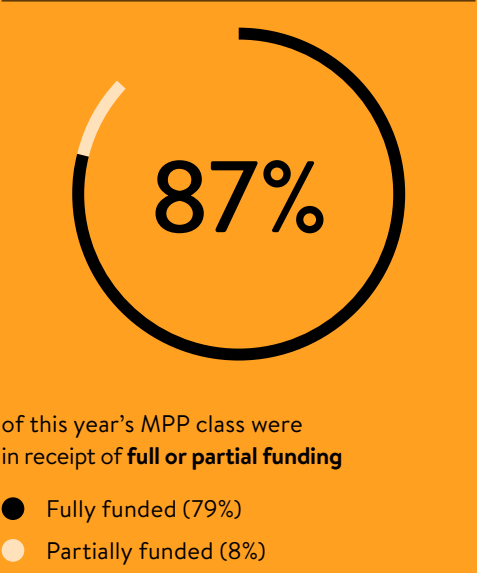
Scholarships List

- Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation (AIG) Scholarship
- Africa-Oxford Initiative Graduate Scholarship
- Beit-Blavatnik-Wadham Scholarship
- Black Academic Futures Scholarship
- Blavatnik School of Government Alumni MPP Scholarship
- Berrow Foundation (Lincoln College)
- Brasenose-Blavatnik- Marshall Scholarship
- Chevening Scholarship
- Chevening/Anglo American Joint Scholarship
- Clarendon
- Commonwealth Shared Scholarship
- Cyril Shroff Scholarship
- Duke of Cambridge Scholarship
- Eisenhower Global Scholarship
- FirstRand Scholarship
- Governor Phillip Scholarship
- Hill Foundation Scholarship
- Jaime and Raquel Gilinski Scholarship
- Jardine-Exeter Scholarship
- Jardine-Oxford Scholarship
- Jepson Scholarship
- Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship
- Jusoor and Saïd Foundation Scholarship
- Khazanah-Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Merdeka Scholarship
- Kwok Scholarship
- Lemann Foundation Fellowship
- Lord Browne Scholarship in Public Service
- Luksic Scholarship for Public Service
- Mo Ibrahim Scholarship
- Oxford-CREAT Group Scholarship
- Oxford Lebanon Master of Public Policy Graduate Scholarship
- Oxford MESCYT Scholarship
- Oxford-Oak Zimbabwe Graduate

Scholarship

- Oxford-Pershing Square Scholarship
- Oxford-Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Graduate Scholarship
- Oxford Thai Foundation Graduate Scholarship
- Oxford-University College Burma Graduate Scholarship
- Poler Family Oxford Graduate Scholarship
- Policy Leadership Scholarship
- Political Leadership Scholarship
- Public Service Scholarship
- Oxford-Reuben Graduate Scholarship
- Refugee Academic Futures Scholarship
- Rhodes Scholarship
- Ukraine Scholarship
- University College Burma Scholarship
- Vicky Noon Educational Foundation Oxford Scholarship
- Weidenfeld-Hoffmann Scholarship

And a special thank you to our founding donor, Sir Leonard Blavatnik



Connecting global leaders with the next generation of change-makers

The **Blavatnik World Leaders Fellowship**, a new initiative from the School, is for global leaders who are transitioning from steering their countries or organisations to the next stage of their public leadership journey. It offers time and space to develop thinking on how their experiences can positively influence global policy, politics and governments.



Bringing together a global network of leaders with such rich experience and insight will strengthen our mission to foster a world that is better led, better served, and better governed.

Ngaire Woods

Over the course of a year, the Blavatnik World Leaders Fellow will mentor and engage with students and alumni, convene other global leaders and explore innovative approaches to government.

Margrethe Vestager, former Executive Vice President of the European Commission, joined the School this year as one of our inaugural World Leaders Fellows.

We spoke to Margrethe about her move out of high public office, following a distinguished career in domestic and European politics.

“Coming here to the School seems a very good way to transition out of something; a constructive process in which you can think about what to do next and restart the learning and reflection processes at a different level.

“I like interacting with young people, to see if what I have learnt through the years can be relevant for them. What gets me out of bed in the morning is to see if I can help other people have more opportunities in their lives – there are no guarantees in life on what you will accomplish. But the least you can do in society is to enable people, enable agency.”

Can you describe any key takeaways from your time so far at the School?

“If you look at the students here, you can be hopeful about the world. When you come into this building, you sense a culture of people listening to one another – not necessarily agreeing but listening to one another and seeing each other as a resource for their own learning. That I find very inspiring.

“This is a space where you can speak your mind, and some may disagree with you, but they will do it in a way that is not demeaning. This is not

a school where students learn to be more technocratic, it is a school where you learn to be more engaged and how to enable change.”

What advice would you give to the young leaders here about the kind of challenges that they might face in their public service careers?

“Use the trusted network that you get here in the School for advice; your peers will speak their minds, not to undermine you but to qualify what you are doing. And choose your battles – never threaten to leave a discussion or a negotiation, as someone might actually take you up on it, and then you have no place at the table. If you have to make a threat (and that is never a given), also threaten to stay.”

Who or what has been your biggest influence as a leader?

