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Introduction

The term ‘focus group’ refers to an activity in which small groups of individuals participate in a moderated discussion about assessment items. Focus groups are widely used in assessment development. Participants are members of the target population of the assessment being developed, in this case university students in the final year of their bachelor degrees. Focus groups are a very useful means of ensuring the content validity of assessment tasks. In other words, they enable assessment developers to check that assessment items actually measure the constructs they are intended to measure¹.

In a focus group, participants complete assessment tasks and then discuss with a moderator the processes they have used to respond to each task. They are given the opportunity to express themselves on a number of aspects of completing the tasks, such as whether instructions are clear, the time taken to complete different tasks, the level of difficulty of each task, the processes and methods used to respond to each task and whether the assessment materials are interesting to them.

Moderators do not communicate with participants while they are completing the tasks. Instead, they wait until participants have finished completing the tasks and then ask them specific questions about their experiences. Moderators take notes on the participants’ responses to these questions. This qualitative information is analysed and used to improve assessment tasks.

Focus groups have been used by assessment developers and educational researchers for many years as a way to examine the content validity of assessments. They can provide a great deal of information about the ways in which participants perform tasks and the methods they use to respond to the tasks they are given. This allows assessment developers to understand whether the knowledge and skills they are trying to test is actually used by participants in performing tasks, or whether participants are using other methods. At the same time, focus groups indicate to assessment developers whether participants understand the way in which a task is worded, or whether the wording needs to be changed.

Overview of the AHELO focus groups

In the AHELO feasibility study, focus groups are being used to assist with the development of assessments in all modules in Phase 1. The feedback from focus groups will be used to revise each assessment and only then will the assessments be ready for more widespread testing of students in Phase 2 of the feasibility study.

Because the assessments are being developed for use with participants in many countries around the world, it is very important to check that they are measuring equivalent knowledge and skills of participants in all countries. In particular, it is essential to make sure that after the tasks have been translated from the English source version, none of these features have changed:

- The constructs being measured;
- The explicit and implicit meaning of the tasks; and
- The level of difficulty of the tasks.

Focus groups will take place in all of the countries which are participating in the feasibility study. In each country, focus groups will be conducted at between 5 and 10 institutions with participants who have volunteered to take part. During the focus groups, participants will work on a printed version of the assessment which includes two tasks. After the focus groups are complete, the tasks will be reviewed by the translator and assessment developers based on the information that is collected from participants.

While it is possible for focus groups to be moderated by just one person, it is suggested that two people moderate each group: one person communicating with the participants while the other person is making notes of what the participants say.

There will be three stages during the AHELO focus groups:

- **Stage 1: Introducing the focus group**
  The moderator explains the purpose of the focus group to participants and gives the participants instructions for taking the assessment. (See Stage 1 below, and Appendix A).

- **Stage 2: Timed assessment completion**
  The participants respond to the assessment tasks within the time limit. Participants should work alone and not talk to any other participants while they are doing the assessment.

- **Stage 3: Follow-up discussion**
  The moderator first gives participants an assessment feedback questionnaire for each task (Appendix B) and then asks participants about their experiences of performing the assessment and makes notes of their responses. Questions will include how easily participants were able to understand the instructions, how they engaged in each of the tasks and any possible translation issues (Appendix D).
While the moderator takes notes during the discussion, it is also important that the session is audio-recorded. This will allow the focus group to be listened to afterwards by the moderator and his/her colleagues so that any problems or issues which students raise about the assessment can be identified. The moderator and his/her colleagues will then be able to analyse participants’ comments and identify ways in which the tasks should be improved.

What data will be collected?

A range of data will be collected during Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the focus groups.

- **Stage 2: Timed assessment completion**
  Students will complete an assessment, which is divided into two tasks – Task 1 (a constructed response task) and Task 2 (a set of multiple-choice questions). Student responses to these Tasks constitute **Data 1** and **Data 2**.

