Group of National Experts on the AHELO Feasibility Study

PHASE 2 PROGRESS REPORT
8th meeting of the AHELO GNE

Paris, 28-29 November 2011

This document was prepared by the ACER Consortium.

The AHELO GNE is invited to:
• TAKE NOTE of the progress report.
• DISCUSS on progress as necessary.

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INTRODUCTION

1. This Phase 2 progress report lists activities since the March 2011 written report submitted for the GNE 6th meeting. It complements the verbal update provided in July 2011 for the 7th GNE meeting, and via the July 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report. The progress report covers:

   a) International Management;
   b) Generic Skills;
   c) Economics;
   d) Engineering; and
   e) Contextual Dimension.

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

International leadership, management and review

2. International management of AHELO is led by ACER, in collaboration with CAE, cApStAn, ETS, IEA/DPC, SoNET, Statistics Canada, Indiana University, NIER and CHEPS.

3. April to November 2011 has been an enormously busy and productive time for the AHELO Feasibility Study. It has involved finalising instrument development and validation, formative evaluation, diligent international management, finalising contracts for the study, developing systems and documentation to support implementation, ongoing support and training of national managers and scorers, the coordination of dozens of project meetings, extensive consultation with around 1,000 stakeholders internationally, and preparation for implementation of test administration. Data products and reports are also being designed and developed.

4. Members of the AHELO Consortium are in regular and often daily contact with national team members in participating countries. Communications cover all facets of AHELO. Email, skype and telephone calls are used to communicate with NPMs, with all documents posted on the AHELO Exchange. This enables close control over access to documents and secure operations in all areas of work.

5. The AHELO International Project Director and ACER personnel participate in regular/daily communications with representatives of the IMHE at the OECD to report on progress and address operational and technical issues as they arise.
6. Since March 2011, AHELO-related meetings and presentations have been held with groups in Australia, Germany, Japan, Korea, France, Peoples Republic of China, and the United States.

7. ACER was advised in mid July that the GNE had approved at its July 2011 meeting for AHELO to proceed to implementation phase. Since then, ACER has been negotiating a principal agreement with OECD. It is anticipated that legal negotiations will be concluded in early November 2011. ACER has also prepared 10 subcontracts with partner organisations to be implemented once the principal agreement is in place.

8. It is particularly important to acknowledge the work done by national teams. In a period in which demands on the AHELO national teams have been considerable, and in which timelines for all activities have been very limited, national teams have worked energetically, conscientiously and enthusiastically to complete all activities within time limits.

9. As countries commence operational participation in AHELO, the International Project Director and ACER staff establish communication and commence introductions to all facets of the project. International communications then guide national teams through the multifarious activities which constitute national participation in the AHELO Feasibility Study.

10. Numerous implementation support documents are prepared to support countries in their national activities. These are drafted and then circulated to countries for input prior to finalisation. Recently created manuals include the Sampling Manual and the National Management Manual. The Test Administration Manual, the Institution Coordination Manual and the International Scoring Manual are being sent to NPMs in early November 2011 for consultation prior to international training in late November 2011. The International Scoring Manual includes a general introduction to the approach to scoring used in AHELO as well as strand-specific Scoring Guides for the three testing strands.

11. Formative evaluation of the AHELO Feasibility Study has been underway since early 2010 with reference to the Analysis Plan approved by the AHELO GNE, and under the general oversight of the AHELO TAG. An extended July 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report was prepared by the AHELO Consortium for OECD in June 2011. OECD distributed this report to the GNE at its 7th GNE meeting. A shorter October 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report prepared by the AHELO Consortium, and reviewed by experts and the OECD, was delivered to OECD in late October 2011 for the November IMHE Governing Board meeting, the November Education Policy Committee meeting and the AHELO GNE 8th meeting.

12. The design, development and evaluative work conducted thus far has yielded insights that have been used to explore a high-level, illustrative and future-oriented perspective of a feasible international assessment of higher education learning outcomes. These insights have been compiled into a suggestive vision for AHELO’s future prospects.

13. Materials, logistics and delegations are being finalised for a three-day training session in November 2011 during which NPMs and Lead Scorers from all testing strands and all participating countries will be trained in the key implementation activities such as scoring, sampling, use of the test system, and overall national management.

