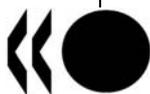


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Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Économiques
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English - Or. English

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

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Group of National Experts on the AHELO Feasibility Study

**FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING
OUTCOMES (AHELO): PROGRESS REPORT**

**AHELO GNE, Paris, 25-26 October 2010
IMHE GB, Paris, 29 October 2010
EDPC, Paris, 5 November 2010**

The AHELO GNE discussed this progress report at its October 2010 meeting and agreed to declassify it in the current abridged version.

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FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES (AHELO): PROGRESS REPORT

1. This report covers progress since the last GNE meeting (15-16 March 2010). An interim progress report was provided in August 2010 ([EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE\(2010\)12](#)).
2. The purpose of this document is to update participants of the Education Policy Committee (EDPC), the IMHE Governing Board (GB) and the AHELO Group of National Experts (GNE) with progress on the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) feasibility study. This document takes account of developments up to 4 October 2010.
3. The EDPC and IMHE GB are invited to:
 - TAKE NOTE of this progress report.
4. The AHELO GNE is invited to:
 - TAKE NOTE of this progress report; and
 - REPORT on progress as necessary.

Project summary

5. The purpose of the feasibility study is to gauge whether an AHELO is scientifically and practically feasible. It is not to develop a comprehensive or final assessment. Rather, it is proposed to take advantage of the feasibility study to explore different approaches, methodologies and instruments that might eventually be envisaged as parts of a fully-fledged assessment. As a result, the work is divided into three distinct strands of work to be undertaken separately but coherently.
6. The AHELO feasibility study will undertake three small-scale pilots of instruments to assess generic skills and discipline-specific assessments in two disciplines (engineering and economics have been chosen for the feasibility study). Each international pilot is expected to involve about 10 HEIs from 4-5 countries representing a breadth of languages, cultures and geographic backgrounds, to assess the international validity and reliability of the instruments used. As part of each of these assessments, contextual data, as well as indirect proxies of quality, will be collected to add essential analytic dimensions to AHELO and to underline the potential danger of conducting an outcomes assessment without taking account of systemic, institutional and individual characteristics.
7. In addition to these assessment pilots and the contextual dimension embedded into them, another strand of work is envisaged in the future to explore the issue of value-added measurement in higher education – *i.e.* the learning gain that takes place during the higher education experience irrespective of previous abilities. This question would be addressed by researchers, both from a conceptual perspective and through a psychometric analysis of existing datasets. This reflection would provide input for the longer

term development of an AHELO, should the feasibility study demonstrate the scientific and practical viability of such an endeavour. Its realization is however deferred subject to funding becoming available.

