Group of National Experts on Evaluation and Assessment

OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes

Guidelines for the Country Background Report

These guidelines incorporate feedback on an earlier version of this document [EDU/EDPC/EA(2009)1], which was discussed at the first meeting of the Group of National Experts on Evaluation and Assessment, held on 1-2 October at the OECD Headquarters in Paris [EDU/EDPC/EA/M(2009)1].

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GUIDELINES FOR THE COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT

Introduction

1. The OECD Review on *Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes* will provide analysis and policy advice to countries on how evaluation and assessment frameworks best ensure real gains in performance across the school system. An important part of the Review consists of collecting information on country approaches to evaluation and assessment, the challenges of implementation and the evidence of their impact. There are important differences between countries with respect to aspects such as the extent of evaluation and assessment in the school system, the evaluation culture, or the uses of evaluation results. The Review intends to provide a stock-take of current policies and practices in countries, identify innovative and successful initiatives, and analyse the effectiveness of policies.

2. With these objectives in mind, the Secretariat will collect information on country approaches to evaluation and assessment through the preparation of Country Background Reports (CBRs), to enable countries to set their approaches in proper context. These will be prepared following the guidelines provided in this document, which were agreed by the Group of National Experts (GNE) on Evaluation and Assessment at its first meeting on 1-2 October, 2009. These guidelines incorporate feedback on an earlier version of this document [EDU/EDPC/EA(2009)1], which was discussed at the GNE meeting [EDU/EDPC/EA/M(2009)1]. The CBRs respond to a common set of issues and questions, and use a common framework to facilitate comparative analysis and maximise the opportunities for countries to learn from each other.

3. All countries opting for a Country Review are expected to prepare a CBR. Other countries are strongly encouraged to also prepare a CBR even if they do not opt for a Country Review. This is part of the effort to collect information from as many member and observer countries as possible, in ways that minimise the burden on countries and make it easy to share and add to the public knowledge base.

Purposes of the Country Background Report

4. The Review is using a comparative framework to help countries assess: (i) how to develop a coherent evaluation and assessment framework; (ii) how to strengthen the use of evaluation and assessment results to enhance school practices so student outcomes are improved; and (iii) how to facilitate the implementation of evaluation and assessment policies. The CBRs will provide in-depth analysis of context, key factors and policy responses in individual countries. They provide an invaluable source of information on evaluation and assessment frameworks and greatly facilitate the analysis to be developed within the Review.


2. The guidelines provided in this document were prepared in line with the analytical framework and the key issues and questions for analysis outlined in the “Design and Implementation Plan for the Review” [EDU/EDPC(2009)3/REV1].
5. The CBR is intended for four main audiences:

- The Secretariat and OECD member and observer countries as an aid to sharing experiences, and identifying common problems and policy options. It will also provide important background material for the final synthesis report;

- The team of external reviewers who will visit the country concerned (for those countries opting for a Country Review) - the CBR will assist to identify issues that should be explored, the policies that should be examined, and the consultations that should be held;

- Those interested in evaluation and assessment issues within the country concerned – the CBR can be an important means of focusing national attention on key issues that need to be addressed, and drawing attention to policy initiatives; and

- Those interested in evaluation and assessment issues at international level and in other countries – all CBRs will be placed on the OECD website and their availability widely disseminated.

6. To serve these purposes and to reach these audiences each CBR will need to be a coherent, self-contained document and not just a series of responses to questions. To maximise the opportunities for countries to learn from each other the CBRs will need to be prepared according to a common framework and structure and written in an accessible style.

7. Nevertheless, the richness and value of these CBRs comes from a problem-oriented and dynamic view of evaluation and assessment issues. The questions posed in these guidelines are intended to draw out coherent analyses and discussions on the key policy issues. Responses to questions may be combined, rephrased or expanded in the light of national circumstances. The key requirement is that the issues underlying the questions are addressed in the CBR. In addition, if something that is important for evaluation and assessment in the concerned country is not mentioned in these guidelines it should nevertheless be addressed in the CBR.

