

Professor Jo Beall is one of the most outstanding academics working in the field of international development today. Both her research and her influence are truly global: her work crosses disciplinary boundaries as well as continents, and her research has shaped international policy and practice while also advancing scholarly understanding.

Jo began her academic career as a student in Durban, South Africa, where she worked part-time as a secretary in a clothing factory. Seeing the appalling working conditions of the employees – who were mostly female and black – led her to becoming an activist with the United Democratic Front, one of the most significant groups leading the fight against apartheid.

As a result of her anti-apartheid activities, Jo was imprisoned and held in solitary confinement for three months. As a British citizen she was able to leave the country but was not able to be a full-time mother to her only son for nearly a decade. These early experiences fired her commitment to social progress, justice and equality, and have inspired her work ever since.

After completing her doctoral work at the London School of Economics, Jo joined its teaching staff in the Department of Social Policy before becoming Professor of Development Studies in the LSE's Development Studies Institute, which she directed for three years and where she also ran its research theme on cities and fragile states. Prior to the LSE she taught at University College London and has previously held visiting professorships at the University of Natal and University of Cape Town in South Africa.

Here at The Open University, we have a very warm and longstanding relationship with Professor Beall. She has supported us in a range of roles: from being an external examiner, a regular speaker, and champion of our global masters programme in Development Management. She has also authored chapters on urban poverty and sustainable development in cities in publications coming out of our degrees in International Studies.

In fact, Jo has well over one hundred publications to her name, including eight books and seven special journal issues. Her work is grounded in political sociology and embraces all aspects of development, from conflict and terrorism, to democracy and governance, to gender and women's rights.

She focuses on the challenges and opportunities inherent in cities, particularly those affected by war and those in developing countries, addressing issues of urban development and urban governance.

Her work on violence in cities has been invaluable in helping to identify and address 'tipping points' for cities in crisis, while also helping to improve stability, well-being and livelihoods over the longer term.

This work has, of course, taken her all around the world, to Africa, Latin America and Asia, with extended stays in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. She naturally retains a personal as well as a professional interest in South Africa, and has recently served as Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Cape Town, responsible for academic affairs, social engagement and the university's international strategy.

Jo joined the British Council in 2011 and now serves on their Executive Board as Director of Education and Society. While working to promote the UK's higher education sector abroad, she has been a vocal advocate for international students in Britain, recognising their economic, social and cultural contribution. She has also warned against restrictions on student and graduate mobility, which might reduce our ability to compete with the best universities and attract the best students from around the world. She holds a number of advisory and honorary academic posts, and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Science.

Honoured as a scholar of exceptional broad insight; recognised as an outstanding teacher by her students and colleagues; and valued internationally by governments and non-government organisations alike, we are delighted to add to Jo's numerous awards and accolades today.

In doing so, we wish to acknowledge her extensive contribution to international development and the benefits her work has brought to some of the poorest citizens of the world, as well as her important role in academia and education.

By the authority of the Senate, I present to you for the degree of Doctor of the University, Professor Jo Beall.