

<b>Institution:</b> University of Huddersfield		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 17 - Business and Management		
<b>Title of case study:</b> A Global Capability Framework for the Public Relations Profession		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> March 2016 – April 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Anne Gregory	Professor of Corporate Communication	September 2014 - present
Johanna Fawkes	Principal Research Fellow	March 2016 – May 2018
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2018 - ongoing		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>The profession of public relations is globalising, but has no recognised framework for benchmarking capabilities of practitioners worldwide. This is problematic when assessing current and future role proficiency and expectations. The Global Alliance (GA), which is the United Nations (UN) recognised confederation of public relations professional bodies worldwide (representing 280,000 professionals), sought to remedy this. The research described here, commissioned by GA and directed by Huddersfield Business School, led to The Global Capability Framework which fills this benchmarking gap. The Framework is now being used across all continents by professional bodies, employers, academics and individuals. It has been publicly acknowledged as a ‘game changer’ for the profession.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Public relations, as a contemporary profession, is going through considerable change. The significance of its role in how companies work with stakeholders has become increasingly apparent (3.3). It is globalising, and there are growing numbers of professionals working beyond western countries where the practice has been historically concentrated. Benchmarking capability globally is required to ensure common understanding of the scope of the profession, so that professionals are working to and further developing their potential and have common standards for providing high-quality public relations services to corporate organisations, public sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and nation states.</p> <p>To fulfil this need, a two-year research project (March 2016 to April 2018) was undertaken (3.1), directed by Professor Anne Gregory and Dr Johanna Fawkes, full time staff members at the Huddersfield Business School, to generate a Global Capability Framework. The project team comprised 12 academic researchers drawn from nine countries across six continents. These academics worked with their professional associations who are all members of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management, the worldwide confederation of professional bodies, educators and training providers in the field, currently consisting of 79 members from all continents.</p> <p>The aim of the research, as agreed with the Global Alliance (3.2), was to produce a global framework that offered practical value to the profession, reflected its cultural diversity, was adaptable, forward looking, and met academic standards for rigour. This would allow benchmarking of capability across countries while accommodating and acknowledging local diversity in practice.</p>		

Previous empirical research, undertaken between 2014 and 2016, under the auspices of the Global Alliance took a 'competencies' approach: lists of knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviours (3.2). This earlier framework proved unwieldy, complex and difficult to use, and through its Western-centric approach (3.2), failed to account for the cultural and operational differences in the profession between nations and continents.

The research described in this case, the Global Capability Framework, is a move away from that paradigm: instead, it takes a 'capabilities' (3.2) approach drawn from the human development literature and increasingly used in the professions. This seeks to describe the profession in as few a number of statements as possible, setting parameters for what the profession is, what it can be at its best, and what it requires of its professionals. The results are easily accessible, forward looking, adaptable to local contexts and easier to update in a dynamic environment.

The researchers used a three-stage data gathering process to compile and triangulate the results: a Delphi study, an online survey, and focus group discussions and/or interviews were variously applied across the research sites. Individual frameworks were produced for each of the nine countries involved in the original research. These were then disaggregated and reformulated to produce an agreed Global Capability Framework which all country researchers and the Global Alliance supported. The Global Alliance officially adopted the Framework at its bi-annual World Public Relations Forum in Oslo in April 2018. The Framework is presently being rolled out in member countries.

The Global Capabilities Framework allows organisations, teams and individuals to assess their capabilities, identify strengths, weaknesses, and plan professional development to improve current and future performance. It is being adopted to suit the needs of the various members of the Global Alliance as they implement it and software has been developed (3.4) to support use of the Framework.

### 3. References to the research

This research can be described as passing the 2\* threshold as it features in highly rated, peer reviewed academic journals, well reviewed books, and highly regarded industry publications.

