



The Centre on Skills, Knowledge & Organisational Performance

Research and action for system change across
post-16 education, skills and economic futures

ABOUT US

System change through research

Connecting education, skills, and economic futures

As we navigate accelerating industrial transitions, deepening social inequalities, rapid technological disruption, environmental pressures, and global economic shift, SKOPE believes that transforming education and skills systems is key to building a fairer, greener, and more productive society.

Founded in 1998 through an unprecedented three rounds of funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), SKOPE is a world-leading research centre at the University of Oxford and undertakes rigorous, interdisciplinary research at the intersection of education, skills, employment, and the economy. Our work engages with the political economy of post-16 education and training (E&T), from vocational and academic pathways to work-based learning and adult education.

Our cutting-edge research examines how the evolving dynamics of skills supply and demand shape productivity, economic growth, and social justice in today's labour market. This shows that to tackle today's biggest challenges, from climate transition to labour market disruption through AI, we must rethink and reform how education and skills systems are designed, governed, and delivered.

Drawing on a network of over 100 leading researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, we combine academic rigour, multidisciplinary research, and policy insights to drive system-level change (see above):

Support fair and inclusive access at all levels of E&T

Address real individual, industrial, economic, environmental, and social needs

Improve productivity and organisational performance in education and training, industry, and the economy

Enable joined-up policymaking across E&T, skills, and innovation

OUR WORK

Applying system thinking to skills and education

As the world-leading centre of research on education, skills, work, and economic futures, SKOPE is committed to systems thinking to understand and shape how policy and practice co-evolve from individual and organisational levels to regional and global skills and economic systems. Our work recognises that education systems must be cohesive, inclusive, and possess strong absorptive capacity, designed not only for economic outcomes but to foster individual potential, advance social justice, and support environmental transformation. As such, we work across three levels:



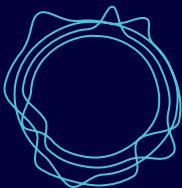
Micro – Individuals

Exploring skill formation and deployment, employability, social mobility, career aspirations, and the needs of individuals as they transition into work and progress through their careers, with a focus on equity, justice, and inclusion.



Meso – E&T providers and industry

Understanding how E&T providers, industry stakeholders and employers shape access and participation at all levels of post-16 E&T, respond to evolving skills needs, and drive economic performance, growth, and change, with a particular focus on the importance of place.



Macro – Skills systems

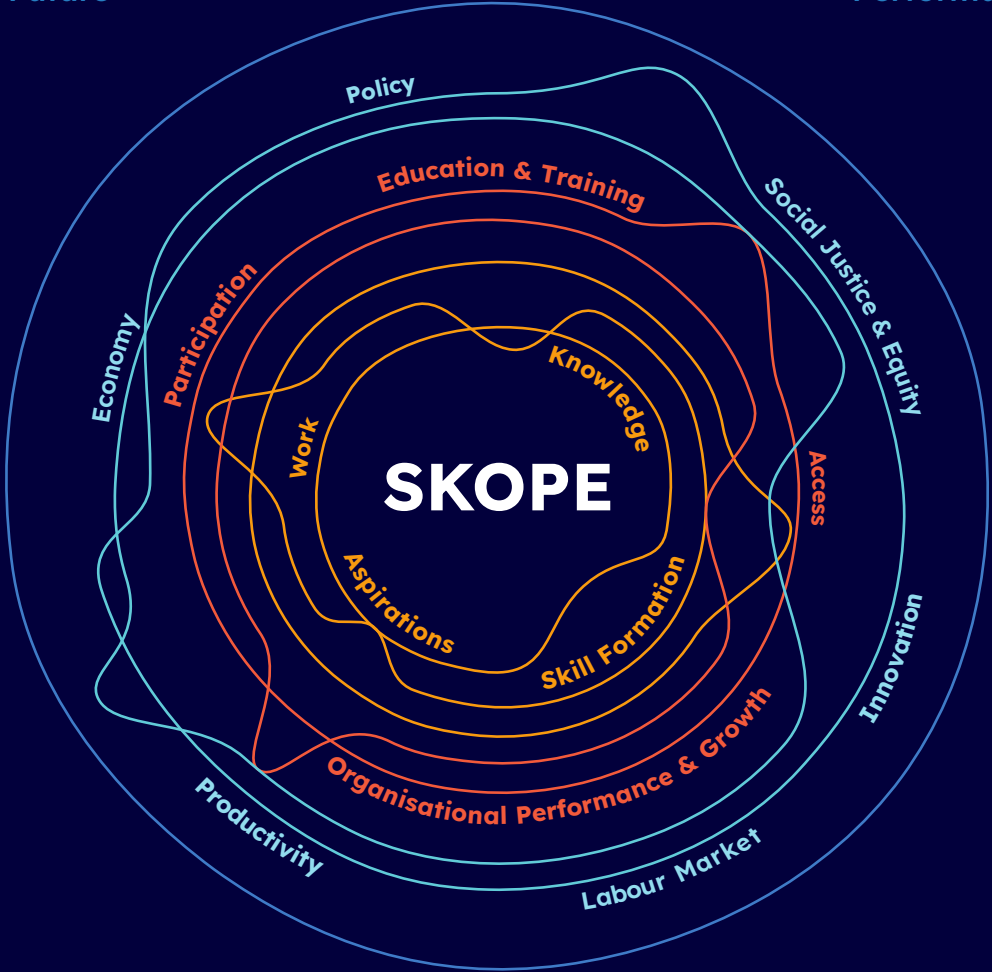
Analysing and shaping regional, national, and global skills and innovation policy, productivity, and performance within the context of technological, economic, and environmental transformation.