Structure of the Country Background Report

8. The proposed structure for the report is an executive summary followed by seven chapters (see Annex 1 for technical information). Each chapter should summarise any available evidence on the main causal factors in the area concerned, and the impact of any policy initiatives. Several questions in each chapter seek opinions or judgements about matters on which there is not likely to be clear evidence or where views may differ among key stakeholders. In these cases it is important that the report indicates the range of views or opinions held by stakeholders and the main issues which are contested. The information to be provided concerns primary and secondary education.3

9. Throughout the report, the objective is to summarise and synthesise the available material on evaluation and assessment and to minimise the burden on countries where material is already available elsewhere. For this reason, hyperlinks to other documents, reports and statistics already available on the internet are encouraged. The report itself should be a maximum of 80 pages, although countries may wish to provide additional information in annexes.

10. Wherever possible, the CBR should refer to the source(s) of any data - legislation, formal agreements, research articles, literature reviews, surveys, evaluations, publications, administrative data and so on.

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3 The scope of the Review does not include early childhood education and care, apprenticeships within vocational education and training, and adult education.
Statistical and other data should be provided to support and illustrate the points made in the report. Where data are provided they should be accompanied by brief notes to clarify the concepts and terms that are used, and the methodology used to collect the data. Where evidence is missing on particular points this should be indicated.

11. The Secretariat is happy to provide comments to countries on their draft CBR or clarify any substance or technical points at any moment.

**Chapter 1: The school system (maximum 5 pages)**

12. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly outline the main features of the school system in a way that sets the scene for readers to understand the rest of the chapters on different aspects of evaluation and assessment.

- Outline the main structural features of the school system – the types and numbers of schools, their governance structure (the levels of government involved, and the extent of public or private provision), and the distribution of student numbers by level of school (primary and secondary), type of programme (e.g. general and vocational secondary education) and sector (public and private) drawing special attention to major recent or proposed changes.

- In the public school system what is the division of responsibilities between the various levels of government, agencies with responsibilities in education, and individual schools in terms of financing, curriculum development, employment of teachers, and school accountability? Have there been any recent major changes in these respects, or are major changes planned, and what are the reasons concerned?

**Chapter 2: The framework for evaluation and assessment (maximum 10 pages)**

13. This chapter should consider the framework for evaluation and assessment as a whole, whether or not it has been explicitly designed as a whole system. The detailed discussion of each component of the evaluation and assessment framework (e.g. system evaluation, school assessment) will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

2.1 Current approach

- How is the framework for evaluation and assessment conceptualised? What broad approach is followed in its design? What are its main components (e.g. system evaluation, school assessment, teacher appraisal, student assessment, evaluation of local educational authorities, evaluation of programmes)?

- What are the main objectives and purposes the framework for evaluation and assessment is trying to achieve? What is the role of each one of the evaluation and assessment components (e.g. system evaluation, school assessment, etc.) in achieving such objectives?

- What is the strategic importance of the evaluation and assessment framework within educational policy? How instrumental is the evaluation and assessment framework in determining strategies for improving school practices and student outcomes?

- How are the responsibilities distributed within the framework for evaluation and assessment between educational authorities at several levels, agencies in charge of quality assurance, schools and teachers?
- How does the framework for evaluation and assessment ensure that its different components (e.g. school assessment, teacher appraisal, etc.) are appropriately interrelated in order to generate complementarities, avoid duplication and prevent inconsistency of objectives?

- What processes guarantee the development of expertise in the area of evaluation and assessment? Are there mechanisms which ensure that evaluation results are appropriately analysed and used for research? How does the framework for evaluation and assessment contribute to creating a knowledge-rich school system? What is the strategy for knowledge management within the evaluation and assessment framework?

- What improvements is information technology bringing to the development of evaluation and assessment arrangements?

- How does the evaluation and assessment framework ensure that evaluation and assessment results reach schools and teachers in such a way school and classroom practice is improved?

2.2 Context

- Are there key developments and trends that have led to a greater emphasis on evaluation and assessment policies in recent years?

- How do evaluation and assessment policies relate to a range of established practices in the school system such as the extent of school autonomy, decentralisation of decision-making, the existence of national curricula and standards, or knowledge management capacity?

- What is the tradition of evaluation in the school system?

