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What is the AHELO Feasibility Study?

The OECD is carrying out a Feasibility Study for the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes. The purpose of this Feasibility Study is to see if it is practically and scientifically feasible to assess what students in higher education **know and can do** upon graduation.

More than a ranking, the AHELO assessment aims to be direct evaluation of student performance at the global level and valid across diverse cultures, languages and different types of institutions.

A full scale AHELO would be a "low stakes" voluntary international comparative assessment designed to provide higher education institutions with feedback on the learning outcomes of their students and which they can use to foster improvement in student learning outcomes.

[AHELO Brochure](#)

Why the OECD?

For more than 40 years, the OECD has been one of the largest and most reliable sources of comparable statistics as well as economic and social data. The Directorate for Education has ample experience in this area with projects such as the Programme for International Student Assessment ([PISA](#)) testing the knowledge and skills of 15 year olds and the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies ([PIAAC](#)).

Methods

The Feasibility Study will look at outcomes in:

- **Generic skills** common to all students (such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem-solving, and written communication).
- **Discipline-specific skills** in economics and engineering

Contextual questionnaires are also being given at the student, faculty and institution level to link the data to student backgrounds and learning environments.

As part of the work of the Feasibility Study the OECD will also aim to do some research work on the measurement of value-added. A literature review has already been produced (forthcoming) and an expert meeting is tentatively planned for the first quarter of 2013.

Find out more on the the assessment and the instruments [here](#).

Participation

Students are tested at the undergraduate level (nearing the end of their first 3-or 4-year-degree). 23 000 students participated in the Feasibility Study.

Universities: for the purpose of the Feasibility Study 248 higher education institutions have been involved. Participation is on a voluntary basis.

Higher education institutions are also involved in the management of the feasibility study. The AHELO Feasibility Study was developed within the Institutional Management of Higher Education ([IMHE](#)) programme and under its Governing Board which includes members from governments as well as from higher education institutions.

Countries: [17 countries/economies](#) representing a wide range of cultures and languages are participating in the Feasibility Study.

Stakeholders: the OECD has invited a group of organisations with a stake or interest in higher education to join the AHELO [Stakeholders Consultative Group](#). It is a channel through which information about AHELO can be presented and discussed with these organisations. It is also a forum in which those stakeholders can raise and formulate ideas on how the study can be implemented. Members of this group include international associations of quality assurance agencies, student organisations, universities, employers and unions, as well as representatives of the engineering and economics professions.

Results

The Feasibility Study will show:

- What is feasible and what could be feasible.
- What has worked well and what has not.
- Provide lessons and stimulate reflection on how learning outcomes might be more effectively measured in future.

While AHELO takes a similar approach to other OECD assessments (like PISA) in that it will assess student knowledge and skills directly it will not provide information at national or system level. The focus will be on institutions and will not allow for comparisons at national level.

AHELO is not a ranking and will not provide league tables. At the feasibility study stage, participating institutions will be provided with anonymous data to allow them to benchmark their performance against that of their peers.

Timeline

Phase 1 - January 2010 to June 2011 - development of testing instruments for the generic and discipline-specific skills in economics and engineering and small-scale validation of these instruments.

Phase 2 - January 2011 to December 2012 - administration of the tests (and contextual questionnaires) in participating institutions.

December 2012: end of the Feasibility Study and publication of volume1 of the **final report** on feasibility by the OECD.

Feasibility study conference on 11-12 March 2013 in Paris: *Measuring learning outcomes in Higher Education: Lessons learnt from the AHELO Feasibility Study and next steps*. Places are limited for the conference and the event is by invitation only. If you would like to be considered for participation please contact ahelo@oecd.org.

April 2013: Publication of the second volume of the **final report**.

Conclusion: based on the results of the feasibility study, OECD member countries will decide whether to delve deeper into the subject as well as set out steps towards conducting a **full-scale AHELO**.

What we have learnt so far

The preliminary findings of the first phase of the feasibility study have been released in the [interim feasibility report](#). A "[highlights](#)" version has also been prepared.

