

INORMS SCOPE Workshop Case Study:

University of Glasgow: Supporting the careers of others.

May 2021

SCOPE is a five-step framework for evaluating research responsibly.

It invites evaluators to:

S - START with what they value about the entity being evaluated;

C – Consider the CONTEXT in which the evaluation takes place;

O – Explore all the OPTIONS for evaluating – both quantitative and qualitative;

P – PROBE their approach for unintended consequences;

E – EVALUATE - and evaluate the evaluation.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

What was being evaluated?

How to evaluate support for the careers of other researchers in a responsible manner.

How did they go about it?

Two workshops: the first to understand with a group of current and ex-researchers what they valued about supporting the careers of others (i.e., to explore the 'S' in SCOPE); the second to consider with academic and professional staff the options for responsibly evaluating this dimension.

What were the outcomes for the University of Glasgow?

- A better understanding of what the University values about supporting the careers of others.
- An approach to the evaluation of supporting the careers of others during recruitment, including formal and informal advertising approaches, question banks and training materials.
- The development of 'Ten Conversation Points' and other materials to guide recruitment panels in evaluating a candidate's track record of, and potential for, supporting careers.

What were the learning points for the SCOPE team?

- There are super-values, values and sub-values – all are useful to inform an evaluation.
- Weighting relative values in an evaluation is an important aspect of being 'values-led'.
- The use of SCOPE as a visible, mediated process is valued by the evaluating organisation.

1 Overview of the evaluation activity

- **Partner organisation name:** University of Glasgow
- **Partner organisation lead contact:** Tanita Casci
- **INORMS REWG members involved:** Elizabeth Gadd & Baron Wolf
- **Focus of evaluation:** “We want to evaluate researchers for the extent to which they support the careers of others.”
- **Context for the workshop:** The University of Glasgow (UofG) have a forward-looking [research strategy](#) that focuses on three strands: creativity, collaboration, and careers. To support this work, they have a Research Culture Action Plan and a newly-formed Lab for Academic Culture and are well-known in the sector for their commitment to improving research culture. As part of this commitment, UofG have already amended their academic promotions criteria, and this evaluation design exercise sought to help them further understand how they could responsibly and meaningfully evaluate the extent to which careers were supported at UofG.
- Brief overview of the workshop(s):
 - a) **Dates:** 11 January 2021: SCOPE Values workshop; 23 February 2021 SCOPE Options & Probe workshop.
 - b) **Focus of each workshop:** As above.
 - c) **Pre-workshop preparation meetings:** Three meetings prior to workshop 1, one after to distil key learnings. One further meeting prior to workshop 2 to plan, and a debrief held afterwards. All meetings held with Tanita Casci (Head of Research Policy and Co-lead for the Lab for Academic Culture), Miles Padgett (Professor of Physics and Co-lead for the Lab for Academic Culture), Elizabeth Adams (Researcher Development Manager). This group are referred to in this case study as the UofG core team.
 - d) **Any learnings from the preparation stage?** (How could this be streamlined, what went well, what went less well, etc).

It proved helpful to hold an initial kick-off meeting describing what SCOPE was and wasn't. This meeting was followed up by a high-level planning meeting, after which invites to Workshop 1 were issued. This was followed by a more detailed plan for Workshop 1 including the need for a 'Park it' board for interesting issues that arose but which weren't pertinent to the evaluation. It was useful also to create a WhatsApp group of Workshop leaders for off-the-record conversations mid-Workshop. It was important to articulate who were the 'others' whose careers were being supported; i.e., was it just other researchers or students or citizens, etc.