E&T for a
Changing Future

E&T Organisational
Performance

Industrial Transformation
and Economic Growth

Skills System
Policy



OUR APPROACH

Building a fairer, sustainable and prosperous future

SKOPE aims to support the design and delivery of post-16 skills and education systems that work for individual learners, employers, and the economy. Building on our systems perspective, SKOPE's research spans four interconnected and dynamic strands covering the whole political economy of skills, knowledge, and organisational performance. These cutting-edge areas not only reflect the complex, multi-level nature of post-16 skills and education but also address urgent place-based challenges, driving forward innovative knowledge and impact at the regional, national, and global levels.

Skills System Policy:

Researching skills and innovation policy approaches and structures and supporting the development of more integrated tertiary-based E&T systems, rooted in principles of collaborative and coordinated governance.

E&T Organisational Performance:

Examining and supporting E&T providers' and institutional behaviour, culture, and practice, helping them to deliver quality E&T, adapt effectively, change and evolve skills needs, and ensuring they provide accessible and equitable pathways.

Industrial Transformation and Economic Growth:

Investigating the relationship between employers and E&T and supporting employers to play a more effective role in skills systems and drive productivity and growth.

E&T for a Changing Future

Understanding evolving social and economic needs and the changes required to align skills and education systems with green transition, climate justice, technological disruption, shifting work patterns, and evolving learner needs.

Macro – Skills systems

Analysing and shaping regional, national, and global skills and innovation policy, productivity, and performance within the context of technological, economic, and environmental transformation.

Meso – E&T providers and industry

Understanding how E&T providers, industry stakeholders and employers shape access and participation at all levels of post-16 E&T, respond to evolving skills needs, and drive economic performance, growth, and change, with a particular focus on the importance of place.

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Impact: Co-creating system change

We embed systems thinking into skills, education, and labour market policy to address complex, interrelated challenges, from vocational and academic pathways to work-based and adult education. Through co-designing research, policy, and strategy, we help build fairer, greener, and more adaptive learning ecosystems, economies and societies.

Strategic system collaboration

Co-designing policy and strategy

We work directly with policymakers and public institutions to help restructure governance, funding, and delivery mechanisms for post-16 education, training, and skills.

