Blavatnik School of Government

EXECUTIVE PUBLIC LEADERS PROGRAMME

Image credit: John Cairns

Hosted by the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford, the Executive Public Leaders Programme is a unique immersive executive education experience for heads of public organisations.

EXECUTIVE PUBLIC LEADERS PROGRAMME

Renewing your leadership for the post-pandemic world

As the chief executive of any government department, agency, ministry, or multilateral organisation, it can often feel as if you are managing every conceivable organisational challenge at once, from the internal culture of your organisation to the mastery of new technology and the forging of international partnerships across the public and private sectors.

Since 2020, every leader has been tested by the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic. As you consider what the pandemic means for you, your organisation, and your society, this programme provides an opportunity to stand back, reflect, and re-equip yourself for the next phase of your leadership. The programme contains a dedicated module to allow you to focus on leading your organisation's role in the COVID–19 recovery. The Executive Public Leaders Programme strengthens your skills and provides you with the conceptual frameworks and practical tools to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing and complex world.

Offering insight from the world's leading scholars and practitioners, peer learning from your counterparts around the globe, and one-to-one guidance from a team of professional coaches, this programme is for you if you are heading a public-sector organisation or you are moving into such a position in the next two years. The experience is intense and demanding, engaging you through a mixture of classroom discussion, simulations, practical exercises and group work.

"This is the kind of programme which every senior public leader needs to invest in."

Marlene Malahoo Forte,
Attorney General of Jamaica,
2019 participant

Image credit: John Cairns

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Image credit: Sidharth Bhatia

University of Oxford

Programme details

- Session dates: 9–22 July 2023
- Applications open: Now
- Faculty co-directors: Associate Dean Calum Miller and Professor Christopher Stone
- Fee: £18,000 per person
  Includes accommodation (9–22 July), meals, tuition, programme materials, executive coaching and extracurricular activities
- Language: English

"A fantastic wake-up call – [the programme] took many of us with senior but partial experience and widened the spotlight, putting our shared experiences into a powerful context. A lot of practical ideas, and things to mull over. And fantastic socially."

Vijay Rangarajan, UK Ambassador to Brazil, 2019 participant

Outcomes

You will leave Oxford with skills and insights that help you in your role, that you can bring home to your organisation, and that will strengthen your contribution to the public sector more widely. In particular, you will have strengthened your ability to respond to six challenges facing all leaders of major public institutions:

- Making tough decisions while managing the biases that distort decisions made under pressure.
- Improving the ability of your organisation to deliver outcomes that matter to the people you serve.
- Building a culture of integrity in your organisation and sector.
- Communicating effectively within your own organisation, across government, and with diverse public audiences and partners.
- Creating effective partnerships with businesses and social sector organisations, and negotiating internationally across sectors to deliver better services, produce better outcomes, and advance the public interest.
- Adapting to changing digital technology and harnessing its benefits while managing the challenges of cyber threats.

The programme will help you to develop a personal and organisational action plan, supported by programme faculty, executive coaches, and your peers.

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EXECUTIVE PUBLIC LEADERS PROGRAMME

Programme faculty

You will be guided by a combination of our core faculty, leading practitioners, and renowned experts from other disciplines drawn from the wider University. Those whose involvement is already confirmed are listed below, with additional experts to be confirmed shortly.

Professor Ngaire Woods CBE

Professor Ngaire Woods is founding dean of the Blavatnik School, and teaches several parts of the programme. Ngaire's research focuses on the challenges of globalisation, global development, the role of international institutions, and global economic governance. She advises governments worldwide as well as multilateral organisations including the IMF, the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the UNDP, and the Commonwealth Heads of Government. She has presented many documentaries for radio and television and authored numerous books.

Mara Airoldi

Mara Airoldi is Director of the Government Outcomes Lab within the Blavatnik School, leading research and practitioner engagement on how to improve the outcomes of government commissioning from the private and not-for-profit sector. An economist and decision analyst by background, she has particular expertise in healthcare and has worked extensively with the UK and Italian national health systems. She has consulted for the UK and Canadian governments, NATO, and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Sir Paul Collier

Sir Paul Collier is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School. Paul is a world expert on development who has conducted internationally renowned research over several decades and has also served as Director of the Research Development Department of the World Bank (1998-2003). He advises governments and transnational bodies around the world and is a bestselling author of books including *The Bottom Billion* and *Exodus*.