8. In accordance with the decisions of the 4th GNE meeting, the work will develop in several phases:

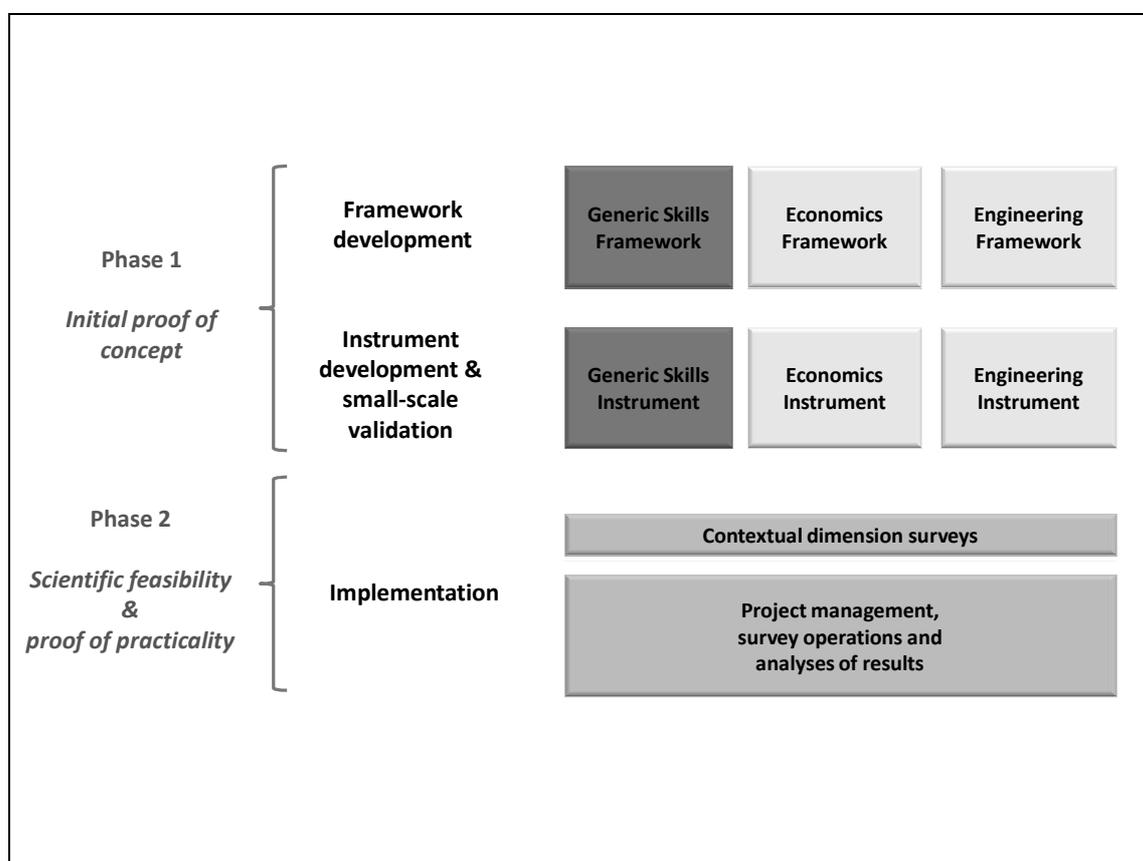
- Phase 1 – January 2010 to June 2011

The first phase of the work will consist in the development of provisional assessment frameworks and testing instruments suitable for an international context for each strand of work (generic skills, economics and engineering), and their small-scale validation (cognitive labs and think aloud interviews with small groups of students in a convenience sample) to get a sense of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural validity.

- Phase 2 – July 2011 to December 2012 (subject to funding availability)

In a second phase, the practical aspects of assessing students learning outcomes will be under focus, and the implementation of the three assessment instruments in a small group of diverse higher education institutions will help explore the best ways to implicate, involve and motivate leaders, faculty and students to take part into the testing. Each international pilot is expected to involve about 10 HEIs from 4-5 countries representing a breadth of languages, cultures and geographic backgrounds, to assess the international validity and reliability of the instruments used. A contextual dimension is embedded in the implementation of each of the three assessments to make some preliminary explorations of the relationships between context and learning outcomes, and the factors leading to enhanced outcomes.

Figure 1. AHELO Phases 1 and 2



9. Should these three assessment instruments demonstrate the feasibility of assessing student learning outcomes across different countries and institutions, the last phase will be to develop a value-added measurement strand to explore methodologies and approaches to capture value-added or the contribution of higher education institutions to students' outcomes, irrespective of students' incoming abilities.

10. By the completion of the feasibility study in late 2012, the information collected on student performance and the analysis of the results will help assess whether a full-fledged AHELO study could feasibly be taken forward from both scientific and practical standpoints. The outcomes of the AHELO feasibility study will guide the decision to be made by the OECD member countries of whether to launch a full-fledged study in the longer term.

Status report

4th meeting of the AHELO Group of National Experts¹

11. The AHELO GNE met on 15-16 March 2010 to:

¹ For a complete summary record of the 4th AHELO Group of National Experts meeting, refer to [EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE(2010)M1].

- review progress on the various parts of the AHELO feasibility study work; and
- review the budget and progress with fundraising in order to develop a strategy to carry out the work with the selected Consortium.

12. With respect to the development work for the Generic Skills Strand, Mr. Richard Shavelson and Mr. Roger Benjamin (Council for Aid to Education) reported on work progress with this strand. The GNE took note of the progress in the Generic Skills Strand and welcomed the quality of the work done.