**Translation, adaptation and verification**

14. In the AHELO Contextual Dimension, the deferred start meant that there was insufficient time for the translation, adaptation and verification procedure identified above to be undertaken. Nevertheless, countries were provided with the option to follow these procedures if they wished. An alternative was also presented to countries. They could have BranTra (the Consortium’s professional translation agency)
undertake the first translation. All countries opted for this second option, although some also undertook a national translation to ensure that the translation they received was accurate. While no translations were required for Australia, Canada and the United States, the national versions nevertheless underwent a process of adaptation. Once BranTra had completed the translation, this was sent to a national team for review and revision, before being returned to cApStAn for verification. The process is complete in all but two countries as at 10 November 2011 (see Appendix 1).

15. A similar process to the translation, adaptation and verification process used in the AHELO Contextual Dimension of AHELO is being followed for the translation, adaptation and verification of the AHELO Generic Skills MCQs. Again, this choice has been made due to time constraints and after consultation with NPMs and linguistic quality control experts (cApStAn and BranTra). Transaltion is complete in all countries and adaptation of all national versions is currently underway (see Appendix 1).

Sample design

16. An AHELO Sampling Manual was delivered to ACER by Statistics Canada in early 2010 and then archived until mid 2011.

17. When the implementation phase of AHELO was confirmed by the GNE in July 2011 ACER and Statistics Canada worked to review and revise the existing AHELO Sampling Manual. Consultation with the OECD, TAG, Expert Groups, HEIs and SCG, NPMs and the AHELO Consortium was undertaken and feedback was used to revise and finalise the AHELO Sampling Manual. The finalised AHELO Sampling Manual was provided to countries in October 2011 to guide their sampling activities. Training will be conducted in November 2011 to train NPMs in sampling activities in their countries.

Preparation of the test system

18. Preparation of SoNET test system for AHELO commenced in July 2011 after the GNE confirmed that implementation would proceed.

19. SoNET adapted their existing Assessment Master testing system for use in AHELO. This involved the graphical design of delivery modules for Economics test, Engineering test, Context Dimension questionnaires, and Generic Skills MCQs. It also involved the formatting translation, administration and scoring systems for use by NPMs, Institutional Coordinators (ICs), Test Administrators (TAs), Lead Scorers and national scoring teams.

20. The revised source versions of the Engineering and Economics tests and three Contextual Dimension questionnaires were uploaded to the online translation management system. Test developers reviewed uploaded source versions of all instruments and advised SoNET on adaptation of the delivery module where necessary. As at 31 October 2011 final revisions of Economics and Engineering tests are being undertaken using the translation management system. Once translation, adaptation and verification of the Contextual Dimension questionnaires and Generic Skills MCQs is complete (early November) these too will be uploaded to the system. National teams will then review and advise revisions to the national versions of the Economics, Engineering and Generic Skills test materials, and to the Contextual Dimension instruments.

21. SoNET is liaising with Internet Testing Systems (who provide the delivery platform for the AHELO Generic Skills constructed response tasks) to integrate the delivery and administration modules of both systems.

22. Given the extremely short time available to prepare for administration ACER has drawn and adapted materials from existing materials to develop an International Scoring Manual, Test Administration
Manual and Institution Coordination Manual. Manuals incorporate technical details and procedural guidelines that are specific to implementation activities for participating countries.

23. In December 2011 and early 2012 (as advised by NPMs), technical tests will be carried out at participating institutions in all participating countries to ensure that the test system works effectively on institutional computers. If any problems are detected with the use of the online test deployment system USBs will be provided as an alternative methodology for test deployment.

Analysis and reporting

24. As part of instrument and system development the AHELO Consortium has prepared detailed data file structures and element specifications to prepare for the vast quantity of data which will be received from students, faculty and institutions in 2012. The data file structures identify all elements of student, faculty, institution and national data which will be recorded and specifies the format in which data will be recorded and its precise characteristics. By way of summary, in addition to various lookup and linking tables four flat unit-record data files will be prepared reflecting the multilevel study design:

a) Country Data File (CDF)—about 20 elements mainly sourced from existing policy documentation;

b) Institution Data File (IDF)—about 90 elements including management elements and data sourced using the Institution Context Instrument (ICI);

c) Faculty Data File (FDF)—about 50 elements, including management elements, sampling elements, and data sourced using the Faculty Context Instrument (FCI); and

d) Student Data File (SDF)—about 250 elements, including management elements, sampling elements, and data sourced using test instruments and the Student Context Instrument (SCI), which a breakdown of elements as follows:

i. management elements (about 20 elements, 8% of SDF);

ii. sampling elements (about 15 elements, 6% of SDF);

iii. Generic Skills constructed response tasks (3 elements, 1% of SDF);

iv. Generic Skills MCQs (about 40 elements, 16% of SDF);

v. Economics constructed response tasks (about 15 elements, 6% of SDF);

vi. Economics MCQs (about 50 elements, 21% of SDF);

vii. Engineering constructed response tasks (about 20 elements, 8% of SDF);

viii. Engineering MCQs (about 40 elements, 16% of SDF); and

ix. Student Context Instrument (about 40 elements, 16% of SDF);

25. The AHELO Consortium has drafted preliminary outlines (in the form of AHELO Dummy Tables, very draft Institution Reports and Reporting Guidelines) to provide countries with an indication of the way in which data is likely to be reported to institutions and internationally.