2 The process

- a) **STARTING with what the organisation VALUED about the entity under evaluation.**

This was explored in a single 90-minute workshop with ten current or previous University of Glasgow researchers at a range of career stages and disciplines, a representative of the UKRI Talent Team, the INORMS and UofG core team. The plan for this session is provided in Table 1. Ultimately the aim was to explore what both evaluators and the evaluated understood by, and might value about, supporting the careers of other researchers. This was surfaced through a mixture of ice-breakers, personal reflections, small breakout groups, and plenary sessions. It was thought to be important to explore both what was and wasn't valued about supporting the careers of others, to provide a clear definition and firm boundaries. Following the options workshop, a meeting of the small UofG team met with SCOPE team members to distil the learnings into a set of five values which were circulated back to workshop participants for their feedback.
- b) **Articulating the CONTEXTS in which the organisation sought to evaluate that entity**

For the purposes of the workshops a single context was identified in order to make the process manageable; however, it was clear that UofG sought to evaluate this 'value' across a number of

contexts including Performance Development & Review, promotion, and recruitment. The 'context' for discussion at the SCOPE workshop was agreed upon by the UofG core team. It was decided to focus on evaluating for recruitment in the second workshop, as it was thought that any chosen options could also be used in some of the other internal evaluation processes. However, the reverse might not be true – i.e., data available for an internal assessment of this value (such as participation in an internal mentoring programme) would not be available for external candidates.

c) Exploring the OPTIONS for evaluating this value in these contexts

The options for evaluating were explored during a second 90-minute workshop with a different selection of ten UofG research and professional services staff, including representatives from HR. The plan for this workshop is provided in Table 2. The aim was to explore the options by which the values identified in workshop 1 might be evaluated in the recruitment process. (Probe was also considered at this workshop – see 2d). To this end, the group considered the opportunities within the existing recruitment process for evaluating this value. They then suggested ways in which this value might be assessed using these existing mechanisms. For example, whether this value should be seen as an 'essential' or 'desirable' criterion, and what interview questions might help to surface a commitment to this value.

d) PROBING the proposed solutions for the 4 key questions in the SCOPE methodology

Having explored some options, the group formed into smaller breakout groups of 4-5 individuals to consider how the options for evaluating this value might lead to unwanted outcomes such as discrimination, unintended consequences and gaming.

e) Setting up an EVALUATION of the evaluation approach

The initial plan was to explore how the evaluation approach might itself be evaluated during this second workshop. However, given the time available, it was agreed to revisit this as part of the core UofG team after the second workshop. We outlined the how SCOPE can be used to evaluate a SCOPE evaluation by focussing on: i) what UofG valued about their evaluation, e.g., was it individuals who were committed to supporting the careers of others, careers that have actually been supported, or the creation of an expectation, a 'culture' of support?; ii) what the context for the evaluation might be, e.g., do they want to monitor progress, provide success stories, etc.; iii) explore the options for evaluating, e.g., through staff surveys, new or existing data sources around the destination of graduates/staff, and iv) to probe their choice(s) for unintended consequences.

3 Learning points for SCOPE

a) VALUES

The key learning from the Values activity was that there are lots of different levels of 'values'. We might call these super-values, values and sub-values. The term 'super-values' would incorporate high-level concepts like 'collegiality', 'community', 'honesty'. The term 'values' would include the way those high-level commitments are expressed in an institution, such as the UofG's value of 'supporting the careers of others'. The term 'sub-values' incorporates the way that value might be realised, such as the UofG's agreed list of five sub-values.

1. The act of giving something up or going out of your way to benefit someone else's career, either within their existing role or to aid transition to another role.
2. The act of giving something up or going out of your way to benefit someone else's career (e.g., time to mentor, an opportunity, authorship on publication list), with the aim of increasing one's "net" contribution to the research system.

3. Taking a coaching approach to career support, i.e., setting the expectation that a mentee will be allowed to, and be supported to, explore opportunities relevant to career development and that a mentor need not have specific knowledge to support that development.
4. The act of lobbying externally to enable better support for researcher careers (either within the HEI e.g., creating more permanent posts, or externally e.g. addressing the steep career pyramid).
5. Thinking about & valuing careers both within and beyond academia.

