

Michael Gibson

Education

DPhil (PhD) in Public Policy October 2023–Present

Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Thesis: How should the delegation of complex public tasks through contracts to private actors be governed?

MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine 2018–2019

First Class (70%)

University of Cambridge

Dissertation: Are global health inequalities unjust?

BA (Hons) Natural Sciences 2015-2018

First Class (72%)

University of Cambridge

Dissertation: The Dual-Use Dilemma in Biomedical Research

Part II: History and Philosophy of Science

Part IB Papers: Neurobiology, Pharmacology, History and Philosophy of Science

Part IA Papers: Biology of Cells, Chemistry, Evolution & Behaviour, Mathematical Biology

Professional Experience

Government Outcomes Lab, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Research and Policy Associate

November 2020-Present

Following my internship and research assistant positions, I was appointed to a long-term position through a competitive process. I undertook this work full-time from November 2020 until I commenced my DPhil studies in October 2023, at which point I reduced my hours to 0.2 FTE.

During this time, I have pioneered the GO Lab's work on formal relational contracting, leading to its establishment as a key work area of the Lab. I developed a practitioner guide to relational contracting in the public sector, which brings together a review of the academic literature and real-world practitioner insights to provide an accessible overview of the potential benefits, challenges and key considerations. I built on this co-authored work to produce an academic publication on managing risk in public contracts through a relational approach. I also organised the inaugural symposium of the Formal Relational Government Contracting Roundtable, and convened and presented in sessions on relational contracting at the Social Outcomes Conference 2022 and 2023. In addition, I undertook a research project on 25 years of attempts to better coordinate local public services in England, and explored the implications for models of accountability and central-local relations.

Alongside my research work, I am also involved in the extensive engagement work of the GO Lab. I am the Editor of the Oxford Government Outcomes Blog, alongside editing all of the Lab's major publications. I developed an editorial process to govern internal and external submissions to the Blog, and oversee submissions, editing and publication of articles. I have produced a weekly policy briefing, and presented research findings to a range of senior policymakers and practitioners.

Writer-Researcher Intern and Research Assistant

May–November 2020

During my internship and subsequent research assistant positions, I developed practical resources on outcomes-based contracts for social intervention programmes in a variety of contexts. I summarised existing GO Lab technical guidance to make it more accessible to practitioners, and produced outlines of key practical information from academic research on outcomes-based commissioning. I also produced a policy report into the UK Government's Kickstart employment scheme.

Traverse Ltd – Temporary Project Support (Response Unit)

March–May 2020

Undertook qualitative analysis on responses to public consultations on major infrastructure projects.

Publications

Academic articles

Gibson, M., van Lier, F-A. and Carter, E. (2023). Tracing 25 years of 'initiativitis' in central government attempts to join up local public services in England. *Policy & Politics*.

<https://doi.org/10.1332/030557321X16837266852569>

Gibson, M. (2022). Debate: In contracts, we trust—managing risk in public contracts through a relational approach. *Public Money & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2022.2133767>

Picker, V., Carter, E., Airoidi, M., Ronicle, J., Wooldridge, R., Llewellyn, J., Monk, L., Stone, S., **Gibson, M.**, Rosenbach, F., Hameed, T., Bregazzi, H. and van Lier, F. (2021) Social Outcomes Contracting (SOC) in Social Programmes and Public Services: A Mixed Methods Systematic Review Protocol. *Social Science Protocols*, 4, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.7565/ssp.v4.5430>

Books

Heinrich, C., Malatesta, D., Ball, N., Carter, E. and **Gibson, M.** (forthcoming 2025). Contracting for Public Value. *Under contract*, Oxford University Press.

Policy papers, reports and guides

Ball, N. and **Gibson, M.** (2022). Partnerships with principles: putting relationships at the heart of public contracts for better social outcomes. *Government Outcomes Lab, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford*. [Available here](#).

Carter, E., **Gibson, M.**, Hulse, E. and Whitworth, A. (2022). Written evidence from the Government Outcomes Lab to the Work and Pensions Select Committee Inquiry into the Plan for Jobs and employment support. *House of Commons*. [Available here](#).