Summary and deliverables

26. In summary, design, development, consultation and validation for the International Management strand has involved:
a) OECD;
b) GNE;
c) 16 NPMs;
d) 16 national adaptation/translation teams;
e) SCG;
f) TAG;
g) around 15 Lead Scorers;
h) Economics Expert Group;
i) Engineering Expert Group;
j) around 30 international verifiers;
k) around 100 Institution Coordinators;
l) around 800 students;
m) around 900 faculty;
n) various professional associations; and

o) AHELO Consortium (ACER, CAE, cApStAn, ETS, IEA/DPC, SoNET, Statistics Canada, Indiana University, NIER and CHEPS).

27. Since March 2011 in this strand, the following has been delivered and provided to OECD on time and on budget:

a) ongoing international support, training and advice;
b) management of the international AHELO Consortium;
c) liaison with ministries, professional associations, and international groups;
d) presentations at numerous international meetings;
e) coordination of meetings for NPMs, TAG, Economics Expert Group, Engineering Expert Group, SCG, and AHELO Consortium;
f) leadership of international training with around 70 NPMs and Lead Scorers;
g) attendance at GNE, OECD meetings;
h) contribution to media and marketing materials;
i) October Interim AHELO Feasibility Report;
j) revised translated, adapted and independently verified Phase 2 Economics test instruments and associated reports;
k) revised translated, adapted and independently verified Phase 2 Engineering test instruments and associated reports;
m) design and development of systems and resources for test administration;
n) development of draft data files, dummy tables, Institution Reports, Reporting Guidelines; and
28. Overall, significant ground has been made in establishing feasibility. Major outcomes have been achieved—such as international agreement regarding discipline frameworks and instruments—and many challenges have been overcome. This is an important finding. Good progress has been made in little more than a year, and in developing instruments and preparing for fieldwork there is certainly no evidence to suggest that an international assessment of higher education learning outcomes is not possible. More boldly and positively, and without discounting the significant work and challenges to be confronted during implementation, there are genuine and sound indications that much of AHELO is feasible.

29. Together, insights to date provide assurance that the enormous amount of energy invested in the study—by countries, the OECD Secretariat, and experts, both independently and in collaboration—has already been transformed into significant achievements. Yet the study is only part-way through and has only yielded preliminary results. With the growing significance and evaluation of higher education around the world, the rationales for assessing higher education learning outcomes are stronger than ever.

30. The implementation phase of AHELO is just commencing but as with any study of this nature much design and development is incorporated into the production of instruments. Feasibility insights thus far include that:

a) The AHELO Assessment Design sets out a vision and strategy for success which, to date, has been sustained and scaled. The only major revision, in response to feedback, has involved clarifying and augmenting the Generic Skills strand with multiple choice items and an assessment framework.

b) Work done so far in Economics, Engineering and Contextual Dimension and Project Management strands has worked well practically and has scaled well. Methods used for translating and adapting the existing Generic Skills constructed response tasks have, according to TAG reports, consumed around half of available funds. National management arrangements have been effective, even despite a range of political, economic and natural problems. Strategies for engaging ministries, institutions, students and stakeholders have proven effective, with much remaining to be done in the implementation phase.

c) In terms of cross-national, cross-cultural and cross-linguistic generalisability: At this stage insufficient information is available to confirm that the Generic Skills constructed response tasks have been translated, adapted and verified to international standards. Work continues to prepare these tasks for deployment, and to describe and document procedures. With the exception of Canada and Russia which have recently joined the Engineering strand detailed transaction-level evidence is available to confirm that the Economics and Engineering tests have been translated, adapted and independently verified using transparent processes to international standards. Translation of the Generic Skills multiple choice questions is complete, and adaptation and verification processes have been launched. The three context instruments have been translated for all languages, and adaptation and verification is complete in all but three countries (Egypt, Netherlands and Russia).

d) The support from systems and institutions has not only been high, but has outstripped predictions. An increasing number of countries have chosen to participate in AHELO as the study has progressed. The total number of strand replications has risen from seven in 2008 to 23 in 2011. Similarly, NPMs in all countries taking part in the Economics and Engineering strands reported high levels of interest and have not reported difficulty recruiting institutions.
e) At this stage it is too early to evaluate whether: the study has been implemented in a methodologically rigorous fashion; it has been possible to engage faculty and a random sample of student respondents in the study; the instruments have been delivered successfully; operations have been managed successfully by countries and institutions; people could be trained to score tasks in cross-linguistically and cross-culturally generalisable ways; or statistical reports of assessment results are of value to systems and institutions.