- What are the political forces that impact on a countries’ decision to implement assessment and evaluation strategies? Are there legal issues around evaluation and assessment policy (e.g. the right to access information versus the difficulties to release meaningful information which provides a fair account of performance)?

- How does the framework for evaluation and assessment in the school system relate to evaluation and assessment policies in the general public sector?

2.3 Initiatives and implementation

- What initiatives have been undertaken or are planned to improve the effectiveness of the framework for evaluation and assessment? What are the likely views of key stakeholder groups on possible policy options?

- What stakeholder groups are involved in the development of evaluation and assessment policies? Are there effective frameworks to promote dialogue and common action among the main stakeholders (e.g. parents, students, teachers, school leaders, teacher unions, educational administrators, educational researchers, policy makers)?

- What are the main difficulties in implementing evaluation and assessment strategies? Are there issues of poor policy design, lack of analysis of unintended consequences, little capacity for educational agents to put procedures into practice, lack of an evaluation culture, or deficient use of evaluation results? Are pilot projects typically developed before wide-scale implementation?

- What are the policy priorities in the area of evaluation and assessment?
Chapter 3: System evaluation (maximum 15 pages)

14. This chapter should consider processes which seek to make an assessment of the school system as a whole. Other forms of evaluation such as student assessment and school assessment are to be considered to the extent their results are used to make inferences about the school system (e.g. as when student national assessments are used to evaluate outcomes of the school system as a whole).

3.1 Current practices

3.1.1 Overall framework for system evaluation

- What broad approach is followed to evaluate the school system as a whole? What objectives is the evaluation of the school system trying to achieve? What is the strategic importance of system evaluation in the overall evaluation framework?

- What aspects does system evaluation seek to monitor and improve? How does the current approach to system evaluation achieve both objectives of improvement and accountability?

- How are the responsibilities for system evaluation shared between educational authorities and evaluation agencies such as inspectorates?

- How is system evaluation articulated with other forms of evaluation such as student assessment, teacher appraisal and school assessment?

3.1.2 Procedures used in system evaluation

- What are the performance criteria and the reference standards used in system evaluation?

- What are the instruments used to perform the evaluation of the school system (e.g. performance indicators, student school-level assessment results, student national examinations, international student assessments, school assessments, national reviews of policy, international reviews of policy, public consultations, national education reports, ad-hoc reports commissioned on specific topics, surveys with students’ and parents’ views, surveys of students’ views on post-schooling experience)?

- What aspects are the subject of the system evaluation (e.g. student performance (e.g. knowledge skills, critical thinking skills, social competencies, engagement with learning, passing/drop-out rates), equity in the school system, efficiency of funds use, effectiveness of policies, rates of return to schooling, quality of the infrastructure, teaching quality, effectiveness of local educational authorities, effectiveness of school leadership)?

- How do educational authorities conclude whether or not the school system is achieving its objectives using the current approach to school system evaluation?

3.1.3 Competencies to evaluate the school system and to use evaluation results

- Who evaluates the overall performance of the school system? Are there specific agencies with responsibilities for quality assurance in the school system? How do such agencies build capacity to effectively evaluate the school system? What processes guarantee the development of expertise in system level evaluation?
What competencies are developed in the school system to ensure that system-level evaluation results are used effectively by school agents (e.g. school leaders, teachers, educational authorities)?

3.1.4 Using system evaluation results

What are the uses of system level evaluation results? Are the results of system level evaluations published? What are the processes through which results are incorporated into policy and practice?

3.2 Implementation of system evaluation

What is the evidence on the impact of current arrangements for system evaluation? What are the main conclusions of studies which analyse the impact of system evaluation arrangements?

Are there major concerns about the evaluation of the school system? In what respects?

What are the perceived difficulties to implement system evaluation? What measures have been developed to facilitate the implementation of system evaluation? How are the main stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, teacher professional organisations, school leaders, parents’ organisations) involved in the implementation of system evaluation?

What are the views of the different stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, parents’ organisations) on the current approach to system evaluation? In which ways do they favour or oppose current arrangements for school system evaluation?

3.3 Policy initiatives

What initiatives have been undertaken to improve the effectiveness of system evaluation? For those policies that have been implemented what is the evidence on their impact and cost?

