

**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNING BOARD**

Group of National Experts on the AHELO Feasibility Study

ROLE OF NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGERS AND RESOURCE NEEDED

Paris, 18-19 November 2009

The AHELO GNE is invited to:

- *COMMENT and AGREE on the role of NPMs;*
- *TAKE NOTE of estimated implementation resource needs at national level.*

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ROLE OF NATIONAL PROJECT MANAGERS AND RESOURCE NEEDED

1. During its second meeting on 27-28 April 2009 in Paris, the AHELO Group of National Experts (GNE) took note and agreed on the proposed division of work between the Secretariat, contractor(s), national experts and higher education institutions (HEIs) but asked for clarification on the role of National Project Managers (NPMs) and associated costs for countries and HEIs.

2. Accordingly, the OECD Secretariat has asked bidders – during the information session on 9 July 2009 – to elaborate on the role and responsibilities of NPMs and to outline in their proposals the types of tasks they would be expected to accomplish, the skills and qualifications they should have as well as the time commitment that countries should anticipate. This information is indeed important to help countries plan for the national implementation of the AHELO feasibility study and assess national implementation resource needs at national level. The two revised proposals received elaborated on the role of NPMs and resource needs at national level and this document draws extensively on the information provided by bidders.

3. While the nature of the tasks to be performed by NPMs is not likely to be fundamentally different across contractor(s) and project proposals, the time commitment expected from national teams may well vary according to project proposals, and so do resource needs at national level. The following description therefore reflects a tentative and provisional sketch of the role, responsibilities, time commitment and costs of national implementation, bearing in mind that actual plans and needs will depend on the AHELO contractor(s) to be appointed, their detailed project plan and timeframe for activities under their responsibility, as well as decisions on the design of the AHELO feasibility study in light of the budget situation [EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE(2009)15].

The AHELO GNE is invited to:

- COMMENT and AGREE on the role of NPMs;
- TAKE NOTE of estimated implementation resource needs at national level.

Implementation of National Centres

4. Participating countries will need to provide appropriate infrastructure for managing key facets of the AHELO Feasibility Study. The in-country infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting the development and implementation of the study.

5. First, it is necessary for countries to establish a National Centre. Experience with related studies suggests that these may be headquartered in government offices, or contracted to specialist service agencies. The consideration may be financial, or it may be related to perceptions of independence and ultimately to the purpose and positioning of the AHELO Feasibility Study. The AHELO feasibility study was launched in 2008, and many national centres have already been established. While the importance of these considerations will vary across contexts, National Centres should be able to engage institutions in a scholarly and quality improvement perspective.

6. National Centres need to have the means of communicating efficiently with the OECD, government agencies, the Contractor(s), and participating institutions. The groundbreaking nature of the AHELO Feasibility Study means that particular value would be derived from the National Centre having well-established and sophisticated strategies for communicating with key institutional, national and international stakeholders. This requires nuanced knowledge of the system, effective leadership capacity, an (optimally) established relationship with opinion leaders, and sound technical footings.

7. The National Centre requires standard office infrastructure, funds to support in-country and international travel, and to undertake consultations in-country, access to document preparation and review facilities, staff or networks to manage translation and adaptation processes, the facilities to manage relationships with Institutional Coordinators. While the staffing of the National Centre depends on its location and history, core staff would include:

- National Project Manager (NPM) (see following section);
- Research Assistant;
- Administrative Assistant;
- Translation/Adaptation Advisor;
- Technical Advisor; and
- Editorial Support.

The National Project Managers

Nomination

8. The National Project Manager (NPM) will be nominated by the participating country. The NPM will be responsible for the implementation of the AHELO feasibility study at national level. More specifically, the NPM has overall responsibility for ensuring that all required tasks are carried out on schedule and in accordance with the prescribed technical standards and survey operations guidelines, and for documenting processes implemented at national level.