Sadie Creese

Sadie Creese is Professor of Cybersecurity in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Oxford. She teaches threat detection, risk assessment, and operational aspects of security. Her current research portfolio includes threat modelling (including anomaly detection for insider-threats), visual analytics for cybersecurity, risk propagation logics and communication, resilience strategies, and understanding cyber-harm for both single organisations and for nations. She previously worked as a cybersecurity expert in business and as a research scientist specialising in security for the UK's Ministry of Defence.

Pepper Culpepper

Pepper Culpepper is Professor of Government and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School. His research focuses on the intersection between capitalism and democracy. His project Banklash, funded by a €2.5m grant from the European Research Council, looks at the interactions between mass media, public opinion, and policy. He previously taught at the European University Institute and at the Harvard Kennedy School. His book *Quiet Politics and Business Power: Corporate Control in Europe and Japan* was awarded the 2012 Stein Rokkan Prize for Comparative Social Science Research.

Stefan Dercon

Stefan Dercon is Professor of Economic Policy at the Blavatnik School and is an economist with a focus on African development. He was Chief Economist of the UK's Department for International Development, the government department in charge of the UK's aid policy and spending, between 2011 and 2017. His current research examines the psychological challenges of poverty, the political economy of development, the challenges and opportunities of new technologies, and how to organise and finance responses to natural disasters and protracted humanitarian crises.

Thomas Elston

Thomas Elston is Associate Professor in Public Administration at the Blavatnik School. His research focuses on the organisation and management of the public sector, particularly the performance of public agencies, the administration of complex organisations, and the political-administrative interface. He regularly consults for public agencies and NGOs in Europe, the US, and elsewhere.

Clare Leaver

Clare Leaver is Associate Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School and Fellow of University College. Prior to this, she was a University Lecturer in Economics in the Department of Economics at Oxford. Much of Clare's research focuses on careers and incentives within the public sector. In previous research, she has studied Public Utility Commissioners in the United States, and the senior judiciary in England and Wales. In her current work she is focusing on incentives for educators in low-middle-income countries.

Ciaran Martin

Ciaran Martin is Professor of Practice in the Management of Public Organisations. Prior to joining the School, Ciaran was the founding Chief Executive of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). Ciaran led a fundamental shift in the UK's approach to cyber security and advocated for a more interventionist posture, leading to the creation of the NCSC in 2016 under his leadership. Alongside secure technology, a constant theme of his has been the promotion of responsible, values-based government whether in the Treasury, Cabinet Office or the security services.

Calum Miller

Calum Miller is Chief Operating Officer and Associate Dean of Administration at the Blavatnik School. Prior to joining the School, Calum was a senior UK civil servant who worked in the Treasury, the Cabinet Office, the Foreign Office, and the Department for International Development, and served as Principal Private Secretary to the head of the UK civil service (2009–10) and to the Deputy Prime Minister (2010–12).

Karthik Ramanna

Karthik Ramanna is Professor of Business and Public Policy and Director of the Master of Public Policy at the Blavatnik School. His scholarship explores the role of business leaders in shaping the basic rules that govern capital-market societies. He was previously at the Harvard Business School, where he taught the required MBA course 'Leadership and Corporate Accountability'. He has consulted with the Brookings Institution, the Center for Audit Quality, and several leading auditing and financial firms.

Tom Simpson

Tom Simpson is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School. He works on questions of trust: what is trust and what does it mean to be trustworthy? When is trust justified? When is it needed? He also examines issues at the intersection of technology and security, and provides ethics and judgement consultancy, in particular to military clients. In addition to his research career, he was an officer with the Royal Marines Commandos for five years, serving in Northern Ireland, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Chris Stone

Chris Stone is Professor of Practice of Public Integrity at the Blavatnik School. Chris has blended theory and practice throughout a career dedicated to justice sector reform, good governance, and innovation in the public interest, working with governments and civil service organisations in dozens of countries worldwide. Throughout his career, Chris has been an advisor to public defenders, police leaders, and public prosecutors, assisting at the creation of the Crown Prosecution Service of England and Wales, the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa, and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

