

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

Group of National Experts on the AHELO Feasibility Study

PARTICIPATION IN THE AHELO STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Paris, 18-19 November 2009

The AHELO GNE is invited to ADOPT this proposal.

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PARTICIPATION IN THE AHELO STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIVE GROUP

1. During its second meeting on 27-28 April 2009 in Paris, the AHELO Group of National Experts (GNE), welcomed the involvement of stakeholders in the AHELO Stakeholders' Consultative Group (SCG) as an efficient means of communication with them; underlined the importance of transparency regarding the intermediate outputs of the feasibility study with stakeholders, in accordance with agreed-upon principles for disclosure of documents; suggested that invitations to join the SCG should be extended to the umbrella organisations of HEIs from those countries directly involved in the AHELO feasibility study; and asked the Secretariat to prepare a document clarifying the membership of the SCG for the next meeting.

2. In response, the present proposal is meant to supplement the Terms of Reference for the AHELO SCG [AHELO/GNE(2009)7] agreed by the GNE, by clarifying:

- The kind of membership the SCG could/should be open to.
- The procedure for joining the SCG.
- The specific roles that could be given to the SCG in the conduct of the feasibility study.

3. The AHELO GNE is invited to ADOPT this proposal.

Agreed-upon principles guiding SCG membership in the Terms of Reference for an AHELO SCG

4. The detailed rules and processes for participation in the AHELO Stakeholders' Consultative Group need to conform with the principles outlined in the Terms of Reference for the AHELO SCG. The latter underline the need for balancing:

- The openness of the composition of the SCG to any interested organization that represents a voice of the stakeholders, provided diversity is ensured; and
- Keeping the size of the SCG manageable.

Membership specifications

Diversity in the range of stakeholders targeted

5. The AHELO Stakeholders' Consultative Group currently comprises the following categories of stakeholders: higher education institutions, unions of academic staff and students, representative organisations of employers and trade unions, representatives of professional associations and the corporate world, as well as quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

6. It is proposed that organisations and foundations providing financial support toward the completion of the AHELO feasibility study be added to the SCG on the grounds that their investment demonstrates stakes in the goals and unfolding of the AHELO feasibility study. This would be done by

providing all AHELO sponsors with automatic access to the AHELO SCG web2 platform, as well as inviting the major sponsors to SCG meetings. The Secretariat would make sure that this addition would not change the consultative nature of the SCG.

7. It is also proposed to consider the addition of further categories in the future, *e.g.* interested representative organisations of disciplines not yet covered by the AHELO feasibility study, but which would have stakes in an eventual AHELO main study¹. This would be done on a request basis, with no proactive recruitment of these groups at this stage.

8. A diverse membership requires that, to the extent possible, no specific category would be prominently represented. Diversity should be understood primarily in terms of activity domain, cultural background, and geographical provenance.

Meta vs. national organisations

9. Priority has thus been given to meta-organisations and federations of organisations rather than national actors. Indeed, the above-mentioned categories of stakeholders can be represented on behalf of overarching organisations.

10. Individual applications to participate in the SCG (*e.g.* by a faculty member, researcher) shall not be accepted in the SCG since individuals cannot express a representative voice of higher education. The AHELO feasibility study offers other opportunities for individual collaborations or dissemination to individual parties (*e.g.* through the AHELO newsletter).

11. Likewise, the participation of national organizations shall be discouraged to the extent possible in order to keep the size of the group manageable.

12. In some cases, however, the extension of the SCG to some national actors may be justified wherever the impact factor that the AHELO feasibility study may generate in the future is perceived to be extremely high. This includes, for instance:

- National actors from some national higher education systems whose size may justify a direct membership on the grounds of the numbers they represent.
- National actors whose importance/experience in the measurement of learning outcomes may add value to the SCG discussions.
- National umbrella organizations of institutions based in countries participating in the AHELO feasibility study, since the institutions they represent will be involved in the AHELO assessments and therefore have stakes in the results and impact at institutional level.
- National student organizations of AHELO participating countries for the same reason.

¹ The OECD Secretariat has for instance received an expression of interest from the *European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)*, which represents more than 250 institutions in higher music education in all European countries.

- National umbrella organizations representing the higher education research community² of AHELO participating countries in light of the potential impact of AHELO for evidence-based research in those systems.

Geographic scope

13. To the extent that the AHELO feasibility study aims at providing insight of the feasibility of an AHELO at international level, it has implications and ramifications for a range of different countries and regions, including outside of the OECD area. The inclusion of organisations from non-OECD countries or economies is thus welcomed.

14. However, the SCG membership is not expected to ensure equal breakdown among stakeholders operating in or with higher education worldwide, nor does it aim at providing a fully representative global picture. Therefore, outreach to stakeholders from non-OECD regions will be dealt with on an *ad-hoc*, on demand basis, with the exception of AHELO sponsors who shall get automatic access to the Stakeholders' Consultative Group.

