



**DRUK GYALPO'S  
INSTITUTE**



Druk Gyalpo's Institute and  
Paro College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan



# BHUTAN: A LEARNING JOURNEY

A 7-WEEK HYBRID  
STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMME

22<sup>nd</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024



## INTRODUCTION

Druk Gyalpo's Institute (DGI), in partnership with Paro College of Education (PCE) of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), is pleased to offer a unique opportunity to students and scholars around the world to participate in a seven-week, International Education Programme (IEP). The IEP provides participants with a set of rich immersive experiences, both online and in Bhutan, leading to a certificate for which additional credit could be negotiated with their home institution. While the main focus of the IEP is on education consistent with Bhutan's commitment to environmental sustainability, general happiness and social harmony. The programme enables participants to engage in and learn about the rich heritage, culture and traditions of Bhutan, as well as the ways in which Bhutan is pursuing a distinctive path towards national development.

Nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, Bhutan offers a truly distinctive experience. Known for its emphasis on Gross National Happiness (GNH) over GDP, the country has carved its own path in terms of sustainable development, good governance, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. It is

the first country in the world with a negative carbon footprint. It has also been developing an educational system in line with these core principles, cultivating citizens who are both globally aware and locally grounded.

Druk Gyalpo's Institute has been leading this effort, emphasising the wholistic growth of children through the development of a Bhutan Baccalaureate, which involves a system of education, rethinking the purposes and governance of education. In developing its approach to education and development, DGI has drawn inspiration not only from its own cultural traditions but also through collaborations with a range of international organisations such as Oxford University Department of Education, and HundrED in Finland.

DGI's partner in this endeavour is Paro College of Education, a constituent college of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), with programmes run on two campuses: Nangka Choeling Campus and Rinpung Choeling Campus. PCE is Bhutan's leading teacher education institution that provides pre-service and in-service education and training programmes at the diploma, undergraduate, and post-graduate levels. Engaging with universities and other higher education institutions across the globe, the College is research-active and provides professional development and policy support to the government, especially the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, and civil society. PCE is also a leading institution for the training and professional development of ECCD teachers, Buddhist mindfulness education and training, inclusive education, physical education, music education and research, and art education.

The seven-week programme has been designed to help participants learn about various aspects of Bhutanese culture and society. It is not designed solely for students in education but presents Bhutan through the prism of its commitment to educational reform. Participants will witness, firsthand, how Bhutan is addressing societal challenges in innovative ways. Ample opportunities will be provided for participants to delve into their areas of interest — sustainable tourism, environmental conservation, linguistics, religion, or social well-being, for instance.



## THE PROGRAMME

The International Education Programme (IEP) is designed to facilitate participants' exploration of and immersion in a diverse range of learning activities that embody the core values central to Bhutan's highly innovative programme of education reform known as the Bhutan Baccalaureate. The Bhutan Baccalaureate integrates Bhutan's socio-cultural,

philosophical outlook, spiritual heritage, and environmental conservation values into the curriculum and teaching methods. It fosters an approach which emphasises wholistic development through self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-direction. Thus, through the lens of this educational initiative, the programme provides insights into the ethos and mores of Bhutanese society alongside Bhutan's unique approach to national development through education.

This learning experience is designed for participants pursuing an undergraduate bachelor's or a coursework master's degree. The IEP aims to attract applicants from around the world as well as from Bhutan, creating a learning context for intercultural exchange and understanding. While the main focus of the programme is on educational transformation and so is, clearly, of interest to those exploring such issues as educational innovation or teacher education and development, it is equally relevant to and caters for participants in other disciplines such as environmental sustainability, social and economic development, Buddhism and spiritual training, culture studies, or international relations. Eligible participants will have a passion for learning, a desire to expand their thinking about the world, and a general interest in learning about Bhutanese society, its commitment to protecting and preserving its pristine environment, and the challenges associated with its national economic and political development. They will learn from leading experts in such areas and will experience a slice of life in Bhutan, introducing them to Bhutan's diverse landscapes and social complexity.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As an intensive experience, this programme has high expectations of each participant's commitment to learning and their contribution to collaborative reflections.

On completion of the programme, it is anticipated that the learners will have developed:

- a general understanding of Bhutanese society, including its history, culture, and politics.
- an appreciation of the ways in which Bhutan is seeking to develop a just and harmonious society based on its commitment to social and environmental sustainability.
- an awareness of some of the challenges Bhutan faces in a globally interconnected and increasingly complex world.
- an expanded and informed view of the role education can play in meeting these challenges.
- an undertaking to reflect on the values associated with the Bhutan Baccalaureate and their role in shaping the learners' lives.
- a general understanding of emerging trends in education in Bhutan and globally.



## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The 2024 programme will be offered from 22<sup>nd</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

The programme is structured into three components. The first comprises two weeks of online sessions which include a combination of synchronous and asynchronous lectures, along with readings. The participants will then travel to Bhutan for the second component — three weeks of in-person sessions — which allows them to immerse in the culture and life of Bhutanese society while pursuing a self-curated area of study. The final component of two weeks of online sessions brings a conclusion to the programme. In each component, participants will have the support of a mentor for their learning journey and are required to fulfil the assessment tasks mandated by the programme.