- Integrated policy frameworks
- Regional governance models
- Green digital transition strategies

Embedded systems thinking for organisations

We help education and training providers, employers, and civic actors embed systems thinking into institutional planning and organisational change

- Theory of change design
- Leadership and capacity-building tools

Strategic foresight and future skills intelligence

Through strategic planning and multi-sector collaboration, we help partners anticipate change and prepare systems for changes and uncertainties:

- Skills foresighting and green and digital skills planning
- AI automation impact analysis

Research, innovation, and knowledge partnership

We collaborate on applied research programmes and innovation pilots with academic institutions, NGOs, and government agencies.

- Impact evaluation and systems learning frameworks
- Applied policy research



HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Catalysing individual leadership for system change

Corporate fellowship

A tailored research-based programme for industry leaders to explore future skills, workforce transformation, and organisational innovation through a systems lens. Enjoy a network of policy-makers, researchers, for roundtable, workshops, and conversations.

Policy fellowship

An immersive learning and exchange experience for civil servants, advisors, and public sector leaders to explore integrated approaches to education, skills, and labour policy.

Professional development and education

Programmes for professionals across sectors to build systems thinking capacity, policy literacy, and strategic foresight for navigating complex change.

SUMMARY

Recent projects

Comparing Inequality and Outcomes across Post-16 Education in the UK | Mapping the UK Tertiary Education Landscape | VET 2050 | NetZeroED | Does Higher Education Politicise Today's Students? | Research Collaboration in Education | Close the Gap | Education and Training for the Climate (ETC) Hub | Intergenerational Mobility and Higher Education Internationally | Green Skills and the Construction Sector: Building Back Better? | Understanding System-Level Change through WorldSkills Engagement | What Matters to Students: Student voice in Regulatory HE Policy | Skills for Sustainable Farming Futures | Fair Doctoral Funding | Diverse Contributions to Educational Research: Conceptualisation, Recognition, and Supporting mechanisms | Unlocking the Potential of Artificial Intelligence for English Law | Narrative and Narrative Skills in Business | Understanding the 'Value' of Humanities Degrees | Neurodivergent Education for Students, Teaching & Learning | The Role of Humanities and Social Sciences in the Local Innovation

20+

Years of research impact in education, skills, and labour market

200+

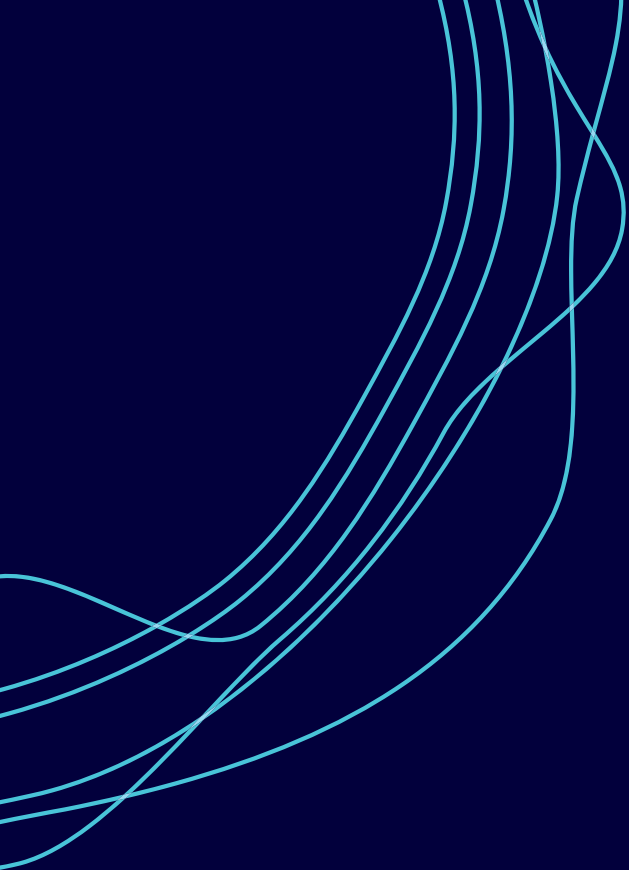
SKOPE research papers/blogs

£26

Grant funding (including large-scale funding from ESRC, OfS, Nuffield Foundation, and others)

100%

Projects involve cross-sector collaboration and impact



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