13. With respect to the development for the other strands of work, the ACER Consortium presented:

- an overview of the work progress (Mr. Hamish Coates, ACER);
- the work progress in the Economics strand (Mr. Tom Van Essen, ETS);
- the work progress in the Engineering strand (Mr. Julian Fraillon, ACER); and
- the plans for project management and analysis.

The GNE took note of the ACER plans and documents.

Country participation

14. Since the 4th GNE meeting, Egypt has joined the group of participating countries, in all three strands of work. Therefore, as of 4 October 2010, 15 countries (of which one remains to be confirmed) have signed up to participate in the AHELO feasibility study: Australia, Belgium (Fl.), Colombia (tbc), Egypt, Finland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States (through the involvement of institutions in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Missouri and Pennsylvania) (see Annex 1 for country-specific strand of work).

Progress on substantive work

Generic Skills strand

15. The work for this strand proceeds as initially planned, with the goal to obtain two final performance tasks, translated and adapted for all participating countries, by the end of November 2010. Participating countries formed their Assessment Adaptation Group (AAG) with guidance from CAE for the recruitment of a test translation team. Countries are currently conducting cognitive labs to pilot test the translated/adapted versions of the two performance tasks with a small number of students under CAE's guidance. The two performance tasks will then be finalised based on the results obtained from the cognitive labs. A detailed progress report on this topic is being presented to the AHELO GNE.

Economics and Engineering framework and instrument development

16. Following the decision made by the GNE at the 4th meeting, the Secretariat negotiated with the ACER Consortium a contract for the development of provisional assessment frameworks and instruments for the Economics and Engineering strands of work and the undertaking of their small-scale validation. The contract also covers fieldwork and project management, as well as the development of the assessment design and analysis plan, translation, adaptation and verification activities and data products and written reports.

17. The initial phase will include small-scale validation of instruments in a small number of higher education institutions from participating countries before proceeding with implementation.

18. The first meeting of the Engineering Expert Group is scheduled for 22-23 October in Singapore and the Economics Expert Group will meet in Paris on 29-31 October. The work of these two groups on framework and instrument development is advancing well.

Technical Advisory Group

19. The TAG has had a first teleconference (on 24 September) to review the terms of reference being presented to the GNE for approval and to provide feedback on some GNE meeting documents (the assessment design and analysis plan).

National Project Managers

20. The first meeting of the National Project Managers for the AHELO Feasibility Study will take place in Paris on 27-28 October 2010. This meeting will involve Contractors and NPMs for all three strands.

Communication and dissemination activities

21. The current AHELO brochure has been revised to address a general public. The brochure is available on clearspace and on the AHELO website.

22. The AHELO web pages (www.oecd.org/edu/ahelo and www.oecd.org/edu/ahelo-fr) have been redesigned and updated.

23. A detailed project update is now available on the site in English and French and can be distributed to interested stakeholders.

24. Following the GNE decision made at its 3rd meeting to publish the Tuning-AHELO reports on expected/desired learning outcomes in Economics and Engineering as preliminary outputs of the feasibility study [[EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE\(2009\)23](#) and [EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE\(2009\)24](#)], and following advice from the OECD Publications services to redraft and edit the reports for wider publication, the reports are currently being edited in preparation for publication as part of the OECD EDU Working Papers series.

25. In accordance with the process of disclosure of documents, the document *Analytical Framework for the Contextual Dimension of the AHELO Feasibility Study* [[EDU/IMHE/AHELO/GNE\(2009\)9](#)] has been made available on the AHELO website. A special web page has been created linking to all declassified documents on AHELO (http://www.oecd.org/document/51/0,3343,en_2649_35961291_42295603_1_1_1_1,00.html).

26. Since the 4th GNE meeting, dissemination about AHELO has been pursued through participation of the OECD Secretariat in a number of events:

- *Goal dynamics in the EU: a challenge to the appraisal industry Colloquy* held by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in Luxembourg on 17-18 March 2010.
- *Going Global conference - Session Leagues Tables: Flaw Rankings or key benchmarks* held by the British Council in London on 24-26 March 2010.