“What [former US Secretary of State] Madeleine Albright did during the Balkan wars was very impressive. She called every European leader every week to knock heads together, a continuous personal engagement. She was so calm and grounded. Madeleine engaged where she didn’t have to.”

World Leaders Circle

We were delighted to welcome former Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Rt Hon Dame Jacinda Ardern, former UK Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, and former Colombian President Iván Duque to the School as members of the Blavatnik School **World Leaders Circle** and Distinguished Fellows.

The World Leaders Circle is a global network of former heads of government, a forum to exchange ideas and foster international collaboration among leaders. As the Blavatnik School advances its research and teaching on critical topics, from digital transformation and climate change to global security, this high-level network will enhance efforts to promote more effective governments worldwide.

Transformational Leadership Fellows

Each year we welcome distinguished individuals from the public, private or not-for-profit sectors to take up to one year out, part-time, to engage



with the latest academic thinking, broaden their perspectives, and develop a working proposal for the next stage of their impact on the world.

This year's Transformational Leadership Fellows (TLFs) include Oxford alum and special adviser to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud; economist, best-selling

author and the Founding CEO of Guepard Group, Abdelmalek Alaoui; Syed Haizam, the Managing Partner of The Hive Southeast Asia; His Highness Tengku Amir Shah Ibni Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, the current Raja Muda (Crown Prince) of the Malaysian state of Selangor; and chair of TheCityUK and former CEO of Fidelity International, Dame Anne Richards DBE.



Left: Rishi Sunak
Top: Jacinda Ardern
Bottom: Iván Duque



The World Leaders Circle is a global network of former heads of government, a forum to exchange ideas and foster international collaboration among leaders.

Building excellence, connecting public leaders

Public leaders face increasingly complex challenges — from global crises and policy reforms to public trust and innovation. Our executive programmes help leaders sharpen their strategic thinking, strengthen decision-making skills, and better lead through uncertainty and change.

This isn't just a step forward in your career — our programmes are a leap into a global network of trailblazers, decision-makers, and changemakers. With a reputation for academic excellence, the School blends deep theoretical insight and hands-on, real-world application. It's where bold ideas meet actionable strategy.

We offer a gateway into a legacy of global leadership. Through close engagement with senior policymakers, government officials, and a richly diverse international cohort, participants gain not just knowledge, but lasting connections, fresh perspectives, and the momentum to shape the future of governance worldwide.

Over the past academic year we have welcomed hundreds of public leaders from across the globe to Oxford, starting with our **Military Leadership and Judgment Programme**, which develops ethical awareness and sensitivity to the challenges of war.

In Rome we helped the **United Nations International Computing Centre** think through their governance, and welcomed 34 Directors from the UK Civil Service to Oxford for our **UK Directors Leadership Programme**. This year 200 new online learners from the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office started our **Economics for Foreign Policy Online Course**, joining the 1000+ who have already completed the course.



Our executive course on **Managing Mining, Oil, and Gas for National Development** saw 53 participants from 17 different countries.

53

Participants

17

Different countries

“

EPLP is masterfully crafted for an immersive, highest quality learning experience specifically around topics related to leadership in the public sector.

Dejan Jakovljevic



200

New online learners

1000+

Completed the
Economics for Foreign
Policy online course

Whether you're trying to reform systems, launch new initiatives, or navigate political landscapes, our **Executive Public Leaders Programme** equips senior leaders of public organisations with the practical tools and strategies to drive change that sticks.

In July, 13 leaders arrived in Oxford to step out of their usual environment into a space of high-level reflection and learning. This intense, two-week programme is transformative, challenging assumptions, exploring new frameworks, while learning from world-renowned scholars and leading practitioners, and building life-long connections with like-minded peers.

“The EPLP is a must-attend for any senior public sector leader who wishes to see the impact of their leadership outlive their time in office. How I wish I attended this much earlier in my career. I would have avoided a lot of the pitfalls in decision-making and team building mechanisms.”

Thomas Munthali, Director General, Malawi National Planning Commission

“The programme exceeded my expectations and I highly recommend it.

“EPLP is masterfully crafted for an immersive, highest quality learning experience specifically around topics related to leadership in the public sector.

“The high-paced programme covered key leadership topics for excelling in public sector settings, and a unique learning experience including peer learning and real world situational scenarios.”

Dejan Jakovljevic, CIO and Director, Digitalization and Informatics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

~

Last April, 25 senior civil servants from all parts of the globe – including Brazil, Ghana, Kosovo, Brussels, UK and Armenia – attended our week-long **Rising Public Leaders Programme** in order to gain the essential skills and knowledge to take on a top leadership role.

The diverse environment allowed participants to engage with like-minded peers from across the world, enabling them to exchange challenges and solutions, while gaining new perspectives on pressing issues within the public service.

“The Rising Public Leaders programme is much more than a skill enhancement opportunity; it is a purpose-built training designed to foster an extremely diverse environment and build unlikely coalitions among participants. The programme has provided me with a community I can continually turn to and has given me a comprehensive approach to leadership in public service.”

Breno Gouvêa, Innovation Manager, Public Ministry at Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil.

