

**THE INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION ACADEMY**

***WHY? WHEN? WHAT? HOW? WHO?***

*“Science without conscience is the death of the soul”*

*Montaigne*

**Why set up an International Evaluation Academy (IEAc)?**

The IEAc will fill a major gap in the global scientific architecture. Evaluation, a legitimate science[[1]](#footnote-1), has yet to secure its rightful place within the science academy world. At a time of existential social and environmental challenge, an action-oriented, principled, evaluation academy is urgently needed given that cultural and political trends are eroding the legitimacy of the scientific enterprise; dismissing evidence as a guide to decision making; and undermining the credibility and independence of expert policy advice.

**When did the IEAc concept emerge?**

The International Evaluation Academy (IEAc) is committed to the *Global Evaluation Agenda* vision that emerged in 2015 - the International Evaluation Year. Thus, it will work to make evaluation an integral part of *all* governments, civil society, and private sector development efforts. It will recognize the urgency of transformative action demanded by the Anthropocene era and the COVID-19 pandemic. It will adopt objectives and values consistent with Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Paris Agreement. A concept paper about the proposed IEAc was discussed at the International Development Association Global Assembly in 2019. This landmark evaluation conference culminated in the approval of a *Prague Declaration* that supported active exploration of the IEAc endeavour. A subsequent survey of evaluation practitioners confirmed broad based international support for the initiative.

**What then is the Academy about?**

The International Evaluation Academy (IEAc) is being established as a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO) in the United Kingdom. It will be owned and managed by a Board of Trustees with help and guidance from a Council. Board and Council members will normally be appointed by the Board for four-year terms (renewable once).

As other science academies, the IEAc will seek to attract distinguished evaluators and expert practitioners and undertake public policy-related research and advisory activities. It will set up independent commissions, workshops, roundtables, and expert meetings focused on critical public policy and other relevant issues. But it will avoid the elitism implicit in the rigorous process used to select the members of other science academies.

The Academy will embrace evaluation transformation, influence, and professionalization towards (i) respect and care for the community of life in all its forms; (ii) ecological integrity; (iii) social and economic justice; and (iv) democratic values, non-violence, and peace. It will aspire to make transdisciplinary, value-driven evaluation play an influential role in the promotion of good governance, global justice, social, economic, and environmentally sustainable living.

The Academy will seek to achieve results. It will infuse its activities with ethical content; and it will not privilege individual disciplines, emphasizing interdisciplinary inquiry instead. At its best, it will demonstrate that high quality evaluation provides a legitimate transdisciplinary umbrella under which many knowledge occupations are mobilised[[2]](#footnote-2) to address the numerous ‘problems without passport’ that plague humanity.

**How will it work?**

A decentralized, collegial management approach will characterise Academy activities. Under Board strategic guidance and systematic oversight and with expert Council support, the Academy will support Fellows to work together to initiate, design, and implement initiatives that fall within and/or across the following priority clusters: (i) evaluation research: (ii) evaluation advocacy; (iii) evaluation education**;** (iv) evaluation training**;** (v) evaluation professionalisation: (vi) transformational evaluations; (vii) evaluators without borders; and (viii) expert evaluation services.

The IEAc will observe the subsidiarity principle in all its work. Since many other evaluation and social research organizations share the same purposes and embrace similar values, the Academy will not take the lead in all the initiatives it is engaged in. It will seek partnerships with evaluation associations, societies, and networks, including IOCE. It will rely on the Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) for connectivity and engagement with local, national, and regional evaluation actors. Its volunteer driven, action-oriented, science academy, business model is distinctive, and it complements the VOPEs’.

The IEAc will engage in initiatives and partnerships grounded in mutual trust, shared values, agreed ethical codes and high professional standards. It will stand for sound, objective, professional evaluation in the public interest. It will undertake to be open, respectful, and honest in all its activities. It will strive for diversity. It will not be biased, sectarian, or politically motivated. It will commit to promote inclusive, equitable and culturally responsive evaluation approaches that respect and protect nature, stand for human rights and harmony within and between societies, and promote gender equality. It will not accept funding that compromises its independence

All Academy interventions (programs, projects, events, publications, etc.) will fall within the scope of Board approved *strategies* that emphasize the following priorities:

* *Transforming*: in pursuit of systemic social transformation, work to change mind sets, promote inter- and transdisciplinarity, broker knowledge exchanges, empower civil society, promote equity, and improve the ways practitioners identify, conceptualize, plan, carry out and facilitate the use of evaluations.
* *Influencing:* expand the reach and impact of evaluation through improved evaluation governance norms; principled advocacy; and increased evaluation engagement across borders, generations, and sectors (public, private, and civil society)
* *Professionalizing:* contribute to methodological advances at the frontiers of social research and evaluation; provide professional development support, especially to young and emerging evaluators; lay the foundations for international agreement on what being a good evaluator means, how to reach for evaluation excellence in the public interest, etc.

The Academy will practice what it preaches. All Academy programs and partnershipswill model good evaluation practice. Evaluation products will be held to high standards of excellence and quality. An independent evaluation of Academy performance will be commissioned by the Board every five years.

**Who will be entitled to join the Academy?**

The Academy will be driven by volunteers. Fellows will be its life and blood. No fee will be charged. The only criteria for Fellows to be admitted to the Academy, and remain in good standing, as well as be eligible to use the IEAc Fellow designation and apply for Academy small grants are: (i) significant involvement in evaluation activities – research, practice, management, commissioning, etc.; (ii) commitment to Academy purpose and values; and (iii) willingness and ability to contribute to evaluation excellence, advocacy, social relevance, and environmental sustainability. However, Fellows that do not make substantive contributions to the Academy over time, and/or bring disrepute to the organization, may lose their Academy Fellow designation, following due process.

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1. Michael Q. Patton (2018). *Evaluation Science*. American Journal of Evaluation. Vol 39(2) 183-200, Sage Publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Michael Scriven (1993). Hard-won Lessons in program evaluation. New Directions for Program Evaluation, 58 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)