

INORMS Research Evaluation Group

SCOPE Mini Case Study: Creating awareness about responsible research evaluation: SCOPE used in interviews with Higher Education (HE) leaders in Denmark

June 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

Danish universities evaluate research and researchers for many different purposes. However, frameworks, statements, and guidelines for responsible research evaluation (e.g. SCOPE, DORA, and Leiden Manifesto) are not that prominent in discussions about research evaluations. Therefore, this mini case is not an implementation of the SCOPE framework, but SCOPE is used in interviews with HE leaders to create awareness about responsible research evaluation.

What was being investigated?

Interviews with ten Danish HE leaders to investigate:

- Barriers for initiating discussions about value-driven responsible research evaluation.
- Ideas for incentives for engaging in value-driven responsible research evaluation.

During the interviews, the SCOPE framework worked as an illustration of how to conduct value-driven responsible research evaluation. The analysis of the interviews will be reported in a research article. This mini case, however, focuses on the use of SCOPE in the interviews.

How did they go about it?

Personal interviews with ten HE leaders from the eight universities in Denmark. The ten interviews cover all major research fields (humanities, medicine, etc.). The first part of the interviews investigates the current research evaluation practices at the faculty or

department, whereas the second part discusses the possibilities and barriers related to the implementation of the SCOPE framework.

What were the outcomes for the HE leaders at Danish universities?

The HE leaders were interested in sharing their views on and experiences with research evaluations as well as getting new knowledge about research evaluations. All were engaged in research evaluation as the one initiating an evaluation, having specific responsibilities during an evaluation process, and/or as users of the results of an evaluation.

Before the interviews, none of the HE leaders was familiar with the SCOPE framework or applied other formalized approaches of value-driven responsible research evaluation. However, it was easy for them to relate to the five steps in SCOPE. The HE leaders saw SCOPE as a checklist. Some were very positive towards the framework while others saw the overall framework as reasonable but had objections to some parts of the framework.

During the interview, the HE leaders became aware of their own practices in relation to research evaluations, for example, more aware of pitfalls of standard metrics and metrics driven evaluations. Thus, SCOPE provided inspiration for small or large changes in the current research evaluation practices.

What were the learning points for the SCOPE team?

Research evaluation proved to have immediate interest among the Danish HE leaders. Overall, personal interviews were effective for creating awareness about value-driven responsible research evaluation among HE leaders, who are important stakeholders in relation to local research evaluations. Hence, approaching HE leaders by personal communication is a valuable tool that can be used alone or supplementary to SCOPE implementation workshops for practitioners.

The interviews with the ten Danish HE leaders will not result in immediate implementations of the SCOPE framework considering that the full framework would be a radical change to the current practices. However, the interviews can be seen as a micro implementation of the SCOPE framework as the interviews created awareness about the framework and provided the HE leaders with new knowledge on how to conduct responsible research evaluations.

Who was involved?

- Partner organization name: The eight universities in Denmark.
- Partner organization lead contact: Ten HE leaders accepted the interview invitation. The interview persons are anonymous.
- INORMS REWG members involved: Marianne Gauffriau (Copenhagen University Library, The Royal Danish Library, Denmark), Lone Bredahl Jensen (University of Southern Denmark, Denmark), Tanja Strøm (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway), Laura Himanen (Tampere University, Finland).
- Dates: The ten interviews were conducted February – May 2021.