In-depth analysis of the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems: Guidelines

Enhancing Higher Education System Performance.
Informal Working Group on Higher Education.

This document presents the guidelines for country participation in the In-depth analysis of the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems (the “in-depth analysis exercise”). The in-depth analysis exercise is part of the OECD Enhancing Higher Education System Performance project, which is being developed by the Higher Education Team, Skills beyond Schools Division, Directorate for Education and Skills. These guidelines have benefited from the advice of the Informal Working Group on Higher Education (IWG). The guidelines include:

- The timeline of the in-depth analysis exercise for 2017-18
- An outline of the roles and responsibilities of the OECD and participating countries
- Information about the scope of the project and the data collection process
- A description of the approach to country reviews
- An outline of what country and synthesis reports will aim to achieve
- Information on how the in-depth analysis exercise will conclude in 2019

These guidelines have been updated to reflect minor changes in several sections.

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NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document presents the guidelines for country participation in the *In-depth analysis of the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems* exercise (the “in-depth analysis exercise”).

2. The in-depth analysis exercise is part of the OECD’s Enhancing Higher Education System Performance project, which is being developed by the Higher Education Team, Skills beyond Schools Division, Directorate for Education and Skills. These guidelines have benefited from the advice of the Informal Working Group on Higher Education (IWG).

3. This document includes:

   - Timelines for the in-depth analysis in 2017-2018 (including both a broad timeline for the overall project and an illustrative timeline for country reviews)
   - An outline of the roles and responsibilities of the OECD Secretariat and participating countries
   - An outline of each phase of the in-depth analysis (e.g. scoping and data collection for country reviews, country review visits, and the development of the country reports and the synthesis report)
GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE LABOUR MARKET RELEVANCE AND OUTCOMES OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Overview

4. The In-depth analysis of the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems: Analytical framework and country practices report [EDU/EDPC(2017)2] provides the analytical framework for addressing the policy issue.

5. The Secretariat will review the labour market relevance and outcomes of participating countries through a series of missions, and through analysis of data and information identified by the Secretariat or provided by participating countries. Each participating country will receive a report on the labour market relevance and outcomes of their higher education system. These reports will focus on the policy levers available to policymakers to improve the labour market relevance of higher education systems and the labour market outcomes of graduates.

6. A synthesis report will be produced in 2019. The synthesis report will analyse the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems based on the country reviews, and propose various policy approaches to improve the labour market relevance of higher education and the outcomes of higher education graduates. The report will identify international best practices and provide lessons learned about policy levers that can improve the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems. The OECD will be responsible for preparing the synthesis report in collaboration with participating countries and following the guidance of the IWG.

Timelines

7. Table 1 highlights the overall timelines for the in-depth analysis exercise. Table 2 provides an illustrative timeline of how country reviews will be conducted over an eight-month period. Specific timelines for the country reviews will be developed with participating countries to reflect their individual needs and circumstances.
Table 1: Broad project timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/year</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| January 2017 to December 2017 | Begin the *In-depth analysis of the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems*  
Conduct four country reviews and publish the country-specific reports |
| January 2018 to December 2018 | Conduct country reviews and publish the country-specific reports  
Countries choose the topic of second in-depth analysis exercise |
| January 2019 to December 2019 | Draft the synthesis report for publication at the end of 2019  
Develop the analytical framework for the next topic of in-depth analysis |

Table 2: Country review illustrative timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/year</th>
<th>Action</th>
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</table>
| Month 1    | Countries nominate a national coordinator  
Send guidelines to participating countries  
Meeting with the national coordinator  
Agree on scope of review with participating countries  
Send request for background information |
| Month 2    | Countries submit background information and data                       |
| Month 3    | First review visit: fact-finding via semi-structured interviews        |
| Month 4    | Outline of draft country report sent to country                         |
| Month 5    | Second review visit: testing findings and initial policy recommendations via semi-structured interviews and workshops/focus groups |
| Month 6    | First draft country report sent to country                               |
| Month 7    | National coordinator submits comments on draft report                    |
| Month 8    | Final draft country report sent to country; report finalised and published |