What policy options are currently being considered to improve the effectiveness of system evaluation? What are the likely views of key stakeholder groups on these policy options?

Chapter 4: School assessment (maximum 15 pages)

15. This chapter should consider both external and internal school assessment processes.

4.1 Current practices

4.1.1 Overall framework for school assessment

What are the key broad features of the current approach to school assessment (e.g. relative importance of improvement and accountability functions; whether it has consequences or not; whether it takes account of the socio-economic context of the school; whether it is voluntary or compulsory)? How does the current approach to school assessment achieve both objectives of improvement and accountability?

What is the rationale for the current approach to school assessment? What objectives is school assessment trying to achieve? What is the strategic importance of school assessment in the overall evaluation framework?

How are the responsibilities for school assessment shared between educational authorities, evaluation agencies such as inspectorates and schools?
How is school assessment articulated with other forms of evaluation such as student assessment, teacher appraisal and system evaluation? In which ways do processes for student assessment, teacher appraisal and system evaluation impact on school assessment? Are their uses of school assessment results for student assessment, teacher appraisal and system evaluation?

4.1.2 School assessment procedures

- What are the performance criteria and the reference standards used in school assessment? What are the instruments used to perform the assessment of a school (e.g. school self-evaluation; external review; performance indicators; student results; classroom observation; surveys with students’ and parents’ views)?

- What aspects are assessed (e.g. school management; educational leadership; compliance with regulations; student performance; school development; school environment; infrastructure; links with the community; organisation of teaching; monitoring of teaching quality)? How is school assessment differentiated by type of school (e.g. primary vs secondary education; location of the school)?

- What is the methodology followed for school assessment (e.g. mix of instruments; range of evaluators; frequency)? Is it mostly a process internal to the school or is the external component dominant? How is internal school assessment articulated with external school assessment? In what respects may school assessment differ across schools and educational jurisdictions?

4.1.3 Competencies to assess schools and to use assessment results

- Who are the evaluators and how are they identified? What qualifications and training are evaluators required to have? Who evaluates the evaluators?

- How are schools and school leadership prepared for the assessment? What competencies are developed by evaluators and valuees so assessment results are used effectively? What is the role of school leadership in the assessment of schools? What support is given to schools to use assessment results effectively?

- How do evaluation agencies build capacity to best process school assessment results to the benefit of the school system? What processes guarantee the development of expertise in the area of school assessment?

4.1.4 Using school assessment results

- What are the uses of school assessment results? Are there links with school development processes, opportunities for schools to improve their practices or school reward systems? Are school assessment results published?

- What are the processes through which results are incorporated into policy and practice?

4.2 Implementation of school assessment

- What is the evidence on the impact of current arrangements for school assessment? Provide statistics on the functioning of school assessment if available (e.g. proportion of schools assessed, distribution of assessment results, strengths and weaknesses identified) and the main conclusions of studies which analyse the impact of school assessment arrangements.
- Are there major concerns about school assessment? In what respects?

- What are the perceived difficulties to implement school assessment? What measures have been developed to facilitate the implementation of school assessment? How are the main stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, teacher professional organisations, school leaders, parents’ organisations) involved in the implementation of school assessment?

- What are the views of the different stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, parents’ organisations) on the current approach to school assessment? In which ways do they favour or oppose school assessment?

4.3 Policy initiatives

- What initiatives have been undertaken to improve the effectiveness of school assessment? For those policies that have been implemented what is the evidence on their impact and cost?

- What policy options are currently being considered to improve the effectiveness of school assessment? What are the likely views of key stakeholder groups on these policy options?

Chapter 5: Teacher appraisal (maximum 15 pages)

16. This chapter should consider both formal and informal and both external and internal teacher appraisal processes.

5.1 Current practices

5.1.1 Overall framework for teacher appraisal

- What are the key broad features of the current approach to teacher appraisal (e.g. relative importance of improvement and accountability functions; whether it has consequences or not; whether it takes account of the school context; whether it focuses on the individual or the group; whether it is a process internal or external to the school; whether it is voluntary or compulsory)? How does the current approach to teacher appraisal achieve both objectives of improvement and accountability?