**GENERIC SKILLS**

**Overview**

31. This report lists activities conducted since the March 2011 written report submitted for the GNE 6th meeting. It complements the verbal update provided in July for the 7th GNE meeting, and via the July 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report. The report covers a period of time in which there has been great progress made in all strands, and in which all national teams and members of the AHELO Consortium have been working very hard to accomplish a great number of tasks within a very short timeframe.

32. Work in Phase 2 of the Generic Skills strand has been conducted by the Council for Aid to Education and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

33. This Phase 2 report covers the:

   a) Generic Skills Assessment Framework, led by Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER);

   b) Generic Skills constructed response tasks, led by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE); and

   c) Generic Skills multiple choice questions (MCQs), led by ACER.

34. Five countries have confirmed their participation in the second phase of the AHELO Generic Skills strand (Finland, Kuwait, Norway, the Slovak Republic and the United States) while the participation of four more is yet to be confirmed: Colombia, Egypt, Korea, and Mexico.\(^1\)

**Generic Skills Assessment Framework**

35. The need to develop a Generic Skills Assessment Framework arose from consultations, feedback and meetings in late 2010 and early 2011. These confirmed a need to position the AHELO Generic Skills strand in an international context, to define the content being assessed, and to define the parameters of the AHELO Generic Skills Assessment.

36. Work on the AHELO Generic Skills Assessment Framework commenced in late July 2011 following confirmation of the implementation phase by the AHELO GNE.

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\(^1\) Negotiations are underway for those countries marked in italics.
37. The Economics and Engineering Assessment Frameworks were used to frame development of the Generic Skills Assessment Framework. Given the short timeline for development, extensive recourse was made to existing ACER documentation regarding the conceptualisation of ‘generic skills’ and its operationalisation in culturally diverse higher education assessments. CAE provided information on the United States Collegiate Learning Assessment.

38. A review of research into the definition of generic skills around the world was undertaken to provide a context for the development of generic skills test items in AHELO. This was combined with a summary of the underlying concepts, objectives, structure and development of both the constructed response tasks and MCQs.

39. ACER produced the first draft of the AHELO Generic Skills Assessment Framework, which was reviewed by CAE, then further revised by ACER. The current/first working draft of the AHELO Generic Skills Assessment Framework has been provided to the TAG for review.

40. Further consultation and development strategies will be discussed with the Secretariat, Consortium, GNE and TAG. Given the need to procure performance data to finalise the framework it is anticipated that the framework will be finalised by mid 2012.

Generic Skills constructed response tasks

41. In terms of Phase 2 work, CAE and NPMs completed the two-phased process of review (called ‘user acceptance testing’) for the online versions of the constructed response tasks and three test platform interfaces (for test administrators, students, and scorers) developed for the AHELO Generic Skills constructed response tasks. To facilitate review, NPMs and country teams were provided access to view the constructed response tasks in the student interface to review and approve text. NPMs confirmed the proper appearance of each constructed response task and requested minor revisions. In the next stage, CAE provided NPMs with access to mini-testing demonstrations. NPMs set up mock testing sessions and reviewed the complete site translations for the proctor, student, and scoring interfaces. CAE also provided the translated proctor reference manual and caption text for the proctor training video for guidance. Based on feedback from countries, CAE incorporated requested revisions.

42. CAE is currently integrating testing platforms with ACER for unified test delivery. Initially, CAE developed three complementary interfaces—for students, proctors, and scorers—to be used for implementation. Through integration with ACER, CAE will still provide access to the student and scorer interfaces as the proctor interface is not required given overall management via the SoNET test system.

43. It is anticipated that the testing sequence for the Generic Skills Strand will proceed as follows:
   a) 10 minutes setup (via the SoNET system);
   b) 90 minutes for Generic Skills constructed response task (ITS system);
   c) 30 minutes for Generic Skills MCQs (SoNET system); and
   d) 10 minutes for student context instrument (SoNET system).