“I am not sure words are enough to describe the level of positive impact the Rising Public Leaders Programme has had on me as a person and as a leader.

“This experience has taught me deep reflection as a leader to embrace diversity as it breeds ideas that create opportunity. I have learned the power of setting the tone for my team to thrive and that compromise in negotiation is sometimes a winner; the ability to create institutions that respect cultures and are attuned to emotional responses, finding that in delivering effective narratives, nobody is better without preparation.

“I have become most certainly better equipped to rise as a leader in any given capacity. I will never forget the beautiful, magical memories of Oxford.”

Kudirat Shuaibu, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Environment in Kebbi State, Nigeria

~

Our **Leading Cross-Sector Partnerships** programme kicked off in 2024 to equip public leaders with strategic insights and practical tools to navigate the intricacies of partnership management. Blending theory with real-world applications, participants delved into innovative learning, gaining solutions to the challenges presented by short-term approaches in partnership management.

“A course that combined practicalities with vision, building concrete skills and strategies while also challenging established modes of operation and remaining focused on a shared belief that we can form partnerships more effectively to deliver better outcomes.”

Lauren Bruce, Director, Delivering in Scotland, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, UK Government

~

Our **Public Corruption Turnarounds** programme successfully concluded after an intensive three days in Oxford in early May. The programme brought together public leaders and managers from countries such as Zambia, Lebanon, Colombia and Canada, all united by a common goal: to eradicate endemic corruption and foster cultures of integrity.

“The programme breaks the stereotype of addressing corruption. It helps you look at how to build cultures for long-term change rather than developing rules and paint a veneer of success. I highly recommend it to public officials who are reformists and ready to turn around their respective institutions.”

Rueben Lifuka, Zambia Country Lead, Chandler Foundation Zambia

SPOTLIGHT

AIG Public Leaders Programme

The **AIG Public Leaders Programme** is a collaboration between the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation, a public-sector-focused philanthropic organisation dedicated to public service delivery, and the Blavatnik School. Through blended classes, held both online and in Abuja, Nigeria, the programme offers high-potential African public servants the opportunity to strengthen the skills they need to build cultures of excellence, effectiveness and integrity.

The programme focuses on five main themes:

- Governing in times of challenge and change
- Harnessing technology
- Integrity in public life
- Negotiating in the public interest
- Strengthening public organisations

The programme requires participants to work individually on a capstone project, using what they have learned on the programme to develop or advance an initiative or innovation in their department or ministry.

The impact of these capstone projects has been astonishing, resulting in real impact to people’s lives. Here are just a few:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Leveraging mobile technology to improve mental health service access | • Introducing computer-based training tools to empower staff to use digital tools securely and responsibly |
| • Digital solutions for blood transfusion services | |
| • AI-powered chatbots to transform knowledge management in an agency for maritime safety | |

We welcome enquiries from other countries who would like to partner with us.