The programme will comprise a rich array of learning activities including interactive sessions, discussions, field visits, and collaborative projects. During the three weeks,

in-person component, participants will have sessions at the DGI campus in Pangbisa and the Nangkar Choeling campus of PCE. Two days a week will be set aside for on-campus classes consisting of lectures, small and large group discussions, small-scale projects and other facilitator-led activities. On other days, participants will be taken on various excursions, such as to monasteries and museums, villages and farms, industrial sites, field trips and hikes. The participants will also have regular mentor-mentee meetings with their mentor.

A significant element of the programme is the self-curated study project where participants can pursue their own interest in Bhutan and their individual learning goals for the programme. Options might include outdoor education, Buddhism and meditation, sustainable economics, community development, agriculture, teaching, aesthetics, traditional arts and crafts, or Dzongkha (Bhutan's national language).





# LEARNING JOURNEY

## Week 1:

Participants will be introduced to Bhutan with an overview of its geography and history, its cultural traditions, and its political system. They will learn about the significance of religion and spirituality in Bhutan, the Gross National Happiness Index, and the policies for managing its natural environment which have had great success. Participants will meet one another during the synchronous sessions, share their backstories and discuss their expectations of the programme. Participants will also share their understanding/experiences of the emerging trends in education globally.

## Week 2:

During the second week, the participants will also discuss the challenges of development in Bhutan, how it defines these challenges and how it expects education to play a pivotal role in working towards its development aspirations. Participants will be introduced to the core values and operational principles of the Bhutan Baccalaureate and discuss how these principles align with Bhutan's development aspirations. Participants will also be advised on the operational and cultural expectations of a visit to Bhutan. At the end of this week, they will submit their first assessment piece of a reflective backstory (1,000 words).



### **Week 3:**

The focus of learning during the participant's first week in Paro, Bhutan, will be on exploring trends in education and discussing how leading education systems are realigning their systems. Within this, participants will learn about the history of Bhutan and the ways in which its political system is being democratised and its public policies improved. The participants will also get exposure to Bhutan's religion, culture and society: they will visit significant cultural, spiritual and political sites. They will be assigned to mentor-mentee groups and will be encouraged to develop a roadmap for their self-curated studies and activities. They will commence their self-curated projects.

### **Week 4:**

This week's learning will concentrate on communities and education. The participants will learn, in greater depth, about the core principles and operational aspects of the Bhutan Baccalaureate, especially the ways in which it differs from educational reforms, its conceptualised global potential and the ways in which it can respond to local conditions. The participants will be exposed to wider Bhutanese society when they visit small farms and villages and the schools situated in those communities and consider the Bhutan Baccalaureate in reference to these contexts. They will continue their self-curated projects.



## **Week 5:**

During the fifth week, the last week in Bhutan, learning will focus on Bhutan's pristine environment and how attempts are made to preserve it. The participants will learn about the environment experientially through hikes and other outdoor activities. They will also explore the challenges associated with the interplay between technology and social media, shifting youth cultures, environmental sustainability, and Bhutan's geopolitical location. To understand how the Bhutan Baccalaureate seeks to develop the ability of participants to navigate and adapt to emerging trends, fostering resilience and informed decision-making in an ever-changing global landscape, they will meet with students and teachers at The Royal Academy and Paro College of Education.

## **Week 6:**

Returning to online classes in Week 6 on their return home, participants will reflect on their learning journey and experiences during the in-person, in-lace component. They will prepare and present their learning journey to the faculty and peers, through their medium of choice, focusing on what they have learnt and what potential exists to apply their learnings in their own unique context.



## Week 7:

During the final week, participants will report on the progress of their roadmap and their self-curated project, sharing ideas of how the project could be developed further, beyond the programme. The participants complete and submit their final reflective essay (3,000 words). They will meet their mentors to bring closure to the programme and provide feedback on ways in which to extend or improve the programme for future groups of learners.



## LEARNING ASSESSMENT

The participants will be encouraged to assess the success of the programme in their own ways, against their own backstories and roadmaps. Additionally, Druk Gyalpo's Institute and Paro College of Education will assess their participation in terms of the enthusiasm and commitment they display in learning, their engagement in learning activities, their presentations, and the quality of the report they produce and share their self-curated project. The assessments will also include a 1,000-word, reflective backstory at the end of the first two weeks of the programme, a learning showcase during the sixth week and a 3,000-word, final reflective essay at the end of the seven weeks. The participants will be awarded a statement indicating the quality of their participation that they may submit for credit at their own institution. For participants enrolled in a tertiary course within Bhutan, this programme can contribute towards their degree.

## PROGRAMME FEES

The programme fee per participant is **USD 2,900**. The programme fee includes:

- tuition costs
- accommodation
- main meals while in Paro, Bhutan
- costs associated with excursions and cultural activities related to the programme, including local transport

The programme fee does not include:

- international flights or transport from participants' homes to Paro
- personal insurance, or any incidental personal expenses

## ENROLMENT

To provide participants a rich learning experience, the number of places is capped at 20. While applicants can enrol in this course on an individual basis, it is considered more advantageous for universities abroad to assist small groups of 3 to 5 students to enrol before 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024, contacting DGI directly on [bhutaniep.pce@rub.edu.bt](mailto:bhutaniep.pce@rub.edu.bt).





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