Roles and responsibilities

8. Participation in the in-depth analysis exercise requires that countries provide a voluntary contribution to support the country-specific analysis and make an active commitment to providing relevant information and data. The roles and responsibilities of the OECD and the participating country are set out in Table 3.
Table 3: Roles and responsibilities for the in-depth analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD</th>
<th>Participating country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall project management and responsibility for process and outputs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Project coordination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare overall project plan and ensure sequencing and completion of project activities within an agreed budget and timeline</td>
<td>• Appoint a national coordinator (and establish a national project team) to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advise the national coordinator on managing critical success factors for the project</td>
<td>o liaise with the OECD Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o coordinate the collection of country data and feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o ensure data and information is provided to the OECD on schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o provide timely input and feedback to the OECD on draft reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conduct regular meetings with ministry/ministries during the course of the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Co-ordinate, organise and secure all practical arrangements for project activities in country, including identifying and hiring venues for workshops, logistics, refreshments, and interpretation (if needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data and analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Source of national expertise on higher education and the labour market</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collect comparative data (OECD and other sources)</td>
<td>• Provide information and expertise regarding national data and analysis on higher education and the labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collect national data</td>
<td>• Provide guidance on international data and the experiences of other countries that may be useful for the country context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyse data and information</td>
<td>• Provide background information to the OECD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure the OECD has access to the most recent relevant data and information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OECD Participating country

**Country review visits**

- Design and conduct semi-structured interviews and workshops/focus groups with stakeholders, in close cooperation with national coordinator
- Provide material and exercises for interviews and workshops/focus groups, carefully selected from the Secretariat’s range of material to reflect the country’s circumstances and challenges
- Brief national coordinator before workshops/interviews/focus groups, and debrief afterwards to ensure further use of common learning experiences
- Act as a neutral and independent external facilitator throughout

**Participation in design and facilitation of country review visits**

- Provide advice to the OECD Secretariat on planning for workshops/interviews/focus groups,
- Identify and actively promote attendance by key stakeholders
- Act as facilitators for small group discussions in workshops
- Provide feedback to the OECD following workshops

**Communication within OECD and with countries**

- Maintain regular contact with national coordinator to ensure common understanding of goals, phases and progress during the project (e.g. via tele- or videoconferences)
- Provide relevant and timely information about project progress and results through formal channels (e.g. OECD committees)
- Inform and involve relevant colleagues within the OECD at each stage of the process
- Promote and disseminate key project outputs and outcomes via the OECD’s communication platforms

**Communication with OECD team**

- Maintain regular contact with the OECD Secretariat to ensure common understanding of goals and progress in the project
- Provide guidance for the design of the project process
- Coordinate feedback from stakeholders to the OECD Secretariat (e.g. on workshop design or draft reports)
- Inform the OECD Secretariat of any events which might have an impact on project completion

**Drafting and publication of reports**

- Prepare and circulate draft country reports to the national coordinator for feedback in accordance with the timeline agreed between the OECD Secretariat and the national coordinator
- Draft a synthesis report and circulate it to national coordinators for comments
- Publish the synthesis report and country reports

**Communication within country**

- Provide timely and relevant reporting to minister(s) on project progress and outcomes
- Ensure relevant issues are discussed and shared within ministry/ministries
- Provide regular updates and information to stakeholders
- Act as the main interface with national stakeholders during the project
Scoping and data collection

Scope of the in-depth analysis

9. The In-depth analysis of the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems will balance the needs of individual countries participating in the exercise with the need for comparable data and information so that countries can learn from each other.

10. Each in-depth analysis of a participating country will begin with a discussion to decide on the scope of analysis within the existing analytical framework. This will provide the Secretariat with clear directions on which aspects of labour market relevance and outcomes should be the focus of the country review. It will also ensure that the report deals with the most relevant issues related to higher education and the labour market in a given country.

Data collection

Principles

11. All information and data is to be prepared within a common framework. This will facilitate the comparative analysis and maximise opportunities for countries to learn from each other.

12. Full use will be made of existing OECD statistical collections; countries will not be asked to duplicate statistics that are already available. In order to avoid duplication of effort, the in-depth analysis will also draw upon other work on tertiary education being carried out within the OECD, for example:

   - the work of the Working Party on Indicators of Educational Systems (INES) and its networks
   - the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)
   - the work of the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC)
   - the Local Economic and Employment Development Programme’s (LEED) work on HEInnovate
   - the work of the Economic and Development Review Committee (EDRC)

13. Wherever possible, countries should refer to the sources of any data that they provide, e.g. legislation, formal agreements and so on.

14. Where data is provided it should be accompanied by brief notes to clarify the concepts and terms that are used, and the methodology used to collect the data.

15. In order to minimise the burden on countries where material is already available elsewhere, countries are encouraged to use hyperlinks to documents, reports and statistics already available on the internet.

16. Additional information and data sent by the countries is intended for the OECD Secretariat, which will use it in preparing the country reports and the synthesis report.