15

Executive programmes

1125

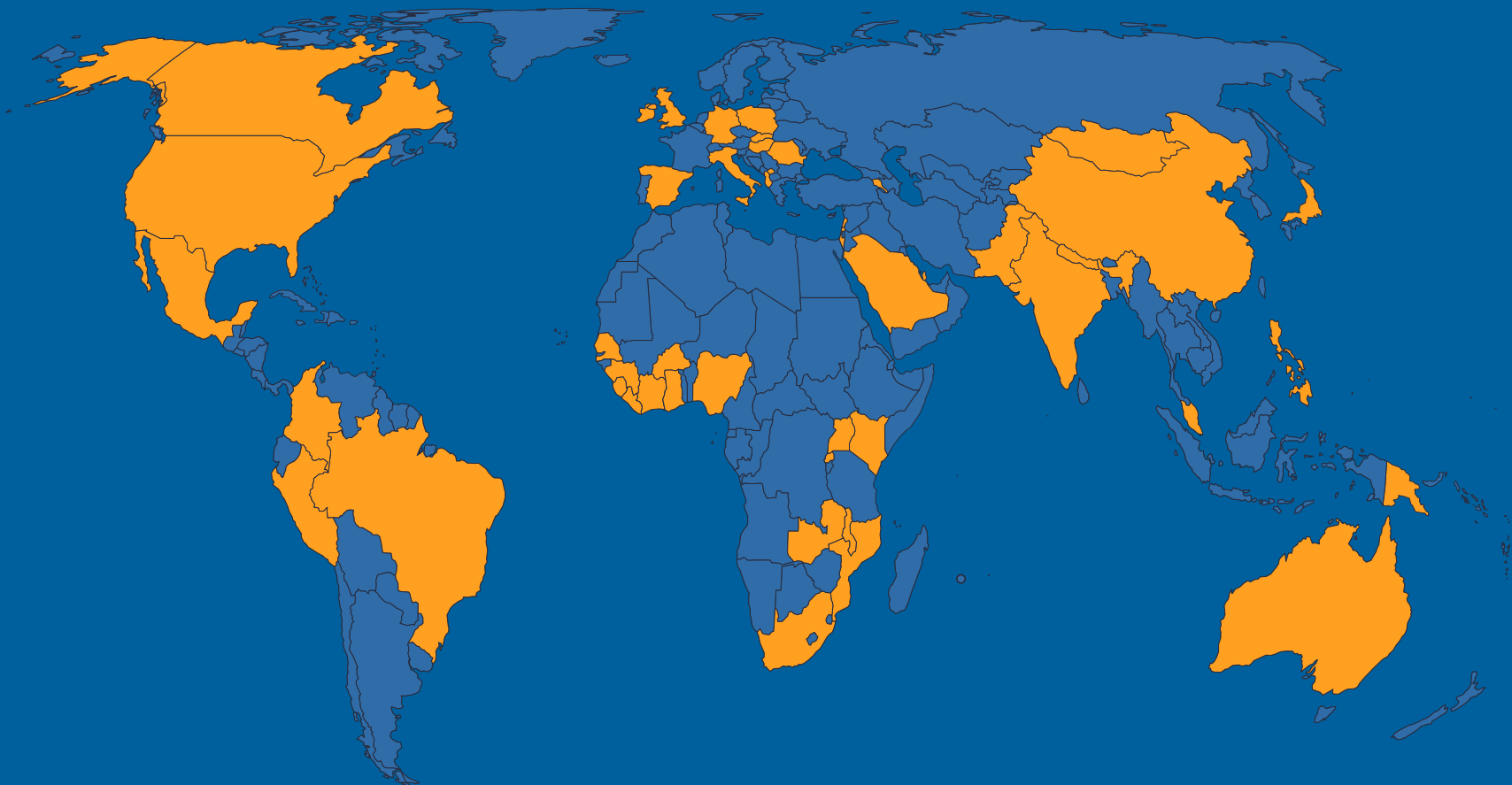
Attendees

47

Nationalities

Nationalities on our executive programmes:

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|-------------|----|------------------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Albania | 13 | India | 25 | Mexico | 36 | Romania |
| 2 | Australia | 14 | Ireland | 26 | Mongolia | 37 | Rwanda |
| 3 | Armenia | 15 | Israel | 27 | Mozambique | 38 | Saudi Arabia |
| 4 | Brazil | 16 | Italy | 28 | Nepal | 39 | Senegal |
| 5 | Burkina Faso | 17 | Ivory Coast | 29 | Nigeria | 40 | Sierra Leone |
| 6 | Canada | 18 | Japan | 30 | Pakistan | 41 | Slovakia |
| 7 | China | 19 | Kenya | 31 | Papua New Guinea | 42 | South Africa |
| 8 | Colombia | 20 | Kosovo | 32 | Peru | 43 | Spain |
| 9 | Germany | 21 | Lebanon | 33 | Philippines | 44 | Uganda |
| 10 | Ghana | 22 | Liberia | 34 | Poland | 45 | UK |
| 11 | Guinea | 23 | Malawi | 35 | Qatar | 46 | USA |
| 12 | Hungary | 24 | Malaysia | | | 47 | Zambia |



A growing global community

When you join the School – whether as an MPP, MSc or DPhil student, or as a participant in one of our executive programmes, you’re not just investing in your own development, you’re becoming part of a thriving, ever-expanding and lifelong community of over 2,000 public leaders from around the world working to improve public leadership and better serve societies.



“The friends and colleagues you make at the Blavatnik School open up the

world to you. Even years later, we all are strong friends, keeping in touch, chatting about problems and visiting each other’s countries. Of the many great things about an MPP, this is the most enduring and valuable.”

David Barda (MPP 2015)



“The stronger the network you have, the better you are at your job. It’s having

people you can turn to and discuss problems. It makes you more confident. I’m so grateful that the Blavatnik School has given me both lifelong friends and a fantastic professional community.”

Lama Khaiyat (MPP 2016)

Our growing alumni network in over 100 countries includes ministers, policymakers, civil servants, social innovators, and changemakers on the front lines of public leadership tackling some of the world’s most pressing challenges.

And what makes this community truly powerful is the ongoing connection and collaboration it enables long after the degree or executive programme ends. Alumni stay connected, sharing insights, exchanging best practices, and supporting each other in times of crisis and change. Whether you’re looking for advice on a tough policy decision - restructuring sovereign debt, responding to disinformation during an election, negotiating a trade agreement, seeking a partner for a cross-border initiative, or simply a fresh perspective - our alumni network is a trusted source of inspiration and support.

Effective leaders who act with integrity and compassion

Our alumni are policymakers who are not just skilled across a range of professional competencies, but also have a humane outlook and a moral compass, working on innovative projects and policies spanning anti-corruption, human rights, education, climate change, cybersecurity, and science and innovation.

Hundreds of our alumni are working in governments and intergovernmental organisations - such as the World Bank, INTERPOL, OECD, the World Health Organisation, UNICEF and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) - spanning 106 countries around the world.

The alumni offer

We continue to support our alumni with opportunities to network with each other, faculty and practitioners, attend curated events on topical issues, and to continue learning and collaborating with the School.

Our alumni connect through a vibrant global network, faculty-hosted reunions, community platforms and an alumni directory. From regional and industry WhatsApp discussions and termly online catch-ups, to the launch of new alumni-led communities like the our tech and digital network, and a resilience community network, we ensure alumni stay informed, inspired, and supported wherever they are in the world.