Qualifications of the National Project Manager: skills and experience

9. A person appointed to the NPM position should have experience in planning, organising and conducting large-scale surveys:

- Essential skills for the NPM position include the ability to identify, select and manage a team of project staff, together with the experience and competence to handle multiple tasks that may require attention simultaneously.
- Previous work in the fields of higher education, educational assessment and contextual surveys would be very beneficial for the NPM position, as would familiarity with data processing, survey quality control procedures and data file structures.
- The NPM must possess excellent oral and written communication skills in the local language, as well as in English. The NPM will need sufficient linguistic knowledge and confidence to

represent the participating country at international meetings where all aspects of the project will be discussed in English, the official communication language of the AHELO Feasibility Study.

Role of NPMs in implementing the AHELO Feasibility Study at national level

10. The National Project Managers will be the primary contact point for the OECD Secretariat and Contractor(s) in the day to day dealings with that country. NPMs will liaise with the Contractor(s) on all issues related to the implementation of the AHELO Feasibility Study in their country. NPMs play a vital role in ensuring that the AHELO Feasibility Study is administered in accordance with prescribed technical standards and survey operations guidelines, and in documenting processes implemented at national level toward the development of the AHELO Feasibility Study's final reports. Wherever appropriate, the same individuals may serve as representatives on the AHELO GNE and AHELO NPM.

11. More specifically, the NPMs will play at least two critical roles. The first is that they lead survey implementation in their respective countries. This is an enormously complex job, and one of the prime responsibilities of the Contractor(s) is to provide accurate, detailed and timely information to NPMs that guide their work on key implementation tasks. The Contractor(s) will use a variety of methods to communicate with NPMs and to deliver the support and information they require to perform their functions. These methods will include:

- maintaining regular and direct email communication with NPMs as a group and with individual NPMs;
- using telephone and video-based meetings where this is appropriate;
- maintaining and developing an AHELO Feasibility Study website as a user-friendly resource and central tool for project implementation; and
- conducting briefing and training meetings at which key information is provided for discussion and review, and at which input from NPMs is obtained to assist the team in the conduct of its business.

12. The second major role for NPMs is in providing a channel through which national interests are represented in the implementation of the AHELO Feasibility Study. The use of surveys and review documents, providing an online discussion forum, and including in meetings sessions that are specifically designed to collect national input and the views of NPMs are examples of the ways in which these objectives will be achieved. The Contractor(s) will place great emphasis on obtaining and using input and feedback from NPMs on such matters as the draft frameworks as they are developed, the proposed test and questionnaire items, operational issues with survey implementation, the conduct of meetings, workshops and training sessions, and NPMs are in a key position to provide the most informed advice on the survey data collected through the AHELO Feasibility Study assessment, and its interpretation.

13. The Contractor(s) will attend all NPM meetings, and meeting papers and records of all meetings will be posted on the AHELO Feasibility Study website either before or as soon as practicable following each meeting.

14. Elaborated guidelines on proposed timelines and procedures for NPMs will be further elaborated and communicated with national centres and others as an early priority in project implementation once decisions have been made about the successful tenderer.

15. An important aspect of the Contractors' work on the AHELO Feasibility Study's implementation with NPMs will relate to the role of the AHELO Feasibility Study technical standards. The Contractor(s) will develop and review these standards as one of its first activities and will present proposed revisions of the standards firstly to the Technical Advisory Group, then, if appropriate, to the Secretariat for consideration by the AHELO GNE.

16. In addition, the National Project Managers will play an important role in developing and validating the context instruments. Key facets of this include:

- supplying background materials to inform conceptual and practical designs;
- consulting with institutions to contextualise and validate proposed indicators;
- supplying and reviewing items and instruments;
- assisting with qualitative and quantitative validation activities;
- reviewing final instrumentation prior to deployment;
- assisting with the collection and verification of existing system data;
- contributing to data entry, verification and coding; and
- reviewing results and reports.