- *Actual R&D in Education* held by the higher School of Economics in Moscow on 27 April 2010.
- *Internationalization of Higher Education: Trends, Forecasts and Scenarios for the Future – International Conference* held by the National Training Foundation with support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation in Moscow on April 28, 2010.
- *Fostering Excellence: Evaluating the Academic Output & Benchmarking Administrative Efficiency Seminar* held by the UNICA Rectors' Association in Tallinn, Estonia on 28 May 2010.
- *U-Multirank Advisory Group Fourth Meeting* in Brussels on 7 June 2010.
- *Enhancing Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance in MENA: Exploring Potential tools to facilitate Labour Mobility, Alleviate Skills Mismatches and Create Lifelong Learning Opportunities Seminar* organised by CMI, Marseille Center for Mediterranean Integration, NTF, the National Training Foundation, and the World Bank in Marseille, France on 14-15 June 2010.
- *Benchmarking Education Systems for Results*, East Asia Regional Conference in Singapore on 21-23 June 2010.
- *Ethics and Values in Higher Education in the era of globalization: What role for the disciplines?* - IAU 2010 International Conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania on 25-26 June 2010.
- *Higher Education in a World Changed Utterly: Doing More with Less*, IMHE 2010 General Conference on 13-15 September 2010.
- *Making Knowledge Work*, 22nd Annual EAIE Conference in Nantes on 15-18 September 2010.
- *EC Advisory Group on ranking*, Brussels, 27 September 2010.
- *Quels outils de pilotage pour renforcer l'autonomie de l'université?*, Rabat, 28 September 2010.
- *The Academic Rankings: From Popularity to Reliability and Relevance*, IREG (Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence), 7-8 October, Berlin.
- *Italian and European Universities within Innovation Global Market: Reforms and triggers of change*, 4th Annual Vision Conference, 18 October 2010, Turin.

27. The Secretariat also provided, upon request, a project update to the European Universities Association.

Stakeholders Consultative Group

28. The second meeting with the SCG was held in Paris on 17 March 2010 with 18 participants. In addition to an update on the progress of the feasibility study presented by the Secretariat, the ACER Consortium presented the plans for the development of frameworks and instruments in Economics, Engineering and for the Contextual dimension, as well as for project management, and CAE presented the framework for the assessment of generic skills based on an adapted version of the CLA instrument, as well as progress to date on that strand of work. The summary record of the meeting is available on [Olis](#) and [Clearspace](#) for further details [[EDU/IMHE/AHELO/SCG/M\(2010\)1](#)].

Next steps

5th meeting of the AHELO Group of National Experts

29. The 5th meeting of the AHELO Group of National Experts is scheduled on 25-26 October 2010 in Paris. The aims of this meeting will be:

- Review progress on the various aspects of the AHELO feasibility study.
- Agree how to take forward the work of the feasibility study.
- Initiate reflections on AHELO beyond the feasibility study

ANNEX I - AHELO COUNTRY-SPECIFIC STRAND OF WORK

AHELO Strand of Work	Participating Countries
Generic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colombia (tbc) • Egypt • Finland • Korea • Kuwait • Mexico • Norway • USA (CT, MA, MO and PA)
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belgium (Fl.) • Egypt • Italy • Mexico • Netherlands • Russian Federation
Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia • Egypt • Japan • Sweden

AHELO Participating Countries	Strands of Work Selected by Counties
1. Australia	Engineering
2. Belgium (Fl.)	Economics
3. Colombia (tbc)	Generic Skills
4. Egypt	Generic Skills, Economics, Engineering
5. Finland	Generic Skills
6. Italy	Economics
7. Japan	Engineering
8. Korea	Generic Skills
9. Kuwait	Generic Skills
10. Mexico	Generic Skills, Economics
11. Netherlands	Economics
12. Norway	Generic Skills
13. Russian Federation	Economics
14. Sweden	Engineering
15. USA (CT, MA, MO and PA)	Generic Skills