We offer industry insights and updates on the School’s research with our Thematic Cluster series, our Public Service Careers Accelerator programme of workshops and panel discussions, and with our Public Service Jobs Board.

2000+ alumni

100+ countries

All alumni are invited to attend our exclusive Dean’s Forum events featuring global leaders, and are offered discounts to our executive programmes.

Alumni giving back

Our alumni commitment to the School’s mission and vision for the future has a transformational impact – just this past year, over 400 of our alumni offered their time, talent and philanthropy by:

- Referring great candidates, and promoting scholarships
- Enriching our curriculum as panel speakers
- Mentoring students and acting as Policy Report placement hosts
- Offering blogs and reports for our website, Alumni Spotlight interviews and Instagram ‘takeovers’
- Research input and Case Centre consultation



Partnerships spotlight

Lemann Foundation

Since 2013, the School has proudly partnered with the Lemann Foundation, which provides transformative pathways to public leadership for the most committed Brazilian changemakers and supports research that will have a real-world impact in Brazil.

To date, Lemann Foundation Fellowships have supported 37 Brazilian public leaders on the MPP. We are grateful to the Lemann Foundation for providing additional support for our scholarship outreach efforts, improving the accessibility of the MPP for all applicants who have the talent and drive to succeed in public service.

In 2021, the Lemann Foundation Programme was launched at the School, aiming to generate and disseminate knowledge to improve the public sector and its associated institutions in Brazil through comparative research.

The Programme's research team investigates public policy impacts, management practices and institutions in the public sector. It tackles some of the hard, long-term challenges that the public sector in Brazil and comparator countries face, such as the bureaucracy's lack of diversity, especially in senior roles, and how little the civil service is typically trusted by a highly unequal and polarised citizenry – the very people with whom it seeks to co-produce many public goods and services.



"The MPP has been pivotal in shaping my career aspirations by providing a robust network of passionate individuals committed to making the

world a better place. The programme's unique blend of philosophy, evaluation techniques, and economic policy has equipped me with the tools necessary for addressing economic development policies with a mature perspective. More importantly, it has

solidified my commitment to public service, using my position to advocate for policies that demonstrably alleviate poverty and economic inequality in Brazil."

Eduardo Araujo, Lemann Foundation Fellow, Economist, Treasury State Department, Brazil (MPP 2022)

Luksic Foundation

In 2024, the School celebrated ten years of partnership with the Luksic Foundation, a collaboration that drives positive change in public service by empowering public sector leaders in Chile.

At the core of the partnership is a shared commitment to ensuring that exceptional individuals from all backgrounds have equal access to educational opportunities that enable them to develop, succeed and give back to their communities.

Over the years the Luksic Scholarship for Public Service has supported 20 outstanding Chileans on the MPP at the School, equipping them with the skills, experience, and networks to address the pressing public policy challenges facing Chile and the global community.

The partnership between the School and the Luksic Foundation goes beyond scholarship support. In 2024, a delegation led by Ngaire Woods and Karthik Ramanna visited Santiago where they participated in the Luksic Scholars' inaugural conference, Global Paths: Seeking Points of Encounter, as well facilitating a workshop for Chilean faculty on training public leaders of the future with the School's innovative and immersive case method.



"The MPP reinforced my career aspirations in public policy, equipping me with practical tools to drive meaningful change. The

programme's interdisciplinary approach—spanning politics, economics, law, and philosophy—was instrumental in helping me understand complex issues from multiple perspectives and in a more holistic way."

Sarita Undurraga, Luksic Scholar, (MPP 2023)

Our work on climate

2024 broke global summer heat records, as 2023 had before it. Billions felt the direct impact of climate change in their day-to-day lives, whether through heat, rain, or the multitude of knock-on impacts, from cancelled trains to large-scale crop failure.

Governments and societies face an immense challenge: to limit and halt emissions to prevent further (catastrophic) warming, at the same time as adapting to the change already wrought. Meanwhile, they are buffeted by immediate issues like conflict, migration, economic woes, and energy shortages – all of which divert short-term attention from

climate change, but have been (and will be) worsened by it.

No wonder, then, that climate change was a major focus for many in the Blavatnik School community during 2024–5, with our faculty, researchers, students, alumni and wider community showing drive and optimism.

Much of our work clustered around two key moments on the global calendar: the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2024 and COP29 in November 2024.

At UNGA, a Pact for the Future was adopted by member states, pledging action towards an improved world for tomorrow's generations – a vision in which halting and adapting to climate change plays an obvious role. Tom Hale contributed to a key part of the pact called the Declaration on Future Generations, which aims to safeguard the rights and interests of those not yet born. Tom's thinking in this area is the product of many years examining how we can manage transnational problems in general, and climate change in particular. His book *Long Problems: Climate Change and the Challenge of Governing Across Time*, published in April 2024, shows how governments can address generation-spanning issues.

At COP29 Rachel Kyte, Professor of Practice in the School (left), played a key role as the UK government's climate envoy, while Tom Hale led the delegation of Oxford University researchers. Many other members of the School community were also in attendance, including well-known Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate, who is currently studying for our MPP.