National committees and meetings

17. It is suggested that each country should organise a national committee to offer advice to the project and ensure that national views are represented. This may be composed of national experts in, for example, survey research, education management, relevant government agencies, teachers' associations and relevant university departments. Either meetings of this national committee at regular intervals will be needed or some other way of eliciting their input will be required to review progress, procedures and results throughout the project. Support from such a committee could help to raise the profile of the AHELO feasibility study and gain the co-operation of higher education institutions.

18. Each country will be asked to co-ordinate the collection of relevant national examples of assessments in their country. It will also need to co-ordinate the review of assessment materials and contextual questionnaires. This will involve identification of appropriate national experts to contribute to the review process, collation of review response and communication of these to the Contractor(s).

19. Organisation of these activities may be done by the National Centre or may be done by another national body (for example the GNE member or a government department where staff are used to carry out other National Centre tasks).

20. Table 1 provides an indicative focus for each of the NPM meetings to be organised by the Contractor(s).

Table 1 - NPM meetings

Meeting	Indicative focus
1	Project introduction and overview Review assessment design and analysis plans Review fieldwork plans, preparations and support Review sampling methodology and management Discuss assessment frameworks and sample items National presentations
2	Discuss fieldwork procedures Review instruments and items Review data management procedures National reports on sampling implementation Update on data management and analysis plans Discussion coding procedures National presentations
3	National implementation updates Report on fieldwork data management Coder training National presentations
4	Review fieldwork implementation and outcomes Review data and initial results Report on and develop analysis plans Consider scientific and practical feasibility National presentations
5	Review study outcomes Review draft results and findings Debrief on feasibility study National presentations

Time commitment

21. The NPM will be the primary contact point for the contractor(s), dealing with day-to-day activities. Therefore, the position of NPM will ideally involve a full-time contract under stable conditions, to ensure continuity of activities over time:

- The NPM must be able to commit a significant amount of his/her time to the AHELO feasibility study.
- If the NPM does not work full time on the AHELO feasibility study, s/he must employ full-time senior staff in key positions such as operations and data management.

22. The amount of time spent on the project by the NPM will depend on the availability of other staff at the National Centre. In particular, the availability of support staff such as administrative assistants and data management staff will affect the amount of time to spend by the NPM. The most cost-effective arrangement would be for the NPM to spend approximately half their time on the project and for more routine operational tasks to be undertaken by administrative staff or more junior staff under the supervision of the NPM. It is estimated that in total the work involved would require the equivalent of one and a half or

two full-time staff although additional administrative staff may be needed at busy periods, for example when collating and dispatching materials to participating institutions or in connection with recruiting manuals.

Responsibilities of the National Project Manager

23. The NPM will undertake or supervise all tasks related to the development and implementation of the AHELO feasibility study in his/her country:

- The NPM will be required to attend NPM meetings convened for two main purposes:
 - To provide a forum for national representatives to review, comment on and ratify proposals presented by the contractor(s) relating to assessment frameworks and instruments, contextual surveys, sampling requirements, survey operations, data confidentiality and status reports; and
 - To provide training for NPMs on sampling tasks, operational procedures, scoring and coding, data preparation and data cleaning.
- The NPM is responsible for the following communication and reporting activities:
 - Communicate the country's official position on a range of aspects of the project, both to the contractor(s) and at NPM meetings.
 - Interact with the contractor(s) and other international committees as needed.
 - Prepare reports on the preparation and implementation of the feasibility study, including reports of sampling plans, adaptation and translation of survey instruments and the overall conduct and progress of data collection.
 - Monitor and utilise the AHELO Feasibility Study website for communications on all project-related activities.
 - Prepare and tailor the AHELO Feasibility Study outreach materials for promoting the project and liaise with local media, if appropriate.
 - Review technical reports and draft of final report.
- The NPM is responsible for the following test development activities:
 - Review questionnaires and cognitive instruments for accuracy of information, national relevance and cultural appropriateness.
 - Recruit assessment/subject specialist(s) to review assessment instruments and surveys.
- The NPM is responsible for the following translation and adaptation activities:
 - Monitor and coordinate the translation and adaptation of instruments and supporting materials (training and administration manuals) according to translation and adaptation specifications provided by contractor(s).