Whilst it was found to be beneficial to explore and understand these sub-values when seeking to evaluate for a particular value, in some evaluation contexts the higher level 'value' would suffice. For example, an interview question might simply ask candidates how they supported the careers of others, and that would be a value-led evaluation question. However, the specific aspects of such support as listed in the sub-values could help candidates understand what was expected of them, and might lead to more nuanced interview questions such as 'Can you tell me about a time you supported a researcher into a career outside academia?'

b) CONTEXT

A key learning point here is that when seeking to identify alternative approaches to evaluation for *recruitment* in academia, unless there is an appetite and/or opportunity to completely overhaul a recruitment approach, recruitment for permanent posts is usually subject to strict, long-established policies and processes. The only real scope for innovation is therefore in the types of questions asked at interview, the use of a particular practical test, or the supply of some new data or training to panel members. Due to these constraints the Options discussion was largely limited to what alternative interview questions might be asked. However, the outcomes from these discussions did ultimately go wider than this.

c) OPTIONS

The group agreed that the opportunities for evaluating support for careers (according to the values in 3(a)) within the existing recruitment process were:

- Amendments to the generic job descriptions
- Amendments to a Person Specification, in terms of essential and desirable criteria
- Advertisements
- Shortlisting process
- Standard interview questions
- Training for appointment committees and PIs for when informal approaches were made
- Post-recruitment rejection letters

The last consideration was a particularly interesting one, namely, that post-recruitment rejection letters could embody the University's identified values and provide feedback to candidates that further supports their career.

The group agreed that supporting the careers of others should be seen as an essential criterion, using a form of wording along the lines of "Provide evidence of a commitment to supporting the careers of others."

The majority of the session focussed on what alternative interview questions could be asked. Competency-based interview questions were suggested, with the option for ECRs to provide a response to hypothetical questions as they may not yet have as much experience, and therefore evidence, to draw on.

An interesting observation from an HR staff member highlighted that while it was possible to place some emphasis on a new value in the form of supporting the careers of others, this would need to be weighed against – and may sometimes conflict with – other values such as a strong publication record. If researchers were being asked to both give up first-author publishing opportunities to support others, and still be expected to demonstrate first-author publications, this could be problematic. This was a useful learning point, which may need feeding back into Values: it's not only what we value, but the extent to which we value each value that matters.

d) PROBE

Running a probe exercise prior to the options actually being agreed proved to be a largely hypothetical, although not entirely unhelpful, exercise. A useful summary of the key findings from the Probe investigation was provided by Elizabeth Adams:

It was felt that individuals at earlier career stages, or from disciplines that do not typically have a 'group' culture (e.g., Arts) would be disadvantaged if evidence of career support were to be made an essential criterion. Workloads are already high in HE and colleagues with caring responsibilities or disabilities may struggle to find the time to support others in the way that they would like. Equally, under-represented groups might themselves have fewer opportunities to 'pass on'. People coming in from other sectors or international colleagues might not be aware of some of the unwritten rules of how academia and career progression work and so might not be sure what is expected in terms of supporting others (although this could be countered by induction, expectation setting and enabling strategies).

A requirement to focus on careers might be gamed if people aren't fully honest at interview stage or in evidencing their track record of contributions (e.g., authorship and articulating contributions / leadership in projects).

Unintended consequences might be in having to compromise on other parameters (e.g., time spent in interviews / too many questions and criteria already). An additional essential criterion could put people off (including those in under-represented groups) if they don't fully understand what is expected or don't feel they fit / haven't had previous opportunity (or evidence) to meet this criterion.

One key learning point is that whilst Probe needs to be considered throughout the evaluation design process, and during Option design in particular, it should also be reconsidered after the options have been chosen *and* after the evaluation has been run. Some unintended consequences are, by definition, hard to predict.

e) EVALUATION

The team have decided to integrate the evaluation of their approach to evaluating support for the careers of others with their related work on improving research culture at UofG. Ultimately, they value support for the careers of others as it will lead to better quality research. However, this outcome is achieved by improving the experiences of researchers at UofG. To this end, they plan to assess whether individuals are experiencing better support for their careers through engagement with CPD, destinations of PGRs, and staff surveys.