- **Stage 3: Follow-up discussion**
  After the students have completed the assessment, the moderator gives them two assessment feedback questionnaires – one for each task – to fill in. Each questionnaire includes 12 statements with a Likert scale for responses and 2 open response questions. Responses about Task 1 constitute **Data 3** and about Task 2 constitute **Data 4**.

The moderator then asks some discussion questions. The first set of discussion questions refers to Task 1 (**Data 5**), the second set of discussion questions refers to Task 2 (**Data 6**) and the third set of discussion questions refers to the assessment as a whole (**Data 7**). The moderator takes notes and audio-records the discussion, then listens to the recording after the focus group and expands their notes to include everything that the students said.

In summary, Table 1 specifies the data to be collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Data to be collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data 2</td>
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<td>Data 3</td>
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<td>Data 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To make data reporting simple, two methods of reporting data have been prepared:

1) Focus Group Data spreadsheet (Excel file) – see Appendix C
2) Focus Group Data form (Online) – see Appendix E

The Focus Group Data spreadsheet will be used to record Data 1, Data 2, Data 3 and Data 4.

The online Focus Group Data form will be used to record Data 5, Data 6 and Data 7.
Which task is which?

In each focus group, for both the Engineering assessment and the Economics assessment, students complete two tasks:

- A constructed response task - this should be referred to as **Task 1**
- A set of multiple choice questions - this should be referred to as **Task 2**

Because these tasks are circulated in focus groups, it is very important that an accurate record is made of which tasks have been used in each focus group. You will be able to record this information on the Excel spreadsheet and instructions are given below.
Before the focus groups

Circulating the tasks in the assessment

The final version of both the Economics and Engineering assessments will take students 90 minutes to complete. In the focus groups, however, participants will spend just 60 minutes responding to tasks from the assessment. This is because the purpose of the focus groups is to contribute to the development of the assessment and the feedback from participants will be used to decide which tasks to include in the final versions, ready for Phase 2 of the Feasibility Study.

For this reason, and because more tasks than will be required have been created by the assessment developers, tasks will need to be circulated among focus groups. NPMs will need to decide the best way to do this based on the number of focus groups which will take place within each country. A guide for each assessment, however, is given below:

Engineering assessment

The final version of the engineering assessment will comprise two constructed-response modules (M1 to M4) and two sets of multiple-choice questions (MC1 to MC4), with each set including 10 items. During the focus groups, four constructed response tasks and 40 multiple-choice questions will be circulated among participants. In each focus group, participants will complete ONE constructed response task (30 minutes) and TWO sets of multiple choice questions (30 minutes). This means that:

Task 1 = one constructed response task (M1, M2, M3 OR M4)
Task 2 = two sets of multiple choice questions (any combination of two of MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4)

As a suggestion, based on eight focus groups, the tasks could be circulated as in Table 2.

Table 2: Task allocation for engineering focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>MC1</th>
<th>MC2</th>
<th>MC3</th>
<th>MC4</th>
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</thead>
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</tbody>
</table>

If more than eight focus groups are conducted, care should be taken to ensure even coverage of the constructed-response tasks and multiple-choice questions so that each set of items is used with approximately the same number of participants in each country.
Economics assessment

The final version of the economics assessment will comprise one constructed-response module and a selection of multiple-choice questions. Two test forms have been prepared for the focus groups (the documents are titled ‘Economics Form A Student/Master version’ and ‘Economics Form B Student/Master version’). In this case:

**Task 1 = one constructed response task (first section of Form A or Form B)**
**Task 2 = set of multiple choice questions (second section of whichever form used in Task 1)**

If more than six focus groups are conducted, care should be taken to ensure even coverage of the two versions so that each task/set of items is used with approximately the same number of participants in each country.

**Selecting student participants**

The small-scale validation of instruments planned in Phase 1 of the AHELO Feasibility study does not require probability sampling to select student participants. Instead, institutions are encouraged to ask for student volunteers to participate in the focus groups.

Participants should be students in the final year of their bachelor degrees. They should be enrolled in a degree programme which is related to the assessment they are taking.

Ideally a focus group includes between five and ten participants. This will ensure that feedback is gathered from a large enough number of participants to present a range of perspectives but still remains within the budget and practical constraints of the study.