EXECUTIVE PUBLIC LEADERS PROGRAMME

The programme aims to strengthen the skills that senior public servants need to build cultures of excellence, effectiveness, and integrity throughout the institutions they lead and across the public sector more widely. Throughout the programme, you will work on skills and frameworks that are essential today across all branches and departments of government in any country or international institution:

- Communicating effectively
- Harnessing digital technology
- Reducing cognitive bias in decision-making
- Strengthening organisational effectiveness
- Negotiating in the public interest
- Maintaining personal integrity

While these are taught as distinct modules, you will work with your peers, faculty, and individual coaches to pull lessons together and apply them to your role.

Every government is currently navigating its response to the COVID–19 pandemic. Throughout this year's programme, we will apply the concepts we are learning to the pandemic response and to the recovery. We will draw on the immediate challenges and policy opportunities in participants' countries, as well as on expertise from across the University of Oxford, to anticipate the challenges still ahead for everyone.

"Any senior public sector leader who wants to make a bigger difference in the public interest will find that this course provides rich, multi-layered learning and enduring relationships."

Rebecca Kitteridge, Director General of Security, New Zealand, 2019 participant

Context and communication

The programme recognises the speed and depth of change confronting today's leaders, and will open with an overview of the key drivers of change: technological, social, political, and environmental.

You will then examine how leaders of public organisations communicate to best effect: internally, across government, and beyond. This requires abilities to listen, to weave a narrative that is anchored in the values of the organisation, and to communicate with the clarity necessary to catch attention amid a jumble of competing messages around government.

These sessions will leave you with a fresh understanding of the role of storytelling as a fundamental part of leadership.

Digital technology

All leaders face multiple challenges managing today's rapid changes in information technology. You will explore the complex political, regulatory, and technological challenges leaders face, using a case study on the development of 5G technology.

You will examine questions of cybersecurity, including threats newly enhanced by artificial intelligence. And, because your priorities may differ from those of some other participants, you will be able to choose to dive deeper on one topic such as building digital platforms for citizen services, the use of big data in policy formation, and regulating digital technology including social media.

Decision-making

You will examine bias in decision-making, using a behavioural science lens. While senior decision-makers – just like academics – pride themselves on using the best advice and evidence available, there is plenty of evidence that decision-making can be distorted by psychological biases, as well as through social processes such as group deliberation.

During the session, you will explore framing bias, confirmation bias, overconfidence bias, and sunk-cost bias, as well as examples of groupthink.

You will consider the consequences for decision-making, and test some simple techniques to overcome these biases in individual and group decisions.

Integrity

Issues of integrity run across the entire programme. You will examine classic texts as well as contemporary ethical challenges faced by leaders like you. With your programme colleagues, you will build a moral language for understanding such scenarios and have greater confidence in handling the pressures that public leaders inevitably face.

These sessions will also explore how public leaders like you can build and promote integrity within their own organisations and what it means for an organisation to be trustworthy. A further set of sessions will examine how difficult it can be to recognise integrity, the factors that cloud our ethical decisions, and the long-term damage to one's leadership that can flow from a single misjudgement.

Strengthening public organisations

As a rising public sector leader, you are under constant pressure to show how your organisation can deliver better, faster, cheaper. You face a continual tension between delivering immediate priorities and attending to the long-term capability of the organisation. You know that your people are your greatest asset, but that selection, development, and motivation are time-consuming.

This module will explore what it means to lead an effective organisation. You will look at the trends and cycles in organisational reform and what evidence there is to support strategies of radical reform or incremental improvement. You will look at the tools that different administrations use to improve performance, including target-setting, data generation and outsourcing.

The session will also look at the experience of your people, and what the evidence tells us about how they respond to different incentives and management approaches. Finally, we will look outwards and consider how the relationships your organisation builds are critical to understanding the needs of citizens and responding with outcome-focused services.

Negotiation

A full day on negotiation in the public interest will refresh and extend your familiarity with core concepts and expand your knowledge of more advanced negotiation tactics. Through interactive simulations, you will learn and practice specific analytical tools for conducting multistakeholder deliberations across international boundaries and with powerful commercial interests and multiple governments.