- Document proposed changes to instruments and supporting materials for the verification phase of the documents.
- Communicate with the contractor(s) on translation and adaptation issues.
- The NPM is responsible for the following sampling activities:
 - Monitor the sample design and selection process according to detailed specifications provided by contractor(s).
 - Recruit HEIs based on a convenience sample based on provided guidelines.
 - Review student sampling process and selection of faculty, programme and institutional leadership staff.
- The NPM is responsible for the following survey operations activities:
 - Monitor the production, dispatch and receipt of materials to and from HEIs.
 - Ensure that procedures for administering the assessment instruments and surveys are thoroughly understood by the Institutional Coordinators (ICs).
 - Conduct training sessions for Institutional Coordinators (sampling and administration procedures).
 - Recruit scorers to attend scoring session, based on guidelines provided by contractor(s).
- The NPM is responsible for the following data file preparation activities:
 - Communicate data entry procedures and supervise data entry operations.
 - Conduct validation checks of data from the survey instruments, following the detailed guidelines.
 - Organise the dispatch of data files to the contractor(s).
 - Respond to data queries in a timely fashion.
- The NPM is responsible for ensuring quality control throughout survey implementation through prescribed monitoring, verification and reporting activities.
- For countries participating in a strand involving computer-assisted delivery of instruments, NPMs must perform significant activities related to systems integration and operation. Each NPM may choose to appoint an information technology coordinator who will have direct responsibility for the following activities:
 - Obtain or ensure access to sufficient computers to support survey operations. These computers must meet the minimum technical requirements established by the contractor(s) and should be dedicated to the AHELO Feasibility Study project during the study.

- Configure these computers with assessment instruments/survey software to contractor(s) specifications.
- Train Institutional Coordinators in the operation of the computers and the assessment instruments/survey software.
- Along with the NPM and related staff, receive training on the assessment instruments/survey software.
- Operate a national helpdesk to provide technical support for the Institutional Coordinators.
- Extract survey data from laptop computers and manage the formatting and cleaning of the data for delivery to the contractor(s).

National Project Manager major tasks

24. Table 2 provides a list of the major tasks the NPM will likely need to go through in implementing the AHELO Feasibility Study. The corresponding timeframes are to be interpreted as provisional indications. They will be revised on the basis of the detailed project plan once the AHELO contractor(s) is appointed and the plans for the feasibility study implementation are finalized.

Table 2 – National Project Manager Major Tasks

Planning January 2010	<input type="checkbox"/> Attend NPM meetings (dates to be determined by contractor(s))
	<input type="checkbox"/> Review national data collection plan <input type="checkbox"/> Review national centre security arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Develop national implementation plan with contractor(s)
Recruiting HEIs and sampling students Jan - June 2010	<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain HEIs co-operation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange necessary permissions for approaching HEIs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare promotional and publicity material
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify Institutional Coordinators (ICs)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish assessment dates with ICs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit list of selected HEIs to contractor(s)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Select student samples, faculty, program and institutional leadership staff
	<input type="checkbox"/> Send instructions for preparing the list of eligible students to HEIs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Receive lists back from HEIs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use designated software to select student sample and generate student tracking form
<input type="checkbox"/> Send list of selected students to HEIs	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify faculty, program and leadership contacts	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate activities of Institutional Coordinators (communications, material distribution, administration procedures, ...)	