While formal sampling stratification will not be used in Phase 1 of the AHELO Feasibility Study, it is important that the students which participate in focus groups are from different backgrounds so that they represent as much as possible the diversity of the student population at that institution. While relevant characteristics will vary from country to country, they may include a balance of male and female participants, participants from different socio-economic groups and participants from different language and/or ethnic backgrounds.

**Incentives for student participants**

The decision about whether to give incentives for students to participate in the focus groups should be made in the context of each participating country. In some places this is standard practice for participants in any kind of research while in other countries it is culturally inappropriate. As a general rule, any incentives given should be limited in monetary value, have an educational benefit and should not involve cash payments. A book voucher to a university book shop is often deemed a suitable incentive for student participation in this kind of study.
**Final preparations for focus groups**

Before the focus group begins it is very important that the moderators are familiar with the assessment tasks. The moderators should also be familiar with the script (Appendix A), the assessment feedback questionnaire (Appendix B) and the moderator’s interview schedule (Appendix D).

**It is vital that the moderators have no professional or personal connection with the participants in the focus groups.** This both protects the confidentiality of the participants and also reduces any stress which participants may feel.

It is highly recommended that if moderators have the relevant academic background (in economics or engineering) they try to complete the assessment tasks before they conduct the focus group. This will help them to become familiar with the characteristics and challenges of each part of the assessment and they will get to know the reasoning and knowledge which participants are likely to use at each stage, as well as the instructions which are written on the assessment. Moderators should also read the scoring rubrics for each task so that they are familiar with what is expected of students.

By going through the same experience as the participants, the moderators will be better able to understand the ways participants respond to the assessment and will be in a better position to understand the comments made by participants about their experience of taking the assessment. Most important of all, they will be able to give more valuable advice on ways to improve the tasks and their translations subsequent to the analysis of the discussion of the focus group.

The way in which the room is arranged will affect how participants engage in the focus group. It is therefore very important to ensure that:

- There are no distractions;
- The room is private;
- The rooms is not too hot or too cold;
- The table and chairs are comfortable and in good working condition;
- The lighting is sufficient to allow participants to read all parts of the test and for the moderator to take notes;
- The audio-recording device is working and, if necessary, spare batteries are available; and
- The audio-recording can be labelled with the time and date.

The moderator should place her/himself so that the audio-recording device will be able to record both their voice and the voices of the participants. She/he will also need to be able to take notes and should have a copy of the script and list of questions for each task, as well as the questions about the assessment as a whole, close by.

Where possible, the room should be set up so that all participants can see each other and the moderator. This will enable the moderator to observe participants while they are taking the assessment and will also encourage discussion in Stage 3 of the focus group.
As well as setting up the room, the recording equipment and the moderator, it is essential to ensure that the moderator is able to give each student:

- A name badge;
- One copy of the confidentiality agreement (Appendix G);
- One copy of the assessment;
- Pens and pencils; and
- Paper for writing on.

The moderator should allow two hours for the focus group to take place. It will take participants one hour to complete the assessment tasks. The moderator will then have one further hour to ask them questions about the assessment.
Conducting focus groups

Stage 1: Introducing the focus group

In order to ensure that focus groups are conducted in a standard way in participating countries, the moderator will need to use a script of the directions and questions they ask participants. These can be found in Appendix A, but are also shown here in italics, along with comments and instructions. (During the translation phase Appendix A and D should be referred to for ease of translation.)

When the participants arrive it is important for the moderator to make them feel comfortable and relaxed. The moderator should treat them in a manner which is appropriate for their age and gender and approach them as an equal – the moderator should avoid establishing a situation in which they are seen by participants as an authority figure.

As the participants arrive in the room, the moderator should get them to write their name on a name badge and attach it to their clothes. This will allow the moderator to use their names when they are discussing the assessment with them.

The moderator will need to ask participants to switch off any electronic devices and mobile phones for the duration of the Focus Group. It is advisable for any bags to be placed away from participants.

