

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

AHELO Stakeholders Consultative Group

WORK AND METHODS OF THE AHELO SCG

Working document

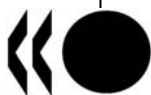
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WORK AND METHODS FOR THE AHELO STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIVE GROUP

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Potential areas of work for the SCG

2. Several points have to be considered regarding the context of the AHELO feasibility study:
- The bedrock of the AHELO feasibility study is sound and relevant data.
 - Some stakeholders have been leading or have been involved in transnational projects dealing with learning outcomes indicators and other types of measurements and may have issued publications, methodologies or recommendations that could be of interest to the feasibility study.
 - Stakeholders might have contradictory opinions on the assessment of the learning outcomes.
 - Contextual data will play a pivotal role in the AHELO feasibility study as it is likely to enhance the interpretation of results and ultimately to reveal directions for improvement.
 - The complex interplay between the discipline-related assessments, the generic skills assessment and the contextual data collections requires thorough discussions with the stakeholders.
 - Participants of the SCG must be familiar with the goals, methods and implementation of the AHELO feasibility study and with the organisation and the timetable of the AHELO feasibility study in order to get a full understanding of this multi-faceted project and to be able to interact with their membership on AHELO.
 - The AHELO feasibility study will gain support and acceptance if the stakeholders are acquainted with the progress of its implementation and share preliminary findings with their respective membership.
3. In this context, five areas of work emerge, on which the SCG could be invited to react:
- The potential impacts of AHELO for institutions and the broader society;
 - The critical stages of the AHELO feasibility study;
 - The teaching and learning process;
 - The data collection; and
 - The use of the AHELO feasibility study.

The potential impacts of AHELO on the institutions and the broader society

4. The AHELO feasibility study might carry unexpected dimensions and generate side effects, not directly related to learning outcomes but which might affect the comprehension of the functioning, the effectiveness and the role of higher education in society.

5. For instance, the AHELO feasibility study is connected to the issue of the quality culture, which is increasingly spreading in higher education. The AHELO feasibility study could impact on and benefit from the development of the reflection or projects related to the quality culture – which closely regards the learning outcomes issue along with other kinds of dimensions (*e.g.* the quality of the student's induction, the partnership with local environment, etc).

6. Additionally, the results of the AHELO feasibility study could underline new issues for the working methods or the roles of some stakeholders in the higher education system.

7. The SCG could be invited:

- To bring its views on the potential impacts of AHELO on the institutions, in the higher education arena and on the broader society;
- To reflect the expectations regarding AHELO from the membership of each participating organisation.
- To comment on the potential influence of the AHELO feasibility study on the working methods and on the roles of the stakeholders.

The critical stages of the feasibility study

8. The AHELO GNE emphasized the crucial role of the SCG at the critical stages of the implementation of the feasibility study.

9. The SCG could be invited to react on:

- The design of instruments;
- Their envisaged implementation;
- The ways to ensure a high level of participation from faculty members and students in the participating institutions;
- The interpretation of results; and
- The communication of results.

The teaching and learning process

10. The contextual data collected as part of the three AHELO assessments (generic skills, engineering and economics) will encompass two main dimensions: the structural and socio-cultural context (setting in which the institutions operate) and the educational processes and practices occurring in each institution, department or classroom.

11. However, the experts group which designed the conceptual framework for the AHELO feasibility study made clear that: “using outcomes data that [cannot be connected] to process improvement of teaching and learning is meaningless; this also means that [collecting] process data that does not have an impact on outcomes is useless.” This statement reinforces the fact that contextual data about teaching and learning practices is at the heart of AHELO and deserves significant investment and attention: these are not just “control variables.” It also implies that the primary basis upon which to choose variables from many potential contextual areas should be the extent to which such items are expected to affect learning outcomes and learning gain, based on previous experience and research.

12. The teaching and learning process is a complex but a crucial issue that the stakeholders might endeavour to better understand and to evaluate. A thorough understanding on the input-process-outcome linkage would indeed help to comprehend the emergence of the learning outcomes and to target the most influential vectors for improvement.

13. The SCG could be invited:

- To comment on the distinction and the selection of the potential variables that may impact the learning outcomes.
- To inform the AHELO GNE of the relevant experience about the teaching and learning process.

The data collection

14. The GNE will ensure that the data to be collected by the AHELO feasibility study will be reliable, relevant and sufficient to AHELO’s purpose. The data must in addition be meaningful for the higher education sector in order to ensure the recognition of the usefulness of the AHELO feasibility study.

15. The data collection shall be as light as possible to limit the efforts required from participating institutions, which undergo recurrent evaluations and accreditation processes. The feasibility study will take into account the risk of generating bureaucracy and excessive paperwork.

16. The SGC could be invited:

- To exchange its views on the sources of evidence that will be selected, on the targeted scale for the data collection (institution, department, classroom);
- To reflect on relevant lessons learnt from earlier testing attempts;
- To bring inputs on the risks of methodological biases regarding the definition, collection and processing of data at the international level, based on earlier experience; and/or
- To give its views on the conditions and prerequisites gathered by the AHELO feasibility study assessments to ensure the adherence and participation of faculty members and students.

The use of the AHELO feasibility study

17. The implementation of the AHELO feasibility study and the findings that will come out of this project will draw interest from the higher education sector and the related stakeholders. As the AHELO feasibility study underpins strategic issues for the higher education sector, for the students and more generally for the countries, an appropriate disclosure and dissemination of the results must be envisaged by the GNE.

18. The SCG could be invited:

- To comment on the potential use of AHELO results by the institutions, their departments and faculties, students, employers, agencies and national authorities; and
- To express its views on publication of the results of the AHELO feasibility study by the stakeholders.

Possible types of participation

19. As stated in the Terms of Reference, the type of participation in the AHELO SCG by the various stakeholder organisations is bound to the will, capacity and possibility of each stakeholder, and restricted by the budget and timeframe of the AHELO feasibility study.

20. Three main types of participation could be proposed to the SCG, namely:

- to react to the unfolding of the AHELO feasibility study;
- to communicate on it with the membership of each participant; and
- to bring new knowledge to the AHELO feasibility study.

21. The timetable will be discussed during the meeting, in line with the presentation of the schedule for the AHELO feasibility study.