Table 2 – National Project Manager Major Tasks (cont'd)

Preparing materials <i>Oct 2009 – July 2010</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate to the assessment instruments and surveys development
	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit assessment/subject specialist for assessment instruments and surveys development
	<input type="checkbox"/> Review assessment instruments and surveys materials
Administering <i>Aug 2010 – Apr 2011</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare assessment instruments, surveys and manuals
	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit translators for national version of assessment instruments and surveys
	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit translated versions to the verification coordinator
	<input type="checkbox"/> Document adaptations made to the assessment instruments and surveys
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide technical and administrative support during translation-verification
	<input type="checkbox"/> Revise administration manuals to reflect national plan
	<input type="checkbox"/> Organise a final proofreading of materials prior to printing (or final proofreading of the electronic version)
Coding and producing data files <i>Mar – Jul 2011</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Oversee assembly and printing of assessment booklets and questionnaires (for paper versions)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Assemble assessment instruments, surveys and manuals
	<input type="checkbox"/> Print assessment and surveys materials and manuals
	<input type="checkbox"/> Send hard copies, pdf and word files of all assessment materials (including coding guides) to contractor(s) for archive
Reporting <i>Nov – Dec 2011</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> In case of electronic delivery, oversee the activities related to the systems integration and operation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Oversee packing and shipping of all materials to HEIs (for paper versions)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Oversee receipt of materials from HEIs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Track participation of HEIS, students, faculty, programme and institutional leadership
Coding and producing data files <i>Mar – Jul 2011</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Review coding and data entry operations
	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit coders to attend central coding session (dates to be determined by contractor(s))
	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit database and related documents to contractor(s)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Be available to respond to queries following data submission
Reporting <i>Nov – Dec 2011</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Archive study materials
	<input type="checkbox"/> Completing Report on administration activities

Estimated national implementation resource needs at national level

25. While it is difficult to be overly prescriptive about costs without detailed analysis of national contexts, these lower- and upper-bound estimates are provided to assist with national planning. These estimates assume the approach given in this proposal, and are based on review of costs of leading in-country activities of a similar nature and scale to AHELO in Australasia, Asia, North America, the United Kingdom, and Europe.

26. The cost of national implementation will vary according to local staff rates, local differences in such things as translation and printing costs, whether premises or equipment need to be hired or all resources are already available and so on.

27. The following may result in lower costs:

- Use of government staff or resources which are already available rather than contracting out all survey operations. However the extent to which this might reduce costs will vary from one country to another.
- Use of institution staff rather than test administrators to administer the survey. This will depend on agreement of the TAG and GNE that this is possible and will also be subject to assurances that security can be maintained. It will also depend on the goodwill of institutional staff and the extent of cost saving would depend on whether institutions are willing to do this without some form of incentive or payment for staff time. In some countries it may be necessary to use test administrators to reduce the burden on the institution and encourage participation.
- Participation in the contextual dimension is currently optional and countries would save costs if they did not participate in this module. However we would urge as many countries as possible to take part as this will greatly increase the quality of the survey and the opportunity to obtain information on the feasibility of this aspect.

28. Conversely there are some issues which may result in increased costs in order to ensure successful participation. In particular:

- In some countries it may be necessary to give some form of incentive to the higher education institutions which are invited to take part to ensure a sufficient number.
- Experts who take part in national committees or review of test items may need to be paid in some countries while in others it may be possible to use experts who will participate without the need for additional payment (*eg.* if employed by government bodies rather than independent consultants, or if they are members of organisations which have a particular interest in the survey).

29. Table 3 presents an estimation of the time commitment needed for the implementation of the AHELO Feasibility Study in one country. Table 4 presents an estimation of national costs for one country. This estimation will vary greatly from country to country, and is included as a guide only.

30. Two alternative costing have been provided in Table 3. The first set of day allocations and costing assume a lower bound estimate assuming that the National Centre can be established using existing infrastructure and expert personnel. The second set of day allocations and costing assume establishment of an independent support agency.

Table 3 - Estimate of staff time for one country (days)

Activity	Days (lower estimate)	Days (upper estimate)
National Project Manager	100	400
Research Assistant	100	400
Administrative Assistant	80	150
Translation/Adaptation Advisor	0	30
Technical Advisor	10	30
Editorial Support	10	20

Table 4 - Estimate of national costs for one country (EUR)

Budget item	2010	2011	Total
Country cost (lower estimate)	200,000	200,000	400,000
Country cost (upper estimate)	450,000	450,000	900,000