The moderator should introduce themselves, the organisation they work for and the AHELO project. The moderator should then explain that the process involves two main stages – a timed assessment completion and follow-up questions. The moderator should make clear to the participants that the purpose of the focus group is to make sure that they can understand the assessment.

It is important that the moderator DOES NOT MENTION that the focus group is related to the evaluation of the translation of the assessment. If they tell the participants about this, participants are likely to focus on the wording of the assessment rather than trying to solve it.

The moderator should start by saying:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the process. My name is __________. I am a ________________ [give position]. I am helping to gather some information for an international study of learning outcomes in which students will work on an assessment.

During the focus group we will do two activities – first you will complete the assessment and then we will discuss your experience of doing so. In total the focus group will last for 2 hours.

I want to assure you that the results from the activities you do today will not have an impact on your grades or your standing in the university you are attending. The purpose of this process is for us to understand whether the tasks you will engage in elicit the kinds of thinking they were designed to elicit. We are solely interested in your experience of taking the assessment.
Once you have completed the assessment I will ask you some general follow-up questions. Also, to make sure that I have captured all the information about your experience of taking the assessment, I will audio-record our session. Since what you have to say is very important I [or ‘my colleague’] will be taking notes along the way to make sure that I/we do not leave out anything.

Finally, before we start, I need you to sign a confidentiality agreement. It states that you are not to reproduce any part of the assessment that you are about to see and that you cannot discuss information from the assessment with anyone.

The moderator should give all participants a confidentiality agreement (Appendix G), and ask each person to sign and date their copy, before returning it to the moderator.

After the moderator has collected the confidentiality agreements, they should give the participants an opportunity to ask questions.

**Before we continue, do you have any questions?**

**Stage 2: Timed assessment completion**

Next it is time for the moderator to give the participants the assessment and to ask them to complete it. It is important that the moderator remind the participants that they cannot talk to anyone else during the assessment as it is important to know about their experience of taking the assessment under test-like conditions.

The moderator should tell the participants:

*I am now going to give you the assessment, which is comprised of 2 tasks. Task 1 is the constructed response task and Task 2 is the multiple choice questions. You have 60 minutes in which to complete both of these tasks and you should spend approximately 30 minutes on each task. Please treat this assessment as you would any other kind of assessment. This means you should not communicate with any other participants while you are completing the assessment and you should do your best to complete both of the tasks within the time limit.*

*If you require any extra pens, pencils or paper during the assessment, please raise your hand. You cannot ask me any questions during the assessment but you will have plenty of time to talk to me afterwards.*

The moderator should then give the participants a chance to clarify their instructions:

**Before we start, do you have any questions?**

The moderator should then give each student the assessment, some paper and pens, pencils and erasers. Moderators should make sure that they have some spare materials in case the participants require more of these.
When the moderator has given the participants the assessment they should say:

You have 60 minutes to complete the assessment.

The moderator should then write the start time and finish time on a blackboard, whiteboard or large sheet of paper so that the participants can see it.

Because the moderator does not want to influence the participants’ responses, it is extremely important that they DO NOT communicate with the participants or disturb them in any way while they are taking the assessment. THE MODERATOR SHOULD REMEMBER TO MONITOR THE TIME.

When the participants have been taking the assessment for 50 minutes, the moderator should say:

You have ten minutes remaining.

After 60 minutes the moderator should say:

Thank you, your 60 minutes have finished. Please stop writing now.

The moderator should not take the assessment away from the participants – they will need them during the discussion.

While participants are doing the assessment the moderator should:

1. Observe the time which has elapsed and remind the participants when they have ten minutes remaining, and when they should finish;
2. Be prepared to give the participants additional materials – pens, pencils and paper - if they raise their hands; and
3. Make notes of any relevant assessment taking behaviour of participants that may relate to their experience of the tasks.

It is very important that the moderator DOES NOT DISTURB the participants during the assessment. The moderator should not:

- Leave the room;
- Make any noise; or
- Communicate with the participants.
**Stage 3: Follow-up discussion**

After the participants have completed the assessment, the moderator will give them the assessment feedback questionnaires. Participants should complete one questionnaire per task – one for the constructed response task and one for the multiple-choice questions.