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EXECUTIVE PUBLIC LEADERS PROGRAMME

How to apply

The Executive Public Leaders Programme is designed for senior public leaders who head a ministry, agency or international organisation (ministers, permanent secretaries, chief executives or equivalent), or are likely to move into such a position within the next two years.

To apply, please complete the form online. You will be asked to upload a résumé/CV and organisational chart if available. Admission to the programme is selective and is based on professional achievements, organisational responsibilities, and personal motivation.

APPLY NOW

For further information on the programme, please contact the Public Leaders Programme team:
publicleaders@bsg.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0) 1865 614343

"The Blavatnik School has rapidly established itself as a leading education and research partner for senior public policymakers. If you want to be challenged and supported by smart people who share your commitment to public service, it's hard to beat."

Lord O'Donnell, head of the UK civil service 2005-11

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The Blavatnik School experience

The Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford, founded in 2010 with a uniquely global approach to government and policy, blends intellectual rigour with real-world practicality.

We undertake teaching, research, and wider engagement with a mission to improve government worldwide. Since our foundation, we have learned from and advised multiple heads of government, several civil service chiefs, and many C-suite executives from organisations like the UN and the World Bank.

For the last six years in a row, Oxford University has been the top-ranked university in the world in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Oxford combines 900 years of history with the innovative mindset required for cutting-edge research. During the programme you will have opportunities to interact with researchers from multiple disciplines.

Over its history, Oxford has produced nearly 60 heads of state and government and countless leaders of major political organisations. The Executive Public Leaders Programme reimagines this leadership education for the 21st century.

"A remarkable experience in my career. The teaching method, content, and colleagues make it a learning process that gives us a powerful practical tool to implement as heads of our institutions."

Jaime Tohá, **National Director of JUNAEB, Government of Chile, 2019 participant**
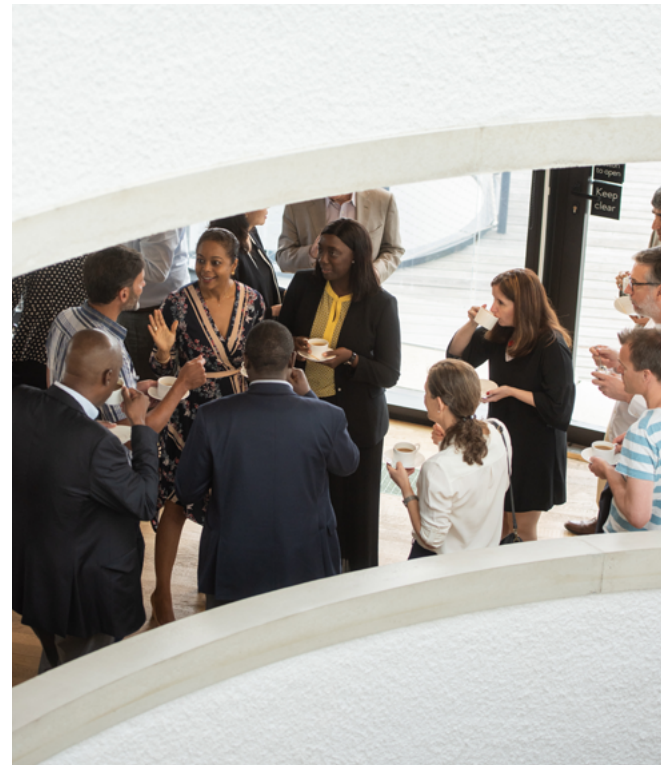

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Our award-winning building offers a purpose-built teaching base for the programme – though learning will take place in a variety of locations chosen to stimulate reflection and imagination.

This information is current at December 2021. Programme content and delivery may vary from the information provided, which should be taken to be indicative rather than tightly prescriptive.

The Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, reserves the right to vary the programme in line with operational requirements.

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To learn more about the Blavatnik School of Government, visit **www.bsg.ox.ac.uk**.

For further information on our Public Leaders Programmes, contact:
publicleaders@bsg.ox.ac.uk; +44 (0)1865 614343