3.1. Fawkes, J., Gregory, A., Falkheimer, J., Gutiérrez-García, E., Halff, G., Rensburg, R., Sadi, G., Sevigny, A., Sison, M.D., Thurlow, A., Tsetsura, K., & Wolf, K. (2018), A Global Capacity Framework for the public relations and communication management profession. Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management Research (GA) Report. Available at: [pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/a-global-capability-framework-for-the-public-relations-and-communication](http://pure.hud.ac.uk/en/publications/a-global-capability-framework-for-the-public-relations-and-communication)

3.2. Gregory, A. and Fawkes, J. (2019). A global capability framework: Reframing public relations for a changing world. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.05.002>

3.3. Gregory, A. (2020). The role of public relations in organizations. In A. Gregory *Planning & managing PR campaigns* (pp 19 – 41). London: Kogan Page <https://www.koganpage.com/product/planning-and-managing-public-relations-campaigns-9781789663204> [can be supplied on request]

3.4. Fawkes, J. & Gregory, A. (2018). Being capable for the future. In *Platinum: Celebrating the CIPR at 70* (ed. Stephen Waddington), London, Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available at: <https://www.blurb.co.uk/b/9034973-platinum> [can be supplied on request]

### 4. Details of the impact

Following its release, the Global Capability Framework (GCF) was adopted in its totality by the Global Alliance (GA) in April 2018. José Manuel Velasco Guardado, then Chair of the Global

Alliance, said: “The Global Capabilities Framework is one of the most significant projects that we have ever initiated. It is literally a game-changer for the profession. We are grateful to Professor Gregory, Dr Fawkes and the global team for making such a seminal contribution to the profession” (3.1). The Framework is displayed prominently on the Global Alliance website’s landing page (5.2) and is integrated into its strategies and resources for supporting members. Given that the Global Alliance represents public relations professional bodies around the world, their commissioning and adoption of the GCF is significant, reaching a total of 280,000 professionals in the 79 member organisations.

Subsequently, the GCF has been made available for adoption by associations and their members around the world, and has seen significant uptake by professional bodies globally. The GA 2019 annual report states that the Framework is “in wide use by individuals, teams, employers, academics and professional bodies around the world” (5.2). In fact, the GCF has been used in countries across all inhabited continents. The impact can be organised by the three main groups for whom the research was undertaken (3.2), and have seen the most benefit from it.

The GA launched another of its 2-year major Reports in December 2020 in which it specifically states it is building on GCF, linking recommended actions in its Global Public Relations (PR) and Communication Model 2021 (5.1) to the Capability Framework. This secures its sustainability beyond the Research Excellence Framework (REF) period.

### **Impact on professional bodies**

Representative bodies for PR professionals around the world have adopted the framework to varying degrees for the benefit of their members. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the world’s largest professional association, has made the Framework and underpinning software available to all its members for career planning and development. The PRSA website (5.3) says the GCF is “a worldwide benchmark for what public relations and communications professionals are capable of when they perform at their best. The framework can be used by individuals or groups (communications teams) to set expectations, define development goals and create a plan for learning and improvement of skills and performance”, and states that “PRSA members have full access to this program through your membership with the Global Alliance”.

The Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ), with over 1400 members, provides a range of training, resources and events for public relations professionals and directly cites the Framework as having become central to their approach to supporting their membership. Elaine Koller, Chief Executive of PRINZ says “the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ) has been utilising the Global Capabilities Framework (GCF) for almost two years and will continue to use it for 2021” (5.4). The Institute links each of its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses to the Framework, and those members using the Framework to develop teams have found that “the framework offers clarity to map learning outcomes against their own professional development goals” (5.4).

Additionally, the Consejo Profesional de Relaciones Públicas de la República Argentina has embedded the Framework into their practice, in particular the assessment software developed as part of the original research, is recommended to its members. Its President, Pablo Cattoni states that members “are entitled to carry out an autotest that allows them to analyze the current situation of their capabilities and their future improvement in a period of time” (5.5).

### **Impact on employers**

The GCF is being used by employers to scope the role of their communication departments, assess current capability in their teams, plan their future development, assist in succession planning and to design job roles and descriptions. In Spain, the professional association for directors of communication, DIRCOM, consists of professionals operating at Board level. The Association’s 2019 Annual Yearbook contained support statements from 10 large companies including Accenture, Coca-Cola, Iberia, Repsol, IKEA and Mondelez who voiced support for the

Framework (5.6). DIRCOM's President, Miguel López-Quesada says of the significance of the Framework: "It is important to analyse what capabilities and skills a Communications Director must have to face this environment". One of the major ways DIRCOM is employing the Framework is through its new PARES project. CEO, José Fernandez-Álava says the project aims to "co-create knowledge with scholars and practitioners regarding the future of the profession" (5.6). The work will focus on understanding the potential for integrating the Framework into graduate education programmes and to reflect on the future of professionalism and the GCF's place within it.

