



Patrick Boland

Currently at: Conexus

Position: Executive Coach and Leadership Consultant

Graduated: 2015

Degree(s): Higher Diploma in Theological Studies



Alumni Profile

What do you currently do?

At the moment I do quite a few different things. I'm an executive coach and a leadership consultant as well as a psychotherapist. I also do some writing and content creation on spirituality with the Centre for Action and Contemplation and Fr Richard Rohr.

How did the completion of the HDip influence your professional life?

Originally, I didn't think it would but it really has. I've written a couple of books with the Centre for Action and Contemplation and I'm currently writing a third book with Fr Richard as well as designing an online course on one of his older books, *Falling Upward*. Having a theological qualification, in addition to my background in teaching, gave credence to what they knew of me. Indirectly, it gave me a further grounding in things that I had already studied myself. But there were a few key insights from the course which I found just fascinating and really helpful in terms of your praxis, how you live your life and the choices you make. When I work with senior leaders in companies and organisations there's always the spiritual dimension there in regards to, 'Why are we doing what we're doing?' or, 'What kind of society are we trying to create?' 'What kind of interpersonal dynamics and communication do we value? Where does this come from and how do we respect each other regardless of cultural background or beliefs? So, on a meta-level, the theological training was really worthwhile when I combine it with the psychological training that I have and with what I try to help teams and individuals to do. It forms you as a person, and it influences the kind of work you choose to do. At the deepest level, that is the most profound way in which the course has impacted me and my career.

What do you remember most from your time at St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth?

I particularly remember some of the students, the great characters in the class and their interactions with the lecturers. I loved the in-depth

teaching of scriptural theology and I do remember particularly great lectures on church history and world religions. Getting a sense of the historical context of faith communities and contemporary social and cultural anthropology was fascinating. I remember writing essays on topics as varied as the theology of religious extremism and the existentialism as Soren Kierkegaard. It was brilliant stuff. I got so much from the course. Some of the content was really excellent.

My personal interest was always in spirituality but in the absence of good theology it's pretty hard to develop a healthy spirituality. I had always read a lot on the topic, so formally getting to study theology was really personally enriching.

One of the highlights for me was going through the last two millennia of various branches of theology and tracing the origin and evolution of ideas and practices that still influence us today. It brings such clarity to the context in which we find ourselves today.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering a degree at SPPU?

In addition to being recognised by the Teaching Council, which is very beneficial if you want to go into teaching, it also gives a great grounding in the fundamentals of theology, particularly if you want to consider going into further education afterwards.

Some people may be put off by the evenings, the weekends and the academic essays but it's not an extremely heavy course load. It is a great opportunity to explore some ideas you might already be thinking about. I have the fondest memories of being there and it's a pity it's only one year long.

And lastly, if you could describe your time at SPPU in a phrase or a few words, what would they be?

The chats: the lecturers were always willing to stay back and answer any questions you had and there were a few times that you'd be standing out in the cold and dark in the carpark, continuing the chats- even after the free tea and biscuits were gone!



Above: Patrick graduating from St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth in 2015

Below: Patrick delivering a TEDx Talk on Failure and Importance of Mentors