At COP29, the UN's Taskforce on Net Zero Policy – to which Tom Hale had been appointed expert advisor in June 2024 – launched

its two major reports. One of them is based on data from our Climate Policy Monitor – see across the page for more on this important tool in the climate fight.

A carbon accounting method co-developed by Karthik Ramanna called E-Liability, which can tell companies and consumers the total greenhouse gas emissions of any product or service from raw materials to delivery, was adopted by an increasing number of companies through the year – from BMW to a boutique security-services firm who discovered using the method that the food they gave their staff in Afghanistan, despite being locally sourced, generated more emissions than their transport.

Alan Stein launched a new research project this year on the effects of climate change on early childhood health and development, especially in the world's poorest countries. It will bring together two previously separate bodies of vast, geographically-specific data – on climate and health – to pinpoint impacts down to community level, and work on adaptations to protect children.

Finally, many of our exceptional students are focused on climate, and have already made a major difference prior to joining us. They want to use their time at the School to rocket-fuel their impact.

www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/topic/climate-and-environment



Climate Policy Monitor

In the face of the climate emergency, nations and companies have made ambitious pledges on net zero. However, as Tom Hale says, “pledges alone won’t prevent catastrophic climate change. We need legally enforced rules.”

A new tool from the Climate Policy Hub, a cross-Oxford collaboration co-led from the Blavatnik School, the Climate Policy Monitor allows scrutiny of just that, providing a detailed view of how key economic rules across major countries and jurisdictions align – or not – to climate goals.

However, there are many gaps, and rules vary in ambition, comprehensiveness, and stringency, with few meeting the Climate Policy Monitor’s criteria on all three. Developed through pro-bono partnerships with 48 leading law firms around the world, the Monitor continuously evaluates regulations against 250+ data points.

The good news is that climate-related policies, including legally enforced rules imposed by governments on themselves and on companies operating in their jurisdictions, have exploded in recent years.

For example, a new law in the EU requires companies to create plans that lay out how they will transition to net zero. In Brazil, incoming rules require listed companies and financial institutions to report publicly not only their emissions, but also the risks they face from climate change. Similar rules exist in California, China, and Turkey. And in the UK, companies seeking to sell the government goods and services worth more than £5m must have a net zero plan.

The global mushrooming of such rules means that even if requirements weaken in certain jurisdictions, as seen currently in the US, companies operating across borders will still face increasing global compliance obligations.

“To close gaps in climate policy, we need to be able to see and understand them”, says Thom Wetzer of Oxford’s Law Faculty and Smith School, who co-directs the Hub along with Tom Hale.



Our open-access Climate Policy Monitor allows everyone to evaluate the ambition, comprehensiveness and stringency of climate regulations as they evolve over time.

Thom Wetzer,
Oxford’s Law Faculty and Smith School

Government efficiency



The Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, has brought government efficiency drives to the front pages – but they are nothing new. We spoke to Thomas Elston, Associate Professor of Public Administration, about the topic.

First, what do we mean by efficiency?

“There are several types of efficiency, but in this context it’s about the ratio of inputs to outputs: how much resource is expended to achieve a given outcome? But the term is often abused. In the US, for example, the Department of Government Efficiency is cutting spending by cutting activity and changing government so that it does much less. It’s a legitimate policy choice, but not really about efficiency.”

Is efficiency even the right goal?

“Yes, I think so. Policymakers typically have lots that they want to achieve, and limited resources with which to act. So you want to consume no more than is necessary on any single objective, in order to maximise your wish list. Efficiency also matters because governments that are ineffective custodians of public money lose credibility on financial markets, and legitimacy among citizens. At a time when governments are going to be asking more of taxpayers, it’s important not to seem profligate.

“All that said, efficiency is never the only consideration. Running an efficient but ineffective service – one that systematically fails to achieve its objectives, even if it remains “within budget” – is clearly bad. And sometimes a degree of inefficiency is tolerable in pursuit of other objectives; for instance, if a more expensive option for delivering public services makes them more accessible to certain target groups or more resilient against shock events. Hospitals typically want to maintain some empty-bed capacity, for example, to meet an unexpected surge in demand.”

What are the most common ways governments try to make efficiencies – and are they the right ones?

“Top of the list usually is headcount. Government is labour-intensive, and so it’s natural to try to cut posts and redistribute responsibilities among those employees that remain. This is often done through reorganisation and abolishing or merging agencies. But unless you also have a credible plan for how to improve productivity thereafter, this can easily result in crude savings rather than genuine efficiency gains. Essentially, what you’ve got is fewer staff trying to achieve the same, if not more, policy objectives – using the “same old” tools and methods. This risks mistakes, burnout and staff turnover.

“There are several ways of thinking about productivity.

“One is to consider what does and doesn’t need to be done by a human, and make investments in AI (or less glamorous forms of digitisation). Really, the 200 years since the industrial revolution has been about increasing productivity through the mechanisation of labour, and AI is just the next step along that road.

“Another option is to think about staff training and upskilling. A better-trained workforce can get through tasks quicker; spot potential problems before they arise; use software and equipment to their full (labour-saving) potential; and re-engineer processes to reduce inefficiencies, all of which conserve precious resources.

