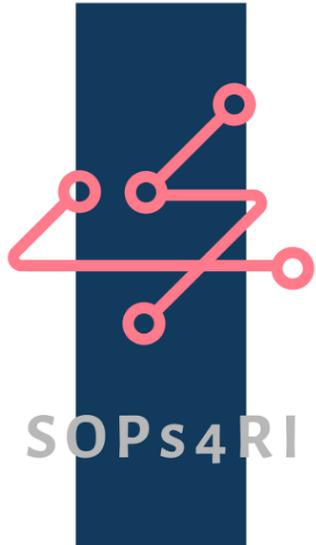


Research Integrity: it should be a no-brainer

George Gaskell

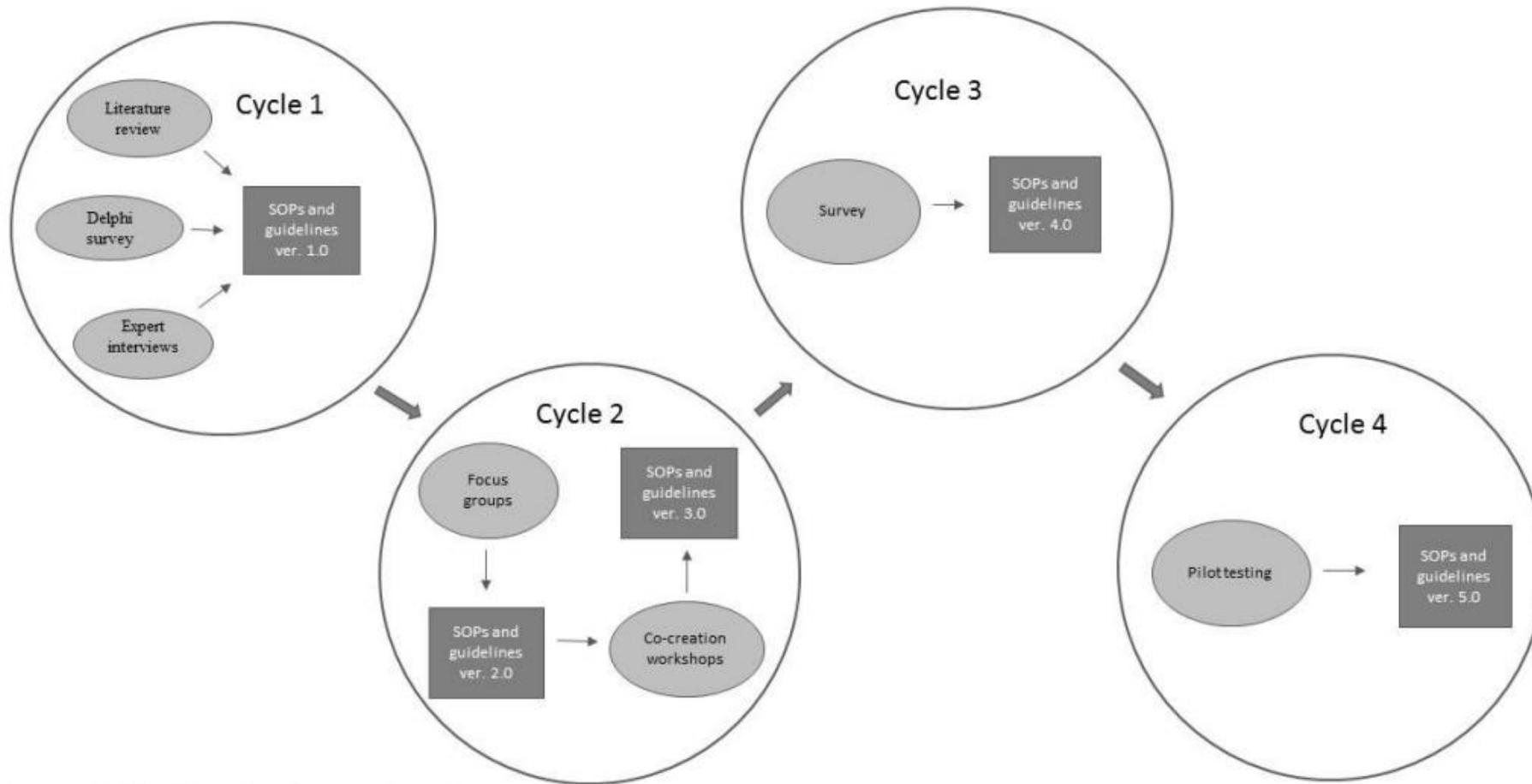
London School of Economics and Political Science



Autobiography

- Trained in experimental psychology and physiology, PhD in behavioural decision theory
- Joined LSE's Department of Social Psychology
- Established Department of Methodology with C.O'Muircheartaigh now at U.Chicago
- LSE Pro-director for seven years
- Member of the SOPs4RI (Standard operating procedures for research integrity) project led by Neils Mejlgaard and Mads Sorensen in Aarhus

SOPs4RI: A bottom up project road map



Tool box



RI has its critics

- “If RI is the answer, what is the question?”
- “We have been doing good research for years, why impose this on us?”
- “Oh dear! More bureaucracy”
- “It will end up as another box ticking exercise”
- “Implementing GDPR was a burden, not another one please!”
- “Like research ethics, we’ll end up plagiarising paragraphs from previous grant applications”

If RI is the answer: what is the question?

- Well documented in the NASEM report 'Fostering integrity in research'
 - The continued problem of detrimental or questionable research practices
 - In extremis FFPs – falsification, fabrication and plagiarism
 - Unpublishable research and retractions
- Resulting in
 - The shredding of institutional and personal reputations
 - Challenges to the validity and value of science and public confidence
- And institutional responses
 - The US has been far more legalistic and dirigiste than Europe
 - NSF's Office of Inspector General and the Office for Research Integrity
 - Europe until recently – exhortation to follow European code of conduct for research integrity and self regulation
- **Winds of change from EU**

Horizon Europe: standard application form clause 6

We declare that the proposal complies with ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity as set out in the ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity), as well as applicable international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.