The moderator should say:

*I am now going to give you two questionnaires. Please complete both of them – the first one about Task 1 and the second one about Task 2. Please work alone to complete the questionnaires and I will collect them when you have finished.*

The moderator should wait until all participants have finished the questionnaires and then collect them from the participants.

When the participants have finished the assessment feedback questionnaires, the moderator will ask them two kinds of questions. The first questions are specific questions about each of the tasks in the assessment. The second questions are specific questions about the assessment as a whole.

**THE MODERATOR SHOULD REMEMBER TO SWITCH ON THE RECORDING DEVICE.**

The moderator should say:

*I am now going to switch on the audio-recording device so that I can record our discussion. This is to make sure that I do not miss anything that you say.*

Questions about each task

The moderator will now ask the participants specific questions about each of the tasks which they completed during the assessment. These questions can be found in Appendix D. It is important that the moderator asks all the questions about each of the tasks in the assessment and does not skip any. The moderator should listen carefully to the responses which participants give and make notes of what they say. The moderator should not worry if they do not manage to write everything down but instead remember that they are audio-recording the discussion and can listen to it again later.

The moderator should say to the participants:

*I am now going to ask you some questions about each of the tasks in the assessment. It is important that you tell me exactly what you think about the assessment so please be frank in your responses.*

As the moderator asks the questions in Appendix D, they should make notes of the participants’ responses in the table given. Before the moderator asks the questions for each task, they should say:
We are now going to talk about Task [say the number of the task]. Please look at the task on your assessment materials.

The moderator should ask each question in turn and make sure that they give the participants time to respond. The moderator should make sure that ALL participants have a chance to talk – if some participants are not saying anything the moderator should say:

What about you [their name]? What did you think of this task?

THE MODERATOR SHOULD NOT FORGET TO REPEAT THIS PROCEDURE FOR EACH TASK.

If the moderator finds that it is difficult to make notes at the same time as communicating with the participants, they should not worry – they should remember that they are recording the discussion and will be able to complete their notes later. It is more important for moderators to ensure that the discussion flows in a natural way than to write down everything that the students say.

Questions about the assessment as a whole

The moderator is now going to ask the participants specific questions about the assessment as a whole. These questions can also be found in Appendix D. It is important that the moderator asks all the questions and does not skip any. The moderator should listen carefully to the responses which participants give and make notes of what they say. Once again, the moderator should not worry if they do not manage to write everything down – they can listen to the audio recording later to fill in any gaps.

The moderator should say to the participants:

I am now going to ask you some questions about the assessment as a whole. Once again, it is important that you tell me exactly what you think about the assessment so please be honest in your responses.

As the moderator asks the questions in Appendix D, they should make notes of the participants’ responses in the table given.

Once again, it is important to ensure that ALL participants have a chance to talk – if some participants are not saying anything the moderator should say:

What about you [their name]? What did you think of the assessment as a whole?

When the moderator has finished the focus group it is important that they thank the participants. The moderator should say:

Thank you very much for your participation in this focus group. Your comments have been very valuable and will be used to improve the assessment.

The moderator should collect all assessment materials, notes and paper from the participants. In order to protect the confidentiality of the assessment material, it is very important that participants do not take any papers away from the focus group.
**Translation and Adaptation revisions**

*Analysis of the focus group*

Once the moderator has completed each focus group, they will need to listen to the audio recording and expand the notes they have taken on the form shown in Appendix D to include everything that the students have said. They should then review their notes and this activity should be performed with colleagues. Examining this information in teams of at least two people will foster dialogue and ensure that information from different perspectives is included. The aim of this activity is to identify any possible issues with the tasks and their translation and/or adaptation.