Generic Skills MCQs

44. In April 2011, the AHELO Technical Advisory Group (TAG) reviewed progress in the AHELO Feasibility Study. They expressed concern that MCQs had been withdrawn from the Generic Skills strand at an earlier planning stage, noting that they were important for scaling, psychometric equating, moderating rubric-based scoring of constructed response tasks, quality control, and reliability. The TAG recommended
that MCQs should be developed to complement the extant constructed response tasks in the Generic Skills test if the Feasibility Study continues into to implementation.

45. Work on the AHELO Generic Skills MCQs commenced in late July 2011 following confirmation of the implementation phase by GNE. A detailed overview is provided in the Generic Skills Multiple Choice Development Report. To summarise item selection and development:

a) working from the draft Generic Skills Assessment Framework, senior ACER test developers consulted a library of existing generic skills MCQs and drafted an initial selection thought to be relevant to AHELO;

b) the initial selection was reviewed by test developers with expertise and decades of experience in international assessment to determine those items most suitable for use in an international context (based on criteria such as content generalisability, cultural appropriateness, translatability, adaptiveness difficulty spectrum, likely bias characteristics, content relevance, cohesiveness, etc.);

c) the selected items were reviewed by CAE and cApStAn;

d) a draft set of 50 multiple choice items (grouped in 16 units) was shared with NPMs in the 9 countries participating in the Generic Skills strand of AHELO;

e) for each item, national teams were asked to note whether it was ‘OK’, ‘Needs minor revision’ or ‘Needs major revision’ (for the latter two categories they were also asked to provide recommended revisions), and seven out of the 8 countries which reviewed the items provided feedback in the given timeline;

f) in the majority of cases, items were regarded by countries as ‘OK’ or in need of only ‘minor revision’, however several NPMs commented that there appeared to be too many ‘numerical/quantitative’ items and too few ‘verbal’ items and as a consequence, positively reviewed items were revised and additional ‘verbal’ items were added in place of previously suggested ‘numerical/quantitative’ items; and

a) all items were finalised on 18 October 2011, and a matrix test structure was specified involving a core of 15 items and then four optional modules each with 10 items.

46. In August 2011, participating countries were provided with the option to translate the items in-country or to have this done by BranTra, the AHELO Consortium’s translation agency. All countries opted for the latter option. By way of summary:

a) all items have now been translated by BranTra, and the translations are being reviewed by cApStAn and source versions uploaded into the SoNET test system;

b) in early November 2011, translated versions will be sent to NPMs who will have the opportunity to review and revise the translation, and make adaptations, prior to independent verification by cApStAn;

c) NPMs will have the opportunity to respond to the suggestions made by verifiers before the translations are finalised;

d) during review, countries will also be asked to flag optional any items in the modules that they might prefer to not include in their country’s rotated form; and
e) it is estimated that the translation, adaptation, verification and review process will be completed by late November 2011, following which revised/final versions of each item will be uploaded to the SoNET test system for deployment in each participating country starting February 2012.

Summary and delivery

47. In summary, development and consultation on the Generic Skills Assessment Framework has involved:
   a) ACER;
   b) CAE;
   c) OECD (review underway);
   d) GNE (review underway);
   e) NPMs (review underway);
   f) TAG (review underway); and
   g) AHELO Consortium (ACER, CAE, cApStAn, CHEPS, CPR, ETS, IEA/DPC, NIER, SoNET, Statistics Canada).

48. Development and consultation on the Generic Skills constructed response tasks has involved:
   a) OECD;
   b) 9 NPMs;
   c) 9 national adaptation/translation teams;
   d) external review of 4 translations;
   e) 42 students;
   f) 12 Institution Coordinators; and
   g) CAE.

49. In summary, development and consultation on the Generic Skills MCQs has involved:
   a) OECD;
   b) 9 NPMs;
   c) 9 national adaptation teams;
   d) TAG;
   e) 9 international verifiers; and
   f) ACER, CAE, cApStAn and BranTra.

50. Since March 2011 in this strand, the following has been delivered or provided to OECD on time and on budget:
   a) draft Generic Skills Assessment Framework;
   b) CAE pre-implementation documents: pre-implementation midterm report on Generic Skills strand; CAE dissemination log on AHELO pre-implementation; CAE work plan for data management and reporting; CAE work plan for performance task scoring management; CAE
work plan for proctor training; CAE work plan for supporting NPMs; AHELO addendum sampling best practices; proctor reference manual (in Arabic English, Finnish, Norwegian, Korean, Spanish); and

c) Generic Skills MCQs translated for use in Colombia, Egypt, Finland, Korea, Kuwait, Mexico, Norway, Slovakia, United States (NB: adaptation/verification underway).