More to the point

“Appropriate procedures, policies and structures are in place to foster responsible research practices, to prevent questionable research practices and research misconduct, and to handle allegations of breaches of the principles and standards in the Code of Conduct”.

A second stream of opinion; the benefits of RI for institutions, research groups, departments, researchers and the public

- Quality of research – reproducibility and transparency
- Trust of colleagues and the public
- Competitive in Horizon Europe
- An attractive partner for Horizon Europe projects – all the more so following Brexit
- An institutional research culture that attracts scholars, ERC grant holders and post-docs etc
- A collaborative research environment in which talent is developed
- The protection of research participants
- And, in the commercial sector (pharma), safe and effective products

International research integrity survey (IRIS)

- An online survey of 65,000 active researchers covering natural, medical, and social sciences and the humanities in over 30 countries
- Respondents were asked about:
 - their motivation and self-confidence in supporting research with integrity;
 - if they consider their organization is effective in delivering best RI practices;
 - how much institutional oversight of RI is desirable;
 - how closely their organization aligns with best practice;
 - the dominant channels of communication on RI topics;
 - which topics they would welcome additional support.
- Findings and data set to be published in the summer 2022

Respondents were asked whether any of these QRPs 'contributed' to their published research in the last 3 years

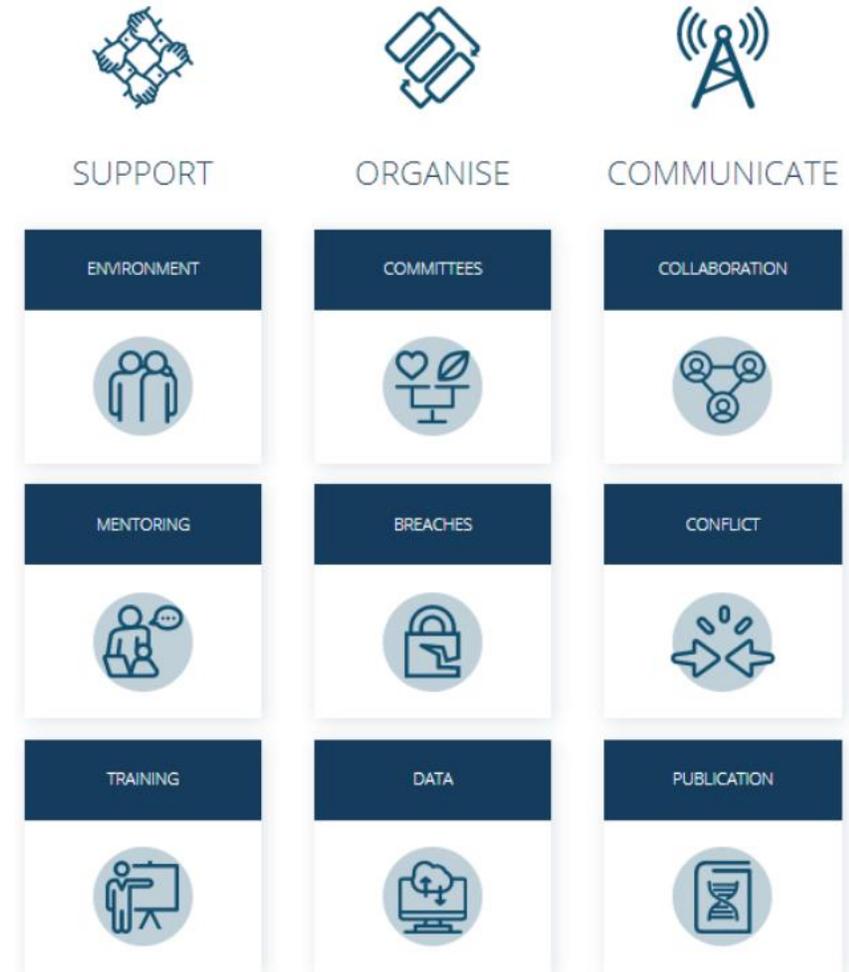
- Including authors who hadn't contributed sufficiently
- Not conducting a thorough peer review
- Inadequately supervising junior co-worker
- Not reporting findings if contradicting your theories
- Failing to cite publications that contradict your beliefs
- Carrying out research without ethical approval
- Failing to disclose a conflict of interest
- Using a researcher's idea without giving credit

We find a non-trivial prevalence of admissions of QRPs

We also find that many researchers want training and for their institution to deliver 'best practice'.

The SOPs study identified three broad topic areas in RI

- Prioritising people and enhancing competencies
 - RI training, supervision and mentoring, and environment
- Organisational policies and procedures
 - Ethics structures, procedures for whistle blowers and those in breach of integrity in research conduct
- Clarity and transparency
 - Data management, research collaborations and declaration of interests



The challenge of embedding research integrity

- No magic bullets, no 'one best method'
- Cultural change takes time; most universities are not noted for speed of innovation
- Current resource commitment - many have just a single RI enthusiast
- RI impacts on a number of functional areas
- It would benefit from a coalition of enthusiasts in the key divisions - Research, HR, Data manager, academics involved in the PhD academy, teaching and staff development policies and methodologists.

Sources

- Website of the SOPs4RI project. www.sops4ri.eu
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Fostering Integrity in Research*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press (2017).
- All European Academies. *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity: Revised Edition*. Berlin: All European Academies (2017).
- European Commission. *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination*. Brussels: The European Commission (2018).