*Revising the translation/adaptation based on the results from the focus groups*

In the moderator’s analysis of the audio recording and the notes, they will need to make sure that they discuss with their colleagues whether any problems that participants had in understanding instructions, the methods they used to respond to the tasks and the length of time taken by participants to complete each task may suggest that the:

- translation altered the constructs measured;
- translated tasks are interpreted by the participants in ways that are not those originally intended; or
- translated tasks appear to be more difficult for the country’s participants to read and understand than they would be if the tasks had been written originally in the country’s language.

Based on the moderator’s analysis of the audio recordings and notes, they should discuss with their colleagues how the translation/adaptation needs to be revised to ensure that the three types of issues listed above are resolved.

In their discussions, the moderator should always keep a copy of the original task in the English source version and a copy of the task in their country’s language in front of them. The moderator should write in the translated task all the notes that may help identify with clarity what changes need to be made or the reasons for those changes.

The moderator should complete the form provided in Appendix F to provide the modifications to the translated/adapted version that need to be made:

- In Column 1, Task - Be specific about the location of the text and/or graphic that needs modification(s) so that the changes can be easily located.
- In Column 2, Original - Provide the original way in which the part of the task that you need changed appeared in the translated/adapted version of the assessment
- In Column 3, Modification - State the way in which you would like this part of the task to appear in the final version.
- In Column 4, Justification - Provide an explanation for why that specific part of the task needs to be adjusted.
Once the team has completed the list of modifications on the form in Appendix F, they should read the translation/adaptation once again and make sure that all necessary modifications have been noted.

Please keep in mind that the final version of the translation/adaptation should not alter the constructs measured; it should be interpreted by the participants in the ways originally intended; and should not be more difficult for the country’s participants to read than it would be if the tasks had been written originally in the country’s language.
Data reporting

Who should report the data?

There is one Focus Group Data spreadsheet (Excel) and one Focus Group Data form (online) for each institution. All data must be recorded in the English language.

National Project Managers (NPMs) are responsible for reporting all data to the AHELO Consortium. NPMs may wish to collect raw data from Institutional Coordinators (ICs) and then enter all the data themselves into the spreadsheets and online forms. They should remember to use a different spreadsheet and a different online form for each institution.

Alternatively, NPMs may wish to ask ICs to enter the data. If this option is chosen, it is important that NPMs double-check that ICs have entered the data correctly.

Focus group data spreadsheet

The Excel spreadsheet is used to record the performance of students on assessment tasks and the responses of students to the assessment feedback questionnaires. The rows and columns on the Excel spreadsheet have been defined in advance and it is simply necessary to enter data into the correct cells.

The Excel spreadsheet has been prepared with 15 rows for data entry, in case there are more than ten students in a focus group. Please note that one row is allocated to each student.

Figure 1: Overview of Excel spreadsheet

Each section of the spreadsheet has been shaded a different colour to enable clarity. In the pages below, precise instructions are given for how data should be entered into each section.

If you have any questions about the spreadsheet or are unsure of how to enter data, please contact ahelo@acer.edu.au.

18
Step 1 – Recording tasks

The first information which needs to be recorded is exactly which tasks are used in the focus group. This is done differently for the Economics and Engineering Modules.

Module B – Economics

On the spreadsheet you need to record whether students have completed Economics Form A or Economics Form B.

![Figure 2: Recording which form used in Economics focus group](image)

Module C – Engineering

In focus groups for the Engineering assessment, tasks are circulated as shown in Table 1 on page 7 above.

![Figure 3: Circulation of tasks in Engineering focus group](image)
On the spreadsheet you need to record which constructed response module (Task 1) students have done (M1, M2, M3 or M4) and which set of multiple-choice questions (Task 2) students have done (two of MC1, MC2, MC3 or MC4). This information can be found at the top of the assessment task. For example M1 is:

![Module 1: Dams](image)

**Figure 4: Example of numbering on Engineering assessment**

![Spreadsheet](image)

**Figure 5: Recording which modules used in Engineering focus group**
Step 2 – Recording non-responses

In some cases students will not provide an answer to every question. If this occurs, it is important that their non-response is recorded on the form with the number 9. The cell should not be left blank.

For example, in this case a student has not provided any responses to questions T1Q01, T1Q02 or T1Q03.

