

PhD programme in Anthropology planned for 2019

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The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) has plans to introduce its first doctoral programme in Anthropology at the College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS) from 2019.

A project team from the Institutional Development Grant (IDG) is working on the development of a PhD programme. The team comprises of president and lecturers from CLCS, international coordinator, internal coordinator, and external Bhutanese and foreign advisors.

Tarayana centre for social research and development's senior researcher and strategic advisor, Dr Ritu Verma, who is also an international coordinator of the project, said the PhD programme would centre on the four pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and their sub-fields, anthropology of the Himalayas and Bhutan, anthropology of development, environmental anthropology, and political anthropology.

Dr Ritu Verma said development of the programme would span over a period of 5 years centred on knowledge, network-

ing, capacity strengthening, approval/validation and piloting, and informal collaboration with renowned anthropologists in the region, University of California and other universities.

"The objective is to develop a PhD programme and also to work towards becoming an institution for the study of anthropology in Bhutan and of the Himalayas," she said. "We're glad that three renowned international anthropologists are helping us."

The team conducted the first set of workshops on October 7 and 9 where members discussed different perspectives to help brainstorm and put the best PhD programme together.

Dr Ritu added there was a need for such a programme because many studies or articles on state of scholarships in Bhutan and state of anthropologists have shown the need to identify gaps and to develop anthropology capacity in the country.

"We find that most of the research done in Bhutan today has quantitative data, but lacks qualitative data, which gives answers to why there is an issue," she said, adding that with Bhutan going through many changes



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in different context, qualitative research would help understand the reasons. It would also help policy makers with information.

Dr Ritu Verma said that having a PhD programme in the country would be economical.

CLCS's dean of research and industrial links, Ngawang Jamtso, said the college has a dedicated department for the study of culture, language and religion, and thus, was thought to be the best place to develop and sustain a PhD in Anthropology.

He said that with strong foundation for the study of culture in

place, CLCS hopes to develop a PhD programme with a long-term vision of becoming a national, regional and international institute of excellence in Anthropology.

"We are not anthropologists but most of the faculties had an opportunity to work in the field and have a sense of the subject," he said. "We're much aware about working in the field of this work, so it is the right place to upgrade such a programme."

The project aims to take in the programme's first cohort of about 10 in 2019 and is working on the semesters and faculties.

"We had an online survey where 108 scholars, especially Bhutanese, participated. We asked if there were need for such a programme, and majority replied that there was a need for one. We also asked what they wanted from the programme," said Dr Ritu Verma.

The PhD programme would be established through the IDG of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, USA with the grant of USD 25,000, in collaboration with the UCLA, the USA, the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, with support from the RUB.