“Relatedly, it’s important to empower those people buried in the middle of the



To make organisational redesign actually work you have to think really carefully about productivity. One key way to do that is consider what does and doesn't need a human to do it, and make investments in AI (or less glamorous forms of digitisation).



bureaucracy to be able to innovate. Frontline staff and middle managers typically have better information about operational inefficiencies. But they need the authority, and the incentive, to trial, implement and refine improvements. If all changes must be approved by leadership, or, worse, in the central finance and reform ministries, it slows the process down and discourages local initiative and problem ownership – particularly if your team has been cut, your workload is growing, and the cost of mistakes is high.”

Anybody who's been involved in a reorganisation will have observed that it takes a lot of time and resource and attention. The argument is often made that the short-term pain will result in long-term gains. Is there any research on how long it takes to actually get a net benefit?

“Reorganisation is certainly very disruptive. It consumes a lot of mental bandwidth, as well as cash for management consultants, IT harmonisation, staff redundancies, etc. My work on local government reorganisation showed a clear deterioration in performance for the activities we analysed, lasting two years before normal service resumed. Other studies looking at employee health, wellbeing and absenteeism during reform programmes similarly show what has been termed “repetitive change injury” – a clear negative impact resulting from frequent reorganisations.

“So yes, the key question with any reorganisation is, is this short-term pain ultimately worth it to achieve long-term gain? In our research, the answer was no: the reorganised councils that we studied never outperformed the comparison group that didn't reorganise, they only suffered worse performance in the short term. As already discussed, it takes more than reorganisation to improve productivity; just cutting posts and redistributing responsibilities is unlikely to suffice.”

Are there other approaches that governments should be thinking about to achieve efficiency?

“A systems thinking approach. That's where, instead of focusing just at the organisational level, you ask how organisations interact with one another as a whole system, and how performance and behaviour in one part of the system affects other parts. A classic example is health and social care. In the NHS, something like 13% of hospital beds are occupied by people who are medically fit to discharge but are awaiting a care package to be put in place because they cannot immediately return to independent living. Potentially, you could make the NHS more productive by shifting some of its budget into social care, although that is politically challenging. So systems thinking is a really powerful tool for making wise spending decisions.”

What are the takeaway messages for governments from your research?

“I think the first point is to have a really robust ‘theory of change’ for why the reform you're contemplating will improve efficiency. Success is far harder than it first appears, so stress test the reform idea as much as possible. Be open to challenge, particularly from the frontline. Seek a wide range of advice, beyond relying only on consultants. Use the growing evidence base of what does and doesn't work. And try to build in time to pilot, evaluate and improve before you proceed to full rollout.

“Set a high threshold before deciding to reorganise. Sadly, there's a huge optimism bias in this area of public policy. The reality is that reorganisation is a blunt instrument that tends to deliver far less than promised. And if restructuring is necessary, think really hard about how to proactively equip staff to be more productive in the new organisation.

“And finally, maybe it's OK to discuss changes that purely result in savings, without dressing them up as efficiency. It's healthy for organisations and governments to think through “Is there anything we shouldn't be doing any more?” or “If we want to start doing this thing, what do we have to stop doing in order to invest in it?”. The current defence situation in Europe is forcing exactly this kind of discussion now.”



Thought leaders. Critical conversations.

Want to discuss real-world issues with leading figures from fields including international governance and politics, tech, climate, and the economy? You've come to the right place.

Our Dean's Forums – events exclusive to our students and alumni – have this year included appearances from former UK Foreign Secretary and recently appointed Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Lord William Hague; former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley; former UK Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, Simon Case; and former Indonesian Minister of Trade Gita Wirjawan.

We also welcomed President Irfaan Ali of Guyana, CEO of Etsy Josh Silverman, Google's Vice-President of Technology and Society James Manyika, Co-Founder of LinkedIn Reid Hoffman, former EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti, and Dario Amodei, Co-Founder and CEO of Anthropic in conversation with former UK Prime Minister the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP.

Other events for our community included briefings on the fallout from the Munich Security Conference, on tariffs and government efficiency in the US and EU with Margrethe Vestager and former senior US government officials – and Harvard academics – Douglas Elmendorf and Karen Dynan, and a discussion on the rule of law with Karim Khan, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Our public events continue to attract wide audiences and expert speakers – from Dr Tom Dannenbaum on the starvation of civilian populations in war, Dr Rahul Mukherji on the decline in India’s credentials as a liberal democracy, Kyriakos Pierrakakis, Greek Minister of Education, who joined us for a discussion on how to reform government and the challenges of public service, to Ciaran Martin and Brianna Rosen’s discussion on foreign election interference and the US election with Gavin Wilde, former White House National Security Council Director and expert on Russia, cyber operations, and election security.

Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan’s Minister for Planning, Development, and Reforms discussed his vision for economic growth, and Alan Stein hosted a public seminar series on global health, with speakers including Josie Gibson, Deputy Editor for the Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, and microbiologist Sir Peter Piot, the pioneering researcher into AIDS and Ebola who helped discover the Ebola virus in 1976.