In the UK, the Government Communication Service (GCS), with 4,500 employees (a corporate member of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, the world's second largest professional body fully supportive of GCF), the largest employer of communication professionals in the country, has used the Framework as the primary source of external research underpinning its own GCS Leadership Framework (5.7). The official GCS Framework document states, "The five strengths we have identified are underpinned by academic research. For example, between 2016-18 the University of Huddersfield conducted a two-year research project to create a global capability framework for public relations and communication management that identified communications, organisational and professional capabilities. The top capabilities under these categories respectively are being able to: • align communication strategies with organisational purpose and values is the top communication capability; • facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities; and • provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor" (5.7).

In Norway, the communications association Kommunikasjonsforeningen has been promoting use of GCF with employers and has produced a case study with Elkjøp Nordic, the largest consumer electronics retailer in the Nordic countries, which employs a total of 10,000 people (5.8). Elkjøp's Jan Christian Thommesen, Head of Communications discussed the difficulties involved with finding a framework that could be applied across all levels of the organisation. He found that using the GCF helped the company to identify existing capabilities in individuals and teams, as well as discover areas that would benefit from improvement. He says "I wish to use this tool to organise the thoughts on what competency we think is key to realise the strategy, as well as how we as a team and individuals assess our competency within all the defined areas. The tool gives us an opportunity to put concrete results up against priorities, which in turn is a very good starting point to invest in targeted competency training" (5.8).

### **Impact on academic teaching**

There are numerous examples of how individual academics use the Global Capabilities Framework in teaching. For example, in Australia, the UK and Sweden, but in Africa, the Public Relations Institute of South Africa is adopting it as a standard for informing University and College curricula countrywide, the list of which is displayed on their website (5.9). They are working towards it being embedded in teaching and will use it to prepare students for the world of work.

In Argentina, the Education Commission of the Public Relations Professional Council has formally launched the Global Framework in 2019 and the 14 leading educational establishments teaching public relations have committed to adopt it into their curricula (5.5).

### **Wider impact**

The impact of the Global Capabilities Framework has extended beyond the original countries involved in the research. Additional countries have either developed (Columbia and Ecuador) (5.10), or are developing frameworks of their own using the methodology designed by the Huddersfield team and used in all country studies to date. In Indonesia, their country study was conducted by and is being used by the largest University (private) offering Public Relations education (London School of Public Relations) who in turn are in discussion with the Indonesian Government about adopting it as the national standard in education.

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the first stage of research has been conducted, and the UAE Framework was presented by the country research lead Professor Ganga Dhanesh from Zayed University at an event in February 2020 (5.10). The event also featured presentations and discussion from those working in the corporate and academic fields, considering how the Framework might be implemented across the UAE. The GCF has also informed curriculum review in Dubai. Other studies are being conducted in Qatar, Turkey and Malaysia.

The reach of the Framework continues to expand, as more locations carry out the research, and the findings are adopted into the practice of public relations professionals around the world.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Global Alliance President's Report 2019

5.2 Global Alliance website. Available at: [globalalliancepr.org](http://globalalliancepr.org)

5.3 Public Relations Society of America career resources page. Available at: [prsa.org/career/career-resources?spMailingID=32807384&spUserID=MTcwOTYyOTkwMjY3S0&spJobID=1824106808&spReportId=MTgyNDEwNjgwOAS2](http://prsa.org/career/career-resources?spMailingID=32807384&spUserID=MTcwOTYyOTkwMjY3S0&spJobID=1824106808&spReportId=MTgyNDEwNjgwOAS2)

5.4 Testimonial from Elaine Koller, Chief Executive of the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand. Detailing how the Institute is using the Framework with its members.

5.5 Testimonial from Pablo Cattoni, President, and Carolina Carbone, President of the Education Commission of Consejo Profesional de Relaciones Públicas de la República Argentina. Detailing how the Framework is being used by members and integrated into the curricula of leading educational establishments.

5.6 DIRCOM Annual Yearbook and supporting testimonial from General Manager José Fernández-Álava. Providing details of the Framework's implementation by employers in Spain.

5.7 Government Communications Service Leadership framework. Reflecting the integration of the Framework into leadership development

5.8 Case study from Norwegian company, Elkjørp. Demonstrating how the Framework is being used by employers in Norway (English and Norwegian version)

5.9 PRISA Communications and Management website Projects page. Available at: [prisa.co.za/projects](http://prisa.co.za/projects)  
Information about the rollout of the GCF into higher education curricula in South Africa.

5.10 Legacy document. Information about countries still developing their research and rollout of the Framework to professionals.