Step 3 – Recording student characteristics

The first six columns of the spreadsheet relate to student characteristics. To find the data to input you need to refer to the top of the assessment feedback questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Figure 6: Recording non responses

Figure 7: Student characteristics on assessment feedback questionnaire
You need to fill in student responses in each column in the spreadsheet:

![Student Characteristics Table]

**Figure 8: Recording student characteristics**

You should record the data as follows:

**Table 3: Format of student characteristics data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1=Male, 2=Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years</td>
<td>Age in years (2-digits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of citizenship</td>
<td>Name of country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First language</td>
<td>Name of first language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major area of study</td>
<td>Name of major area of study, e.g. Civil, Engineering, Macro Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average grade</td>
<td>Numeric, e.g. ‘75%’, or Letters, e.g. ‘A’, or Words, e.g. ‘Distinction’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Step 4 – Recording data from the assessment feedback questionnaire - task 1**

The next 14 columns of the spreadsheet require you to record data from the second part of the assessment feedback questionnaire for Task 1.

The code for each item is indicated below for reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About task one</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was good linkage between the questions in each task</td>
<td>TIQ01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task challenged me to think</td>
<td>TIQ02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The materials stimulated my interest in the task</td>
<td>TIQ03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to the content being assessed</td>
<td>TIQ04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task made me apply knowledge and skills in real-world ways</td>
<td>TIQ05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task covered topics relevant to my program</td>
<td>TIQ06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task assessed an appropriate range of knowledge and skills</td>
<td>TIQ07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to my program of study</td>
<td>TIQ08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to future professional practice</td>
<td>TIQ09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task required me to apply capability gained in my program</td>
<td>TIQ10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment materials were easy to understand</td>
<td>TIQ11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time available was sufficient for me to complete this task</td>
<td>TIQ12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the best aspects of this task?</td>
<td>TIQ13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What aspects of this task were most in need of improvement? TIQ14

**Figure 9: Numbering of assessment feedback questionnaire – task 1**

For the multiple choice questions you need to fill in student responses in each column of the spreadsheet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Task one</th>
<th>TIQ01</th>
<th>TIQ02</th>
<th>TIQ03</th>
<th>TIQ04</th>
<th>TIQ05</th>
<th>TIQ06</th>
<th>TIQ07</th>
<th>TIQ08</th>
<th>TIQ09</th>
<th>TIQ10</th>
<th>TIQ11</th>
<th>TIQ12</th>
<th>TIQ13</th>
<th>TIQ14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Figure 10: Recording data from assessment feedback questionnaire task 1**

Make sure you use the correct code:

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree
For the two open ended questions in this section – T1Q13 and T1Q14 – you should record what the student has written in each box – remember to translate this into English first. If a student has not written anything, just leave the cell empty.

Figure 11: Recording qualitative data from assessment feedback questionnaire – task 1

Step 5 – Recording data from the assessment feedback questionnaire - task 2

The following 14 columns of the spreadsheet require you to record data from the second part of the assessment feedback questionnaire for Task 2. Once again, the code for each item is indicated below for reference:

Figure 12: Numbering of assessment feedback questionnaire – task 2

Once again you should fill in student responses to the multiple choice questions - T2Q01 to T1Q12 - in the first 12 columns.

For the two open ended questions in this section – T2Q13 and T2Q14 – you should record what the student has written in each box – remember to translate this into English first. Again, if they have not written anything, leave the cell empty.
Step 6 – Recording student performance on constructed response task

In the next section of the Excel spreadsheet you need to record the performance of students on Task 1 – the constructed response task.

Module B - Economics

In both Form A and Form B students are required to provide answers to a number of parts—labelled part A, B, C, D, E, F and G. In each part, a range of marks are available to students and it is important that the marks received are input into the spreadsheet. If a student has attempted a part but received no marks, a ‘0’ should be entered. If a student has not attempted a part, a ‘9’ should be entered.

For example: Economics Form A - in this example the student has gained points for parts A, B, C, E and F, has gained no points for part D and has not attempted to answer part G.