Award-winning broadcaster, journalist, and filmmaker, Zeinab Badawi joined us to discuss her book *An African History of Africa: From the Dawn of Humanity to Independence*.

Lord Gus O’Donnell, former Head of the UK Civil Service, co-hosted the 2024 launch of the Blavatnik Index of Public Administration, the comprehensive index of international indicators to assess the effectiveness of national public administrations and civil services across the globe. The Index looks at key features of public administration across strategy and leadership; public policy; national delivery and underpinning people and processes (see page 30).

We hosted events as part of our project on Strengthening Democracy by Reducing Threats to Women in Politics, featuring Dame Melanie Dawes, CEO of Ofcom, and Vijay Rangarajan, Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission.

Alfred Landecker Memorial Event

In January we hosted our annual Alfred Landecker Memorial Event, held each year since 2020 on or around UN Holocaust Memorial Day. Journalist and author Jonathan Freedland’s lecture centred on the story of one of the few Jewish prisoners ever to break out of Auschwitz, nineteen-year-old Rudolf Vrba, and his attempts to alert the world to the horrors there. Vrba’s unique testimony, which would save some 200,000 lives, raises the question of how we can build institutions that ensure the world never experiences such atrocities again.

Blavatnik Book Talks

Our new series of public book talks has seen discussions on the evolution of conservatism in America, the relation of international law to rule of law developments, the rise of ransomware as a threat to national security, how to save democracy from Silicon Valley, a firsthand account of the complex, high-stakes negotiations that led to the historic 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, and the history of the Japanese war crimes tribunal.

Kyoto Prize at Oxford

The Kyoto Prize is an international award, organised by the Inamori Foundation to honour those who have contributed significantly to the scientific, cultural, and spiritual betterment of humankind.

We are honoured to bring the Kyoto Prize Laureates to Oxford for a series of events each May – the Kyoto Prize at Oxford – and this year we were delighted to host Kyoto Prize Laureates contemporary artist Nalini Malani and mathematical physicist Dr Elliott H Lieb.



A golden opportunity for global learning

As nations navigate complex challenges — from digital transformation to crisis management — public trust in government is both critical and fragile. Initiatives like the Blavatnik Index shine a light on what works to strengthen governance for the benefit of citizens.



The Index is an important effort to help us learn from one another and improve our own effectiveness, in order to serve our peoples better”

Leo Yip, Head of Singapore’s Civil Service





How can civil services worldwide learn from one another to improve what they do? This question is at the heart of the Blavatnik Index of Public Administration, launched in December 2024, which aims to provide a global benchmark of effectiveness across 120 countries across the globe.

Drawing on the best available data, the refreshed and expanded Index builds upon the earlier International Civil Service Effectiveness Index (InCiSE), which the School helped to produce from 2017-2019. By expanding beyond OECD nations to include a broader set of countries across income levels and regions, the Blavatnik Index aims to catalyse conversations between countries that may not usually look to each other for learning.

Delving deeper

The Index provides a structured framework to compare national civil services across four core domains: strategy and leadership, public policy, national delivery, and people

and processes. Interactive online tools including the 'data explorer' and 'country snapshots' allow civil servants to analyse their country's relative performance, compare their scores with peers, and delve deeper into specific themes.

The rankings serve as a starting point for meaningful discussions on best practice. For example, the United States, Estonia, France, and Spain all come in joint 9th place, with each country excelling in different domains of the Index. This provides a golden opportunity for potential peer learning.

Impact and engagement

Chaired by Lord Gus O'Donnell, the former UK Cabinet Secretary, the Blavatnik Index's Senior Leadership Panel includes influential figures from around the world, such as former and current Cabinet Secretaries and heads of public administrations. Reflecting on his own experience in government, Lord O'Donnell noted that the Index was

a "valuable tool" to help civil services "better understand and monitor how their administration compares globally". *The Financial Times's* public policy editor Peter Foster noted that Sir Chris Wormald, the UK Cabinet Secretary, could use the findings to "rally the troops" given that "excluding the Nordic nations, the United Kingdom is the highest-ranking country in Western Europe for the Strategy and Leadership domain".

Leo Yip, Head of Singapore's Civil Service, said that he was "humbled" that Singapore's public administration has been well rated in this inaugural Index. "The Index is an important effort to help us learn from one another and improve our own effectiveness, in order to serve our peoples better", he added. At the Global Government Summit in Singapore in January 2025, cabinet secretaries and civil service leaders from 23 countries engaged with the Index as a tool for peer learning.

Global engagement and strengthening data collection

When InCiSE was first introduced in 2017, the late Lord Jeremy Heywood, the former UK Cabinet Secretary, championed the concept of a unified framework and index as a significant breakthrough in tracking civil service performance over time. He also emphasised that its success would depend on ongoing collaboration among civil services, academics, think tanks, and international organisations to refine and enhance it. The Blavatnik Index builds on the legacy of the InCiSE Index and has incorporated feedback received about the design of the framework and country coverage. In addition to the peer learning conversations, the Index also aims to stimulate discussion and action on improving the availability and quality of comparative data about civil services.

Find out more at index.bsg.ox.ac.uk

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