- What is the rationale for the current approach to teacher appraisal? What objectives is teacher appraisal trying to achieve? What is the strategic importance of teacher appraisal in the overall evaluation framework?

- Is there a longitudinal dimension to teacher appraisal? Are teachers tracked over their teaching career?

- How are the responsibilities for teacher appraisal shared between educational authorities, evaluation agencies such as inspectorates, schools and the teaching profession?

- How is teacher appraisal articulated with other forms of evaluation such as system evaluation, school assessment and student assessment? In which ways do processes for system evaluation, school assessment and student assessment impact on teacher appraisal? Are there uses of teacher appraisal results for system evaluation, school assessment and student assessment?

5.1.2 Teacher appraisal procedures

- What are the performance criteria and the reference standards used in teacher appraisal? What are the instruments used to perform a teacher appraisal (e.g. classroom observation; self-evaluation; teacher portfolio; interview; student results or learning outcomes; teacher test)?
What aspects are the subject of the appraisal (e.g. planning and preparation; the classroom environment; instruction; professional responsibilities; non-teaching responsibilities within the school)? How is teacher appraisal differentiated by type of teacher (e.g. primary vs secondary teacher; teachers at different stages of the career)?

What is the methodology followed for teacher appraisal (mix of instruments; range of evaluators; frequency)? Is it mostly a process internal to the school or is the external component dominant? In what respects may teacher appraisal differ across schools and educational jurisdictions?

5.1.3 Competencies to appraise teachers and to use appraisal results

Who are the evaluators and how are they identified? What qualifications and training are evaluators required to have? Who evaluates the evaluators?

How are teachers prepared for their appraisal? What competencies are developed by evaluators and evaluatees so appraisal results are used effectively? What is the role of school leadership in teacher appraisal?

How do evaluation agencies build capacity to best process teacher appraisal results to the benefit of the school system? What processes guarantee the development of expertise in the area of teacher appraisal?

5.1.4 Using teacher appraisal results

What are the uses of teacher appraisal results? Are there links with professional development for teachers, opportunities for teachers to improve their practice, teachers’ reward systems or their career progression?

What are the processes through which results are incorporated into policy and practice?

5.2 Implementation of teacher appraisal

What is the evidence on the impact of current arrangements for teacher appraisal? Provide statistics on the functioning of teacher appraisal if available (e.g. proportion of teachers appraised, distribution of appraisal results) and the main conclusions of studies which analyse the impact of teacher appraisal arrangements.

Are there major concerns about teacher appraisal? In what respects?

What are the perceived difficulties to implement teacher appraisal? What measures have been developed to facilitate the implementation of teacher appraisal? How are the main stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, teacher professional organisations, parents’ organisations) involved in the implementation of teacher appraisal?

What are the views of the different stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, parents’ organisations) on the current approach to teacher appraisal? In which ways do they favour or oppose teacher appraisal?

5.3 Policy initiatives

What initiatives have been undertaken to improve the effectiveness of teacher appraisal? For those policies that have been implemented what is the evidence on their impact and cost?
Chapter 6: Student assessment (maximum 15 pages)

17. This chapter should consider both the formative and the summative assessment of students. However, in what concerns the formative assessment of students, the focus of the information to be provided should be on the use of results within the broader evaluation and assessment framework (how results are integrated in the overall evaluation and assessment framework, in particular how the formative assessment of students is articulated with the other components of the framework). The information provided should not concentrate on how formative assessment of students is undertaken within the classroom (i.e. the daily dialogue between the teacher and students), but should include a brief description of it.

6.1 Current practices

6.1.1 Overall framework for student assessment

- What forms of student assessment exist in the school system (e.g. formative assessment in the classroom, summative assessment in the classroom/school, national examinations at key stages of the school system with a formal civil effect for students, national assessments with no formal civil effect for students, international standardised tests)? How are the different forms of student assessment interrelated? What is the rationale for the current approach to student assessment?

- Is there a longitudinal dimension to student assessment? Are students tracked over their school career?

- How are the responsibilities for student assessment shared between educational authorities, evaluation agencies, schools and teachers?