17. Countries will not be required to provide duplicate copies of data and information that are required by both strands of the Enhancing Higher Education System Performance project.
Data and information to be collected

18. Countries participating in the in-depth analysis exercise will be asked to follow a template when sending their data and information. This template comprises five parts:

1. Description of the structure and governance of the higher education system
2. Data on higher education graduates’ labour market and skills outcomes
3. Data on labour market conditions and projections
4. Identification of higher education practices that support labour market relevance and outcomes
5. Description of policy levers available to governments to facilitate higher education practices that support labour market relevance and outcomes

19. Data on policy levers and practices aimed at enhancing the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education was collected from countries in the 2016 questionnaire on the labour market relevance and outcomes of their higher education systems [EDU/EDPC(2016)15]. Similar information will be sought from participating countries in Parts 4 and 5 of the template. The Secretariat will liaise with participating countries that have already submitted questionnaire responses so that they do not need to resubmit any information previously provided.

Part 1: Structure and governance of the higher education system

20. In Part 1 of the template, countries will be asked to provide a detailed description of the structure and governance of their higher education system. This will include the locus of responsibility for higher education; the main legal framework; the degree structure and how it fits with ISCED 2011; the existing types of institutions; and higher education authorities and organisations and their role in governing the system.

21. The Secretariat will use results of the University Autonomy Tool developed by the European University Association to collect information on the autonomy of European universities. The University Autonomy Tool does not include information on non-university institutions (e.g. universities of applied science or polytechnics). The Secretariat will therefore use the tool to seek information on the governance arrangements for these institutions from participating countries. It will also use the tool for non-European countries participating in the in-depth analysis.

22. This section is common to both strands of the Enhancing Higher Education System Performance project and countries participating in both strands will only need to provide this information once to the Secretariat.

Part 2: National and or sub-national data on the labour market relevance and outcomes of the higher education system

23. In Part 2 of the template, countries will be asked to provide (as available, and where not already found in international datasets) national or sub-national level data on the labour market and skills outcomes of higher education graduates; data on the outcomes of graduates’ peers who do not hold a higher education qualification; and data on higher education institutions. This will include time series data where available.
Labour market data on graduate outcomes over time (e.g. broken down as available by field and level of study; student/graduate characteristics including age and gender; occupational field; region; institution)

Labour market data on individuals in the country who hold less than a higher education qualification, but who are of a comparable age to higher education graduates (peers)

Student skills outcomes

Data or results from any employer and graduate surveys

Data on higher education institutions (e.g. revenues, expenditures, staffing)

Part 3: Description of labour market conditions and projections

24. In Part 3 of the template, countries will be asked to provide general labour market data and an outline of the current and potential future skills needs of the labour market. This analysis will typically include a sub-national and/or regional breakdown.

Overview of present and recent past labour markets, by sector and region/sub-national areas

Signs of imbalance between the supply of, and the demand for, specific kinds of labour and skills

Evolving needs: labour and skills supply (e.g. predicted entry to and exit from labour force)

Evolving needs: labour and skills demand (e.g. taking into account forecasted evolution of sectors of the economy; demography; impacts of changing form of production, etc.)

Part 4: Identification of higher education practices that support labour market relevance and good outcomes

25. Countries will be asked to provide information on the higher education practices used to enhance the labour market relevance and outcomes of their higher education systems.

Practices in higher education (undertaken by higher education institutions, employers, trade unions, students and other stakeholders) that support the development of labour market relevant skills and foster good graduate labour market outcomes

Part 5: Policy levers and practices to enhance the labour market relevance and outcomes of the higher education system

26. Countries will be asked to provide information on the policy levers and practices used to enhance the labour market relevance and outcomes of their higher education systems.

Policy levers (current and past) used to enhance the labour market relevance and outcomes of the higher education systems

Evidence of the effects of government policies and of higher education practices
Processes to follow when providing information to the Secretariat

27. National authorities are responsible for the preparation of the information and data to be sent to the OECD Secretariat. Each country taking part in the in-depth analysis exercise must appoint a national co-ordinator. The national coordinator should be an official with subject matter expertise designated by the sponsoring ministry.

28. The national authority responsible for a country’s participation in the in-depth analysis exercise may decide to fill in the information and data template itself, or it may decide to commission a research organisation, a consultant or a group of consultants to do it on its behalf. Whichever decision is taken, the national co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the template is completed on time and that it follows the guidelines provided.

29. No single organisation, ministry or group will necessarily have all of the information required to complete the template. National co-ordinators therefore need to ensure co-operation between all relevant ministries and agencies, as well as the involvement of key stakeholder groups such as ministries of finance, labour, industry, research, science and technology; employers and trade unions; representatives of higher education institutions; representatives of academic staff; student organisations; agencies responsible for funding and quality assurance; peak bodies (i.e. rectors’ conferences, university groups, etc.); and other relevant stakeholders.

30. A country may choose to assemble a national advisory committee comprised of key stakeholder groups. This committee can play an important role in ensuring that a variety of perspectives are reflected in the template. Where a country decides not to establish an advisory committee, there will need to be other processes in place to ensure that the template information and data adequately reflect the views and perspectives of the different stakeholder groups concerned with higher education.