51. In terms of an interim feasibility evaluation:

a) it is not yet possible to determine whether international consensus has been reached on a Generic Skills Assessment Framework as development has only recently commenced; and

b) while work is well underway it is too soon to determine whether the Generic Skills assessment provides valid and reliable measurement given the absence of content specification, lack of technical information on constructed response tasks and inclusion part-way through the study of MCQs.

ECONOMICS

Overview

52. The progress report for the Economics strand of AHELO lists activities since the March 2011 written report submitted for the GNE 6th meeting. It complements the verbal update provided in July 2011 for the 7th GNE meeting, and via the July 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report. It highlights work done to review and revise assessment tasks, scoring rubrics, the AHELO Economics Mapping Report, the AHELO Economics Assessment Development Report, and the AHELO Economics Assessment Framework.

53. Work in the Economics strand of AHELO is led by Educational Testing Services (ETS), and supported by ACER.

54. Two countries have confirmed their participation in the second phase of the AHELO Economics strand (Netherlands and the Slovak Republic) while the participation of five more is yet to be confirmed: Belgium, Egypt, Italy, Mexico, and Russia.2

55. It is particularly important to acknowledge the work done by national teams in all seven Phase 1 countries. In a period in which demands on the AHELO national teams have been considerable, and in which timelines for all activities have been very limited, national teams have worked energetically, conscientiously and enthusiastically to complete all activities within time limits.

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2 Negotiations are underway for those countries marked in italics.
Revision, translation, adaptation, validation and verification

56. Phase 1 data was provided to test developers to inform their revision of Economics test items. In addition, countries were provided with the opportunity to provide additional feedback on the Economics tests. Data was also collated from other sources, including comments from the Economics experts involved in translation, adaptation and verification process. The Economics Expert Group was also consulted on the revision of the Economics test items.

57. Taking account of Phase 1 psychometrics, reviews, documentation and feedback the AHELO Economics test was revised, as were the AHELO Economics Scoring Guide (with revised rubrics), the AHELO Economics Assessment Framework, the AHELO Economics Mapping Report and the AHELO Economics Development Report.

58. The revised source version of the AHELO Economics test was uploaded to the AHELO test system for final translation work, any residual national adaptation, final verification, and further minor revisions by the AHELO Consortium and NPMs.

Summary and delivery

59. In summary, validation and consultation on the Economics Assessment has involved:
   a) 406 students;
   b) Economics Expert Group;
   c) 7 NPMs;
   d) OECD;
   e) 7 national adaptation/translation teams;
   f) 7 international verifiers;
   g) 45 Institution Coordinators;
   h) 45 faculty;
   i) 7 Lead Scorers
   j) several professional associations; and
   k) ETS, ACER and CAPSTAN.

60. Since March 2011 in this strand, the following has been delivered to OECD on time and on budget:
   a) revised Economics Framework;
   b) revised Economics Development Report;
   c) revised Economics Mapping Document;
   d) Economics Scoring Guide; and
   e) revised Economics test (student and master versions) translated/adapted/verified for use in Belgium, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Russia and Slovakia, with verification underway for Egypt.

61. In terms of an interim feasibility evaluation:
a) international development and validation of the Economics Assessment Framework has affirmed that it is possible to define discipline-specific learning outcomes internationally; and

b) the Economics test, which has been endorsed by domain and national experts, suggests that it is feasible to develop valid discipline assessments to international standards, noting that further evaluation is required during implementation to confirm that the Economics test is pitched ‘above content’.

ENGINEERING

Overview

62. The progress report for the Engineering strand of AHELO lists activities since the March 2011 written report submitted for the GNE 6th meeting. It complements the verbal update provided in July 2011 for the 7th GNE meeting, and via the July 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report. It highlights work done to review and revise assessment tasks, scoring rubrics, the AHELO Engineering Mapping Report, the AHELO Engineering Development Report, and the AHELO Engineering Assessment Framework.

63. Work in the Engineering strand of AHELO is led by ACER in collaboration with the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) in Japan and the University of Florence in Italy.

64. Three countries have confirmed their participation in the second phase of the AHELO Engineering strand (Australia, Canada, and the Slovak Republic) while the participation of five more is yet to be confirmed: Colombia, Egypt, Japan, Mexico and Russia.3 Canada and Russia have joined very recently.

65. It is particularly important to acknowledge the work done by national teams in all eight Phase 1 participants. In a period in which demands on the AHELO national teams have been considerable, and in which timelines for all activities have been very limited, national teams have worked energetically, conscientiously and enthusiastically to complete all activities within time limits.