Financing

The work of the feasibility study has been financed by the participating countries and through generous contributions from Lumina Foundation for Education (United States), Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy), Hewlett Foundation (United States), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal), Riksbankens Jubileumsfund (Sweden), the Spencer Foundation (United States), the Teagle Foundation as well as the Higher Education Founding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA).

Testimonials from our sponsors are available [here](#).

Find out more

- [Frequently Asked Questions - FAQs](#)
- [AHELO Brochure](#)
- [Latest detailed project update](#) (May 2012)
- [Latest AHELO Newsletter](#)
- AHELO in the news: [Media buzz](#)
- [Publications, reports and documents](#)
- [Who's who in AHELO](#): the governance of the project and the different groups involved.
- [The AHELO Team](#)

Contact us

Contact ahelo@oecd.org with any questions or be placed on our mailing list.

Permanent URL of this page: www.oecd.org/edu/ahelo

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Related Documents

[The AHELO Feasibility Study instruments](#)

[AHELO Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Countries participating in the AHELO feasibility study](#)

[AHELO reports and documents](#)

[AHELO Media Buzz](#)

Measuring learning outcomes in Higher Education:

Lessons learnt from the AHELO Feasibility Study and next steps.

11-12 March 2013

OECD Conference Centre, Paris

MONDAY 11 MARCH 2013	
	<i>Registration</i>
9:00 – 10:30	<p>Plenary 1 – Conference opening</p> <p>Welcome speech OECD Director for Education</p> <p>Opening keynote - The emergence and rationale for measuring learning outcomes Jamie Merisotis, Lumina Foundation for Education</p> <p>The making of the AHELO feasibility study and key findings OECD Secretariat</p>
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00 – 12:30	<p>Plenary 2 – Lessons on what worked, what didn't work and what we learnt from the Feasibility Study experience</p> <p>OECD Secretariat, Chairs of the AHELO GNE and TAG</p>
12:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:30 – 16:00	<p>Plenary 3 – What we learnt about the purpose and uses for measures of learning outcomes?</p> <p>Keynote 2 - Measuring learning outcomes: what for and for whom? Andreas Schleicher, OECD</p> <p>Stakeholders' views on measuring learning outcomes</p>
16:00 – 16:30	<i>Coffee break</i>

16:30 – 17:15	Plenary 3 - Continued
17:15 – 18:00	Plenary 4 – Taking AHELO forward: next steps and the importance of the workshop discussions Deborah Roseveare

TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2013	
9:00 – 10:30	Workshop 1 Are international measures of learning outcomes a valid and valuable response to today's higher education challenges?
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00 – 12:30	Workshops 2 What are the key challenges in developing an international measurement of learning outcomes?
12:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:30 – 16:00	Workshops 3 How can we combine an assessment that is useful to institutions with wider policy goals?
16:00 – 16:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:30 – 18:00	Plenary 5 – Conference closing What have we learned from the workshops? Deborah Roseveare Conference Closing and wrap-up of conference discussions



Dr. Barbara Ischinger
Director
Directorate for Education

EDU/D/2012.068

Paris, 27 November 2012

***Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)
Feasibility Study Conference***

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy to announce that the Conference on the **AHELO Feasibility Study** (*Measuring learning outcomes in higher education: lessons from the AHELO feasibility study and next steps*) will take place on **11-12 March 2013**. This event will be hosted at the OECD Conference Centre in Paris.

The Conference, following the publication of the first volume of the Feasibility Study report in December 2012, will be an opportunity to review the findings of the Feasibility Study, reflect on the deeper questions raised about learning outcomes of higher education and consider the way forward. It will be a forum to engage in strategic thinking on the results of the study and an occasion to bring together individuals from different areas of higher education to discuss the broader issue of measuring learning outcomes in higher education.

Places for this event are unfortunately very limited and registration is done on the basis of invitation-only. To register for the event please contact ahelo@oecd.org.

If you have any questions regarding this Conference or the AHELO project, please do not hesitate to contact the Senior Survey Analyst Karine Tremblay (Karine.Tremblay@oecd.org; Tel: +33 1 45 24 91 82) or the Project Assistant (Cecile.Bily@oecd.org; Tel: +33 1 45 24 18 95) for logistical questions.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Ischinger