15. Since the GNE agreed to extend the possibility of participating in the AHELO feasibility study to the five countries pursuing accession to the OECD (Chile, Estonia, Israel, the Russian Federation and Slovenia) and to the enhanced engagement countries (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa), meta-organisations of stakeholders from these regions will be primarily targeted.

Procedure to become member of the SCG

16. Any stakeholder meeting the above criteria has the possibility to apply for membership in the AHELO Stakeholders' Consultative Group. Participating countries, the GNE and the IMHE Governing Board members can also suggest any organisations that could be invited to join the SCG.

17. The decision to include additional members belongs ultimately to the GNE. However, in order to speed up and facilitate the application process, it is proposed that the OECD Secretariat will present applications or proposals for new organisations to the GNE Bureau for approval. Notification of the decision will be sent out to the applicant organisation as well as the GNE.

18. The OECD Secretariat will pay attention to the possible conflicts of interest of any stakeholders applying to the SCG with the work required by the feasibility study, especially regarding the testing that will be contracted out.

Modalities for participation and role of the SCG in the conduct of the feasibility study

19. Most communications and interactions with the AHELO Stakeholders' Consultative Group will go through the AHELO Web2 platform whereas the physical meetings will be restricted to a maximum of two meetings per year, usually around key milestones of the AHELO feasibility study. There is thus room for extending the size of the SCG with additional actors (*e.g.* sponsors, representative organizations of other disciplines, national actors from countries involved in the AHELO feasibility study) while keeping the group manageable.

² The OECD Secretariat has for instance received an expression of interest from a Board member of the *Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education* which could be considered positively were Canada to join the AHELO feasibility study.

20. With respect to the role of the SCG, this group is deemed to bring input and to react on outputs and documents provided by the OECD Secretariat. As the participation of each stakeholder will depend on its possibility, will and capacity, the kind of contribution to the AHELO feasibility study might change deeply according to each stakeholder. Some might be invited occasionally to react on specific issues on behalf of their scope of activity, as soon as they represent a group of stakeholders that is deemed representative for the higher education sector.

21. There is however one aspect for which the AHELO feasibility study could greatly benefit from the involvement of the SCG as a whole, and where much benefit could derive from the interaction and exchange of the diverse nature of the SCG membership – in terms of roles in higher education, goals and viewpoints on the desirability of an AHELO. This has to do with the potential impact of an AHELO for various aspects of higher education and the broader society. It is therefore suggested to assign to the SCG an explicit role in identifying the potential impact of an AHELO on these various aspects, as a basis for a subsequent reflection on directions to maximise its value for higher education and society at large – while limiting eventual adverse effects.

22. The AHELO GNE is invited to ADOPT this proposal.

ANNEX 1 – CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE AHELO SCG

- AASCU: American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- ACE: American Council on Education
- APQN: Asia-Pacific Quality Network
- BIAC: Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD
- CHEA: Council for Higher Education Accreditation (USA)
- EI: Education International
- ENQA: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EURASHE: European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
- EUA: European University Association
- ESU: European Students' Union,
- IAU: International Association of Universities
- INQAAHE: International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- TUAC: Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
- UDUAL: Unión de Universidades de América Latina y el Caribe
- SEFI: European Society for Engineering Education
- CEEMET: Council of the European Employers of the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries
- EEA: European Economic Association

ANNEX 2 – POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS: NATIONAL ACTORS FROM THE AHELO PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES AND VOLUNTARY APPLICATIONS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS (TO BE COMPLETED DURING GNE MEETING)

Rectors' Conference - Associations of higher education institutions Councils of higher education	
Country	
Mexico	National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education
Netherlands	(1) Association of universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) (2) Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (3) Education Council of the Netherlands
Australia	(1) Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee-Universities Australia (2) Australian Learning and Teaching Council
Norway	Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions
Sweden	Association of Swedish Higher Education (SUHF)
Finland	(1) The Finnish Council of University Rectors (2) The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council
Korea	Korean Council for University Education
Japan	(1) National Universities' Association (2) Public Universities' Association (3) Private Universities' Association (4) National Institute for Educational Policy Research of Japan
Italy	(1) Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) (2) National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System
Belgium Flanders	(1) Council of Flemish Institutions of Higher Education (2) Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR)
Student Union	
Netherlands	(1) Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO) (2) The Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb)
Australia	National Union of Students
Norway	(1) The National Union of Students in Norway (2) The Norwegian Association of Students
Sweden	Swedish National Union of Students
Finland	National Union of University Students in Finland
Italy	Unione degli Universitari (UdU)
Belgium Flanders	National Union of Students in Flanders
Voluntary applications	
Canada	Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education
Netherlands	European Association of Conservatoires (AEC)