Revision, translation, adaptation, validation and verification

66. Phase 1 data was provided to Engineering test developers to inform their revision of Engineering test items. In addition, countries were provided with the opportunity to provide additional feedback on the Engineering tests. Data was also collated from other sources, including comments from the Engineering experts involved in translation, adaptation and verification process. The Engineering Expert Group was also consulted on the revision of the Engineering test items.

67. Taking account of Phase 1 psychometrics, reviews, documentation and feedback the AHELO Engineering test was revised, as were the AHELO Engineering Scoring Guide (with revised rubrics), the AHELO Engineering Assessment Framework, the AHELO Engineering Mapping Report and the AHELO Engineering Development Report.

3 Negotiations are underway for those countries marked in italics.
The revised source version of the AHELO Engineering test was uploaded to the AHELO test system for final translation work, any residual national adaptation, final verification, and further minor revisions by the AHELO Consortium and NPMs.

Summary and delivery

In summary, validation and consultation on the Engineering Assessment has involved:

a) 303 students;
b) Engineering Expert Group;
c) conferences with national teams in Australia and Japan;
d) 8 NPMs;
e) OECD;
f) 8 national adaptation/translation teams;
g) 8 international verifiers;
h) 34 Institution Coordinators;
i) 27 faculty;
j) 8 Lead Scorers;
k) professional associations in Europe, Asia, United States and Australia; and
l) ACER, CAPSTAN, NIER and University of Florence.

Since March 2011 in this strand, the following has been delivered to OECD on time and on budget:

a) revised Engineering Framework;
b) revised Engineering Development Report;
c) revised Engineering Mapping Document;
d) Engineering Scoring Guide; and
e) revised Engineering test (student and master versions) translated/adapted/verified for use in Australia, Colombia, Japan, Mexico, Slovakia, with translation/adaptation/verification being concluded in Canada, Egypt and Russia.

In terms of an interim feasibility evaluation:

a) international development and validation of the Engineering Assessment Framework has affirmed that it is possible to define discipline-specific learning outcomes internationally; and
b) the Engineering test, which has been endorsed by domain and national experts, suggests that it is feasible to develop valid discipline assessments to international standards.
CONTEXTUAL DIMENSION

Overview

72. The progress report for the Contextual Dimension strand of AHELO lists activities since the March 2011 written report. It complements the verbal update provided at the 7th GNE meeting in July, and via the July 2011 AHELO Interim Feasibility Report.

73. This progress report highlights work done:

a) to develop the AHELO Contextual Dimension Framework and the three AHELO Contextual Dimension Instruments—Student Context Instrument, Faculty Context Instrument and Institution Context Instrument; and

b) to undertake focus group testing of the ICI, FCI and SCI instruments.

74. The work in the Contextual Dimension strand of AHELO is led by the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) in the Netherlands, in collaboration with ACER and the Center for Postsecondary Research (CPR) in the United States.

75. The contextual dimension instruments will be administered by all countries participating in Phase 2 of the AHELO Feasibility Study.

76. It is particularly important to acknowledge the work done by national teams. In a period in which demands on the AHELO national teams have been considerable, and in which timelines for all activities have been very short, national teams have worked energetically, conscientiously and enthusiastically to complete all activities within time limits.

Development and validation

77. In April 2011 the draft version of the AHELO Contextual Dimension Assessment Framework was provided for feedback to GNE, NPMs, SCG, TAG, Economics and Engineering Expert Groups, OECD, and all members of the AHELO Consortium. All parties (apart from the SCG) reviewed the instruments at least twice. Based on feedback received the AHELO Contextual Dimension Assessment Framework was revised, finalised and delivered to the OECD in September 2011.

78. Working from the Contextual Dimension Assessment Framework, items for the student, faculty and institution instruments were drafted and circulated to NPMs, AHELO Consortium members and the OECD for revision and feedback. Countries were provided with the option to add to their national version of the contextual dimension instruments country specific items (to a maximum of three). Two countries have chosen this option for the SCI: Australia added one item on the Indigenous status, and Egypt added one item on the language of instruction during secondary school. Further country additions are being made during the adaptation process.

79. Focus groups were carried out in Australia, Japan and the Netherlands to provide student, faculty and institution input on the revision of context dimension instruments. Further focus groups with students and faculty are planned in Canada, the United States, and possibly Mexico. Feedback from all stakeholders—students, faculty, ICs, NPMs, SCG, TAG, Economics Expert Group, Engineering Expert Group, translators and verifiers, and the AHELO Consortium—was used to revise, rework and finalise the
student, faculty and institution context instruments. All three instruments were delivered to the OECD in September 2011.

