Pathway highlights

The distinctiveness of this pathway is generated by the professional knowledge of its student cohort, together with its focus on innovation and policy- and practice-relevant research. Students benefit from a rich and diverse research environment encompassing the social, economic, political and technological aspects of international development and inclusive innovation. Students will have access to academics in the Development Policy and Practice Group, the inter-faculty Innovation, Knowledge and Development Centre as well as the Priority Research Area in International Development and Inclusive Innovation, all with strong links to external networks.

Overview

Development Policy and Practice at the OU challenges 'top-down' and aid-driven development policy models and promotes research into more participatory and inclusive approaches. In particular, its approach to 'inclusive innovation' focuses attention on how technological, economic and social innovations in food, bio-economy, health and education systems, sustainable energy and infrastructures can bring benefits to marginalized groups. Underpinning this pathway is a history of research at the OU on the social and economic impacts of innovation and the political dimensions of development, all with a strong orientation to policy and practice.

Training and skills

The OU core methods training will cover: research philosophy, design and ethics; introductory qualitative methods; introductory quantitative methods; interdisciplinary research, all designed to deliver ESRC's training outcomes. Students on this pathway will also follow seminars and workshops in epistemologies, debates in international development, and in inclusive innovation and innovation systems. Students will be able to have access to modules from three masters qualifications (Development Management, Environmental Management and Systems Thinking in Practice), while additional training on quantitative methods and network analysis will be offered where needed.
Structure

Students who have completed core research training at MA/MSc or MPhil level that meets the ESRC 2015 Training Guidelines take the +3 route (full- or part-time) and will be able to add to their prior training where needed during the first year. The +4 route (full- or part-time) provides generic and tailored research training that meets the Training Guidelines for professionals, practitioners and policy-makers, preparing them with a full set of academic research skills.

Knowledge exchange, internships and careers

The pathway has national and global networks with NGOs, multi-lateral organisations, regional and industrial associations, research and policy organisations and the media. Pathway students will be expected to undertake knowledge exchange activities, for example, by carrying out a short internship in an organisation related to their research at an appropriate point in their doctoral study, or through other external collaboration. Internships have included working with NEPAD, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology the Institute of Crisis Management in Nepal and with a television-set company, F4D, in Nigeria.

Applicants’ own links and networks for internships, other forms of external collaboration and potential sources of co-funding are highly welcome. Although not a requirement, we are keen to encourage external financial and other contributions from non-academic organisations. Examples of past co-funding partners include Voluntary Services Overseas, the UK Co-operative College, the International Potato Centre (CIP) and the African Centre for Technology Studies.

Graduates in this pathway typically move into positions in academia, government ministries and agencies, policy and research institutes and consultancy work - in the UK, internationally, or in multilateral organisations.

Further reading

You can visit the following web-sites where recent publications on research areas in this pathway are listed and can be accessed; further information on academics’ publications can be found on Open Research Online (see below):

http://fass.open.ac.uk/development
http://www.open.ac.uk/ikd/
http://www.open.ac.uk/research/main/our-research/international-development
http://oro.open.ac.uk

Further details:

Students may come to the pathway with a range of professional and/or research backgrounds, which may include science and technology as well as the social sciences. A strong academic background in a relevant social science (including area studies and international development/development studies) is desirable. Strong academic backgrounds in non-social science areas are also accepted as long as students are able to make the transition to social sciences. Prior experience and evidence of carrying out research is useful, as well as work experience in a relevant professional domain.

Depending on supervisor availability, supervision is offered in the following areas:

- ‘Rising powers’ in Africa, particularly in relation to infrastructure
• Agriculture and food security, conservation and development, land rights
• Civil society movements and NGOs; development practitioners; participatory/community-based development
• Development finance; corporate social responsibility
• Gender and development; postcolonial and feminist approaches
• Governance, political will, political participation; political economy of aid
• Health delivery, health systems and access to medicines in low and middle income countries; health and education
• Human development; the economics of capabilities and quality of life
• Human development and environment; urban development in the global South, inclusive urbanisation, indigenous rights and the right to the city
• Media, ICT and digital innovations
• Regional development; entrepreneurship/SMEs/social enterprise; capabilities of developing country firms
• Security justice and development; political reform in Africa; the new middle classes in Africa
• South-South and North-South migration, migrant capital, skills and agency; role of diasporas; return migration
• The politics of innovation and inclusion in development; the role of the state and public action; the social and solidarity economy; grass-roots resilience

Please contact: Pathway lead, Professor Hazel Johnson (hazel.johnson@open.ac.uk) or PhD Convenor for Development Studies, Dr Ben Lampert (ben.lampert@open.ac.uk).

Applying for a studentship:
• Applications should include a cover letter outlining why the project is an important area of study, how your background relates to the proposed research topic and why you wish to study at the Open University;
• An outline research proposal of no more than 2,000 words, including the rationale for the research topic, its significance, a summary of literature, research questions and methodology. General advice on writing a proposal can be found here (although bear in mind that this one needs to be 2,000 words): http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process; if you need additional advice, please contact Hazel Johnson or Ben Lampert;
• An academic CV that includes contact details of three referees, of which at least two should be academic;
• An Open University application form, downloadable from http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/research-degrees/how-to-apply/mphil-and-phd-application-process

Applications should be sent to research-degrees-FASS@open.ac.uk by 17:00 on 19th January 2018.