6.1.2 Student assessment procedures

- How is the progress of students assessed within schools? What are the current approaches to formative and summative assessment within schools and how are they articulated? What aspects are assessed (e.g. knowledge skills; critical thinking skills; social competencies; engagement with learning)? What are the performance criteria and the reference standards used in school-level student assessment? How is within-classroom formative student assessment linked to other forms of student assessment and to other components of the evaluation and assessment framework?

- What national examinations, with a formal civil effect for students, are organised at key stages of the school system? What is the purpose of these student national examinations? How are these articulated with school-level student assessment? What aspects are assessed (e.g. knowledge skills; critical thinking skills; social competencies; engagement with learning)? What are the performance criteria and the reference standards used in student national examinations?

- What national assessments, with no formal civil effect for students, are organised? What is the purpose of these national assessments? What is the purpose of taking part in international student tests? How is participation in international student tests articulated with other forms of student assessment?

- In what respects may student assessment differ across schools and educational jurisdictions?
6.1.3 Competencies to assess students and to use assessment results
- What processes guarantee the development of expertise in the area of student assessment? What competencies are developed in the system to both conduct student assessment and to use student assessment results in an effective manner?
- How do evaluation agencies build capacity to best process student assessment results to the benefit of the school system?

6.1.4 Using student assessment results
- What are the uses of student assessment results? What are the links with career orientation and what are the current policies on student retention?
- What are the processes through which student results are incorporated into policy and practice?

6.2 Implementation of student assessment
- What is the evidence on the impact of the current approaches to student assessment? Are there major concerns about student assessment? In what respects?
- What are the views of the different stakeholders (e.g. teacher unions, parents’ organisations) on the current approaches to student assessment? In which ways do they favour or oppose national examinations and international standardised tests?

6.3 Policy initiatives
- What initiatives have been undertaken to improve the effectiveness of student assessment? For those policies that have been implemented what is the evidence on their impact and cost?
- What policy options are currently being considered to improve the effectiveness of student assessment? What are the likely views of key stakeholder groups on these policy options?

Chapter 7: Other types of evaluation and assessment (maximum 5 pages)
18. This chapter is to focus on the types of evaluation and assessment procedures which were not covered in the previous chapters but which are part of the evaluation and assessment framework. Examples of types of evaluation procedures which could be covered in this chapter are:
- Evaluation of specific education intervention, programme or policy (e.g. programme to provide additional resources to schools located in disadvantaged areas);
- Evaluation of local educational authorities; or
- Evaluation of school leaders.
19. For each one of these evaluation procedures, the following issues should be addressed:
- Objectives and articulation with other forms of evaluation;
- Methodology used to undertake the assessment; and
- Use of assessment results.

4 The scope of the Review does not include the evaluation of the quality of educational infrastructure.
ANNEX 1

20. This annex provides some technical details to assist countries in preparing their Country Background Report (CBR). The CBR should be provided in electronic format, preferably as a Word document, suitable for placement on the OECD website.

**Structure of the report**

- Table of Contents
- List of acronyms and glossary of terms
- Executive Summary
- Chapter 1. The school system
- Chapter 2. The framework for evaluation and assessment
- Chapter 3. System evaluation
- Chapter 4. School assessment
- Chapter 5. Teacher appraisal
- Chapter 6. Student assessment
- Chapter 7. Other types of evaluation and assessment
- References
- Annexes (if any)

**Format**

21. To ensure that CBRs have a consistent appearance and are easy to use we would appreciate it if you could follow these format guidelines:

- Font Times 11;
- Single spacing;
- Page size A4;
- Pages numbered;
- Normal text, single spacing within paragraphs, with a space between paragraphs;
- Paragraphs should be numbered sequentially throughout the document (1, 2, 3, etc.);
- Lists should be indented; points in a list should be indicated with bullets or numbers;
- Tables and figures should be prepared in Excel or Word, if possible. Each table and figure should have a title and a source, as well as notes as appropriate. Please insert the tables and figures as “pictures” in the document, not floating over the text; and

- References should appear as needed throughout the text in round brackets, specifying the author and the date, like (Smith, 2004); Full references should be given in the reference list.