Carter, E., Ball, N., **Gibson, M.** and Romanova, O. (2020) How can the government ensure the effectiveness of the Kickstart scheme? Learning from the evidence. *Government Outcomes Lab, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford*. [Available here](#).

Gibson, M. (2021). Outcomes-based contracting introductory guide. *Government Outcomes Lab, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford*. [Available here](#).

Blogs and articles

Sloan, L., **Gibson, M.**, van Lier, F. and Carter, E. (2024). Relational contracting: a fresh perspective. *Oxford Government Outcomes Blog*. [Available here](#).

Gibson, M. (2023). Can contracts facilitate trust? *Voices - Blavatnik School of Government Blog*. [Available here](#).

Gibson, M. (2022). Impact 101: What is an outcomes fund? *Pioneers Post*. [Available here](#).

Gibson, M., van Lier, F. and Carter, E. (2022). Joining up services to level up social outcomes. *Oxford Government Outcomes Blog*. [Available here](#).

Working papers

Domingos, F.D., Caluz, A.D.R.E. and **Gibson, M.** (forthcoming 2024). Financial or social investments? The pivotal role of organizational intent and nonprofit investment in supporting outcome-based contracts.

van Lier, F., Carter, E., **Gibson, M.**, Rosenbach, F. and Domingos, F.D. The Contract as a Living Instrument: Formal and relational practice in a Complex Public Service Delivery Contract.

de Gruyter, E., Carter, E., **Gibson, M.**, Domingos, F.D. and Rosenbach, F. Social Impact Bonds Align the Interests of Stakeholders? Evidence from a longitudinal evaluation of Social Impact Bonds in the UK.

Carter, E., **Gibson, M.**, Heinrich, C. and Malatesta, D. A Tyranny of Metrics vs. a Tool for Learning: Exploring performance information use on the spectrum of formal to relational in outcomes-based contracts.

Presentations (*invited)

***Panellist**, Contracts and relationships in the public sector, *Theory and Applications of Contracts Conference* – May 2024

Respondent, Firming up the handshake: exploring the potential of formal relational contracting in the public sector, *Social Outcomes Conference 2023* – September 2023

Presenter, Relational Contracting in Multi-Party Service Delivery Contracts: Laying out a research agenda, *Towards Relational Public Services Conference* - June 2023

Presenter, Partnerships with principles: putting relationships at the heart of public contracts for better social outcomes, *Social Outcomes Conference 2022* - September 2022

Presenter, Joining up services to level up social outcomes, *Social Outcomes Conference 2022* - September 2022

Scholarships and Awards

Scholarships

Government Outcomes Lab Scholarship 2023–Present

Jesus College Scholarship 2018

Awards

Bleddyn Davies Prize – Best paper by an Early Career Researcher, Policy & Politics 2023
Tracing 25 years of ‘initiativitis’ in central government attempts to join up local public services in England, with Felix-Anselm van Lier and Eleanor Carter

Teaching

Graduate Teaching Associate, Social Policy Cluster January 2024–Present
Master of Public Policy (MPP) – Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Facilitator, Leading Cross-Sector Partnerships May 2024
Executive Education/MPP Course – Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Service

Co-convenor, FoReGRound January 2024–Present
The Formal Relational Government Contracting Roundtable (FoReGRound) is a group of academics, policymakers and practitioners interested in understanding the potential and challenges to a formal relational contracting approach in the public sector. I organised the inaugural session in Oxford (September 2023) along with colleagues Dr Felix-Anselm van Lier and Dr Eleanor Carter, and support ongoing communication around future meetings of the group.

Training

Advanced Qualitative Methods January–March 2024
University of Oxford, Department of Politics and International Relations

Introduction to Statistics for Political Science October–December 2023
University of Oxford, Department of Politics and International Relations

Qualitative Methods and Fieldwork April 2022
Oxford DPIR Spring School in Advanced Methods