4 The outcomes for University of Glasgow

a) The outcome of the workshop. How will this organisation now be evaluating this dimension?

A summary of the outcomes of Workshop 2 was provided by Elizabeth Adams as follows:

The team is exploring suggestions around pre-interview advertising / discussions (to clarify expectations in this area), generating example question banks for the interview panel, training of interview panels (including on disciplinary or career stage differences in terms of opportunities) and evaluating the approach to interviews. Specific actions include:

- *Developing a question bank (“10 interview questions”) to support an interview panel in assessing a track record of, or potential for, supporting the careers of others. The same question set could also be used on self-reflection, e.g., at PDR or promotion.*
- *Encouraging researchers to include reference to support for careers in biographies /webpages.*
- *Including a requirement to evidence support for careers in selective internal (e.g., funding) schemes.*
- *Providing guidance for researchers when evidencing support for careers in applications for research funding or forms of recognition.*

b) What feedback did the organisation provide around the use of the SCOPE framework?

i) Did working to the SCOPE framework help you think through your evaluation problem?

Yes. Carving out protected time to think the evaluation problem through in accordance with a rigorous framework was really valuable. Of particular value was the opportunity to discuss the problem with some third parties versed in evaluation best practice and the application of SCOPE. The team emphasised the importance of this expert facilitation to a successful outcome. It was suggested that some kind of ‘train the trainer’ workshops from the SCOPE team could be useful to organisations, but having an external facilitator brings neutrality and constructive challenge to assumptions internal parties might otherwise not have.

ii) Which elements of SCOPE were most/least useful?

The team felt that examining an organisation’s values prior to embarking on an evaluation is very easy to overlook and yet all evaluations need to start here. A stated set of values is very important even if you don’t agree with them! As values are so fundamental, the UofG team suggested this should always be a separate element of any evaluation design: ‘COPE depends on S’! The team also felt that the point at which they selected their ‘context’ for the workshop was a key decision point and a mediated discussion to make this decision was critical. The importance of leaving a workshop with outcomes was seen to be important too. The post-workshop debriefs (‘having a reflection point off-camera’) were important in this regard as was a commitment from the team to synthesise and act on their learnings.

iii) SCOPE can be used as a ‘skeleton’ (i.e., an invisible internal framework that holds something up) or an exoskeleton that is highly visible. SCOPE workshops are the latter - did this work for you? Did it help or hinder?

The visible framework of SCOPE was very helpful in this context as discussed in b(i) above.

iv) Do you think the outcomes are different to what you might have developed if you had not used SCOPE?

Yes. The team felt that they would have had outcomes if the SCOPE framework had not been followed, but that they might have been different. They did not foresee the outcomes that were developed and they do now have outcomes that are going to be useful.

v) Did the process of engaging with SCOPE bring about other benefits - not necessarily related to the evaluation design?

There have been positive ramifications beyond the evaluation design process resulting from the workshops. The development of the 'interview questions' and other recruitment guides are one example here, developed for career support, but likely to be extended to other research topics such as open research. The team also felt that involving colleagues from other parts of the organisation (in this case, from HR) to follow the SCOPE framework helped to define the complementary roles of the various professional services teams.

vi) Anything else the team wanted to share?

Whilst the workshop generated ideas for evaluating, the UofG team observed that should these not be possible to implement immediately, they would 'start somewhere else' with embedding this.

There are often impediments to 'best laid plans' but where the commitment was strong, alternative routes could be found.

Workshop 1 Plan.