31. A key task of national co-ordinators will be to consolidate these different perspectives in order to provide the OECD Secretariat with a single, integrated response to the template. The methodology used to ensure the involvement of different bodies in the preparation of the template should be noted in the answer to the template itself.

32. Experience gained in other OECD projects suggests that it is likely to take around two months to complete the template. The template will be sent to participating countries at the beginning of the review process. The background information should be returned to the Secretariat at least one month before the visit of the review team.

33. The quality of the final analysis and reports is heavily dependent on co-operation of the participating country and on the information provided. Copies of (or links to) relevant up-to-date policies, data and information should be submitted in a timely manner. If a country lacks the information it requires to respond to certain questions in the template, it should draw this fact to the Secretariat’s attention.

Country reviews

34. The in-depth analysis of higher education topics strand of work for Enhancing Higher Education System Performance is taking a country review approach to examine the policies and practices of participating countries in the related area of interest. The country review approach facilitates the development of a deep knowledge and understanding of education policies and practices in participating countries. The comprehensive, diagnostic approach of country reviews provides a rich body of evidence for comparisons of policies, practices and performance across countries.
35. The country review will involve an OECD team which will analyse the policies and practices to enhance the labour market relevance and outcomes of the higher education system in participating countries, and tailor policy advice and recommendations to improve the performance of their higher education systems.

36. For each country review the Secretariat will deliver a draft report to the country roughly one month after the second review visit has taken place. The Secretariat will take country comments into account before the final report is finalised and published.

37. To help assess the labour market relevance and outcomes of the higher education systems and prepare the final country report and the synthesis report, the OECD Secretariat will visit participating countries to hold talks with senior officials; representatives of higher education institutions; representatives of academic staff; student organisations; agencies responsible for funding and quality assurance; peak bodies (i.e. rectors’ conferences, university groups, etc.); and other relevant stakeholders. This approach will facilitate a good understanding of the context in which higher education systems operate and ensure that the analysis takes account of the views of a range of stakeholders.

38. There will normally be two visits:

- a fact-finding visit relatively early in the review to ensure that the Secretariat has all the necessary information for the in-depth analysis
- a policy visit later in the process that focuses on key policy issues and discusses the Secretariat’s initial assessment and policy recommendations with countries

**Fact-finding visit**

39. The fact-finding visit is aimed at understanding the context of the participating country and its policies and practices to enhance the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education.

40. In this visit, the Secretariat will conduct semi-structured interviews with a range of senior officials and stakeholders. The national coordinator will assist in identifying stakeholders and organising the interviews.

41. The Secretariat will provide the national coordinator with a document outlining the project and purpose of the interviews, which can be shared with the interviewees.

**Policy visit**

42. In the policy visit, the Secretariat will conduct semi-structured interviews and hold a workshop and/or focus group meetings with officials and stakeholders to explore key issues and test out policy options to address identified challenges.

43. The workshops and/or focus groups will involve structured small group discussions and exercises. This approach will facilitate public engagement with all the relevant stakeholders as well as provide data and information for the analysis.

44. Participants in workshops/focus groups will be provided with background materials on the in-depth analysis exercise. The OECD Secretariat will be responsible for collecting and synthesising information from the workshops and/or focus groups. The country coordinator will be responsible for inviting participants and for locating a venue for the workshops and/or focus groups.
**Country reports and synthesis report**

**Country reports**

45. Countries that participate in the in-depth analysis exercise in 2017 and 2018 will receive individual reports that provide a detailed and tailored analysis of the performance of their higher education systems in terms of labour market relevance and outcomes. These reports will provide countries with policy advice and recommendations that help them improve the labour market relevance and outcomes of their higher education systems.

46. As indicated in the timeline (Table 2), countries will have the opportunity to comment on the draft outline of the country report. The draft country reports will be provided to each participating country for their review and comments before finalisation.

**Synthesis report**

47. In 2019, the Secretariat will produce a synthesis report that brings together the findings from its research and the country reviews. This report will examine and compare the performance of the individual countries that participated in the country reviews and analyse the factors driving their performance in order to determine what works in different national or system contexts. This analysis will provide countries with policy advice and recommendations for improving the labour market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems that could be applied in various national or sub-national contexts.

48. The synthesis report will be developed in consultation with participating countries and the IWG.

**Beyond 2017-18**

49. Topics for in-depth analysis will change every two years to ensure that the OECD focuses on current issues in higher education.

50. Countries will be asked to choose a topic for the next in-depth analysis in 2018. The benchmarking exercise may highlight particular areas for attention.

51. The Secretariat will develop the analytical framework for the second topic throughout 2019. Country reviews on this topic will be undertaken in 2020-2021.