80. Two countries—Belgium and Canada—have commenced operational participation in AHELO during 2011, and consultation on the AHELO Context Dimension Assessment Framework and three instruments has commenced.

81. The translation, adaptation and verification process of the AHELO Contextual Dimension instruments began in all AHELO participating countries in September 2011 (further details are provided in the AHELO International Management Progress Report).

82. Translation of the three contextual instruments has been completed in all participating countries. Moreover, adaptation has been completed in 15 participating countries and verification has been completed in 14 participating countries. The translated instruments are being uploaded into the test system as they are ready and final verification will be conducted with NPMs by late 2011.

Summary and delivery

83. In summary, consultation and validation of the Contextual Dimension Framework and ICI, FCI and SCI instruments has involved:

   a) OECD;
   b) GNE;
   c) 16 NPMs;
   d) 16 national adaptation/translation teams;
   e) SCG;
   f) TAG;
   g) 16 international verifiers;
   h) 12 Institution Coordinators;
   i) 21 students;
   j) 15 faculty;
   k) Economics Expert Group;
   l) Engineering Expert Group; and
   m) AHELO Consortium (ACER, CAE, cApStAn, CHEPS, CPR, ETS, IEA/DPC, NIER, SoNET, Statistics Canada).

84. Since March 2011, the following Contextual Dimension material has been delivered or provided to OECD on time and on budget:

   a) Contextual Dimension Framework (containing item mapping and coding guides);
   b) revised Assessment Design and Analysis Plan adding Contextual Dimension;
   c) ATAV guidelines for Contextual Dimension instruments;
   d) Institution Context Instrument English source version;
   e) Faculty Context Instrument English source version;
f) Student Context Instrument English source version; and

g) ICI, FCI and SCI instruments translated for use in all 16 countries, adapted in but one country, verified in all but four countries, and ready for fieldwork in 10 countries.

85. In terms of an interim feasibility evaluation it can be surmised that a Contextual Dimension Framework and Student, Faculty and Institution Context Instruments have been developed and technically validated with stakeholders which, for the purposes of the AHELO Feasibility Study, reflect an international consensus about the important contexts that shape higher education learning outcomes.
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<td>Start of activities</td>
<td>National staff are appointed and actively begin AHELO participation</td>
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<td>Framework review</td>
<td>National staff read draft version of framework and provide comments to AHELO Consortium to inform revisions</td>
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<td>Provision of country items</td>
<td>Test items are provided by countries for possible inclusion in test</td>
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<td>Consultation on items</td>
<td>National staff are provided with draft items and are asked to provide comments to AHELO Consortium to inform revisions</td>
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<td>Adaptation of items</td>
<td>National staff review items and adapt to ensure good fit with national context</td>
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<td>Translation 1 of items</td>
<td>First translator translates all items into national language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation 2 of items</td>
<td>Second translator independently translates all items into national language</td>
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<td>Translation reconciliation</td>
<td>National teams, experts and third translators review the two independent translations and use the strengths of both to arrive at a superior translation</td>
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<td>Independent verification</td>
<td>Verification agency contracts independent verifiers (linguist and domain expert) to review reconciled translation/adaptation and suggest improvements.</td>
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<td>National teams review verifier comments and either accept or reject these to arrive at a final source version in agreement with verification agency</td>
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<td>Phase 1 focus groups</td>
<td>Small groups of students at an average of 10 institutions do test, give feedback via questionnaires, and discuss experiences and observations</td>
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<td>Provision Phase 1 data</td>
<td>National teams score and record student performance in test and summarise feedback</td>
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<td>Phase 2 revisions</td>
<td>Test developers use feedback from countries, students, psychometrics, verifiers and expert observations to inform revisions of test materials</td>
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<td>Phase 2 translation revision</td>
<td>Translation agency revises translation to echo changes to source version</td>
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<td>Phase 2 verification</td>
<td>International verification checks revision to translation/adaptation against revised source version and corrects errors</td>
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<td>National teams review revised and verified translations and provide feedback to verifiers and system developers to ensure contents is accurate.</td>
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<td>Once any recommended changes are made to translated test in test system, countries confirm that it is ready for deployment</td>
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<td>Approximate period of time when AHELO instruments will be deployed to students</td>
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<td>Approximate dates for institutions to carry out technical test of system</td>
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<td>Approximate numbers of national team members who will attend training in November 2011</td>
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ANNEXES

The following documents will be provided as annexes to this progress report:

EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE(2011)21/ANN1  Contextual Dimension Framework
EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE(2011)21/ANN5  Test Administrator Manual