11.00	Introduction	
5min	Lizzie	Intro to INORMS and SCOPE – describe the framework we are operating in. This is the first of two workshops and will be recorded.
5min	Tanita & Miles (slides, to be pre-circulated)	The values/context at UofG: culture values (focusing on supporting each other to succeed; link to Careers pillar of strategy. Why we are doing this: ultimately to make Glasgow a better place to do research and do better research Define 'others' and 'careers' (broader than just academic). State the desired outcome of the session, i.e. where we want to get to by the end of the day (=distil the workshop into an agreed set of values). See Ottoline Leyser quote Explain what will happen in the workshop (timetable on slide)
5min	Elizabeth	Introductions Any questions before we begin
11.15	Icebreaker: Write and Share	
	Miles	2 min for Miles to explain rules, 2 min for writing; 10 min for reporting back. Do not let people have more than 40s each! Exercise: Write down a time when you've seen or experienced amazing support for career development for others. Be specific in your example.
11.30	Breakout	
16min	Elizabeth	Groups should nominate a facilitator for each room, who will also feedback from each session. Everyone has all the topics but asked to focus on their given topics. Task: In 15min, discuss examples of what good career support could look like in specific settings. Group one: outputs and visibility Group two: Research funding and developing contacts beyond academia Group three: Outputs and developing contacts beyond academia ----- Examples shared on padlet
10min	Elizabeth	Facilitators for each breakout to share top 2 examples per topic with entire group
5 min break		

12.00	Group discussion	
	Lizzie and Baron 15min	SLIDE CONTAINING QUESTIONS – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Who benefits when careers are supported? (University, School/RI, Individual, Discipline, Society?)</i> 2. <i>What value results when careers are supported?</i> 3. <i>What don't we value about supporting the careers of others? (What are the boundaries or the things that go wrong? Too much bias or heavy shepherding?)</i> 4. <i>What does the institution gain/lose from supporting careers?</i> 5. <i>What does the individual gain/lose or from supporting careers?</i>
	Elizabeth	Round-up discussion: Identify where institution and individual values align, and bad values are minimised?
12.20	Conclusions	
	Miles and Tanita (5min)	to distil the workshop into an agreed set of values
	Lizzie (5min)	Communicate next steps: workshop leads will reflect on what values to take forward to Workshop 2; these would be shared with Workshop 1 participants, for comment. Close.

Table 1. Plan for Workshop 1 – SCOPE Values. Credit: Elizabeth Adams

Workshop 2 Plan.

11.00	Introduction	
5min	Elizabeth	I will say hello and thank everyone for participating, introduce Baron and Lizzie and outline that we will introduce the workshop process, recap on what happened at workshop one and then have a mix of plenary and breakout discussion. We will write this up and feed back to them after.
	Baron	These workshop build on the many actions already being done to support careers in Glasgow, as formalised in the Careers Concordat:
	Miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support for PIs (e.g., career conversion starters) - collegiality introduced into our professorial assessments <p>Outcomes could be broad and informal, ie extends beyond HR formal processes in to day-to day tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might PIs be supported (interviewing for RAs, supporting RAs day-to-day) • Communication of expectations • How to fill in grants/CV/ prize nominations

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment gives us a reminder/framework for what we do already <p>Great to have HR here to keep us on the straight and narrow, and make us aware of the practicalities.</p> <p>Intro to INORMS and SCOPE – describe the framework we are operating in. This is the second of two workshops. What we want to get out of it by the end of today.</p> <p>The previous workshop / how we arrived at the list of things that are important in supporting the careers of others. The recruitment process and the point of intervention</p>
11.15	Plenary: Options	
	Lizzie	Looking at the 'O' of SCOPE process and current recruitment application and interview process.
11.30	Breakout: Probe	
16min	Elizabeth	<p>Three groups of five. Each should nominate a facilitator for each room, who will also feedback from each session. Everyone has all the topics but asked to focus on their given topics.</p> <p>Task: In 15min, discuss where this might go wrong. Who could be disadvantaged? Perverse outcomes.</p>
10min	Elizabeth	Facilitators for each breakout to share 2min each of key concerns or issues or challenges
5 min break		
12.00	Plenary	
10min	Miles	How might this map across to promotion or PDR?
10min	Lizzie	How will we evaluate our evaluation?
12.20	Conclusions	
	Miles and Tanita (5min)	<p>Next steps</p> <p>Ask for any final reflections or comments</p>

Table 2. Plan for Workshop 2 – SCOPE Options, Probe and Evaluate. Credit: Elizabeth Adams