![Figure 13: Recording performance on task 1 - Economics](image)

Module C – Engineering

In M1, M2, M3 and M4 students are required to provide answers to a series of numbered questions. In each question, a range of marks are available to students and it is important that the marks received are input into the spreadsheet. If a student has attempted a question but received no marks, a ‘0’ should be entered. If a student has not attempted a question, a ‘9’ should be entered.

For example: M1 - in this example the student has gained points for questions 1, 5, 6 and 7, has gained no points for question 4 and has not attempted to answer questions 2 or 3.

![Figure 14: Recording performance on task 1 - Engineering](image)
**Step 7 – Recording student performance on multiple-choice questions**

In the final section of the Excel spreadsheet you need to record the performance of students on **Task 2** – the multiple-choice questions.

**Module B - Economics**

In both Form A and Form B students are required to provide answers to a set of multiple-choice questions. In each question, options A, B, C and D are available to students and they should be input into the spreadsheet. If a student has not attempted a question, a ‘9’ should be entered.

*For example: Economics Form B - in this example the student has provided responses to questions 201040, 201034, 201039 and 201058 but has not attempted to answer questions 201010 or 201011.*

![Figure 15: Recording performance on task 2 - Economics](image)

**Module C – Engineering**

In MC1, MC2, MC3 and MC4 students are required to provide answers to a set of multiple-choice questions. In each question, options A, B, C and D are available to students and they should be input into the spreadsheet. If a student has not attempted a question, a ‘9’ should be entered.

*For example: MC4 - in this example the student has provided responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 but has not attempted to answer questions 5 or 6.*

![Figure 16: Recording performance on task 2 - Engineering](image)

When you have finished filling in the whole worksheet, remember to save it!!
**Online form**

During a focus group, the moderator asks students discussion questions about task 1, task 2 and the assessment as a whole. The moderator audio-records these discussions. After the focus group the moderator listens to the audio-recording and makes detailed notes of student responses. An online form has been created to collect this qualitative data from focus groups.

![Figure 17: Online form overview](image)

NPMs will be issued with one internet link for each participating institution in their country. Each internet link includes a unique identifier.

NPMs may then choose to ask ICs to complete the online form with the qualitative data from the focus group at their institution or they may prefer to collect the raw data from ICs and then enter the data themselves.

If the second option is chosen it is important that **one online form is completed for each institution**. It is also important to remember that all entries must be in the English language.
**Focus group details**

In the first part of the online form, data about the focus group should be entered. This is recorded at the top of the moderator’s interview schedule (see Appendix D).

![Moderator's interview schedule](image18)

**Figure 18: Student characteristics on moderator's interview schedule**

You should enter this data into the boxes on the online form. Please note that only some of the information recorded on the form is required.

![Online form](image19)

**Figure 19: Recording student characteristics on online form**
Questions about Task 1

In the second part of the online form, data about task 1 should be entered. This is recorded on the lower half of the moderator’s interview schedule (see Appendix D).

Figure 20: Discussion question about task 1 on moderator's interview schedule

You should enter this data into the boxes on the online form. If the moderator has typed the record of student comments you can simply ‘copy’ from a Word file and ‘paste’ into the online form.

Figure 21: Recording students’ comments about task 1 in online form
Questions about Task 2

In the third part of the online form, data about task 2 should be entered. This is recorded on the third part of the moderator’s interview schedule (see Appendix D).

Figure 22: Discussion question about task 2 on moderator’s interview schedule

You should enter this data into the boxes on the online form.

Figure 23: Recording students’ comments about task 2 in online form
Questions about the test as a whole

In the final part of the online form, data about the assessment as a whole should be entered. This is recorded on the final part of the moderator’s interview schedule (see page 21 of focus group guidelines).

![Figure 24: Discussion question about assessment as a whole on moderator's interview schedule](image)

You should enter this data into the boxes on the online form.

![Figure 25: Recording students’ comments about assessment as a whole in online form](image)
To submit the online form you simply need to click on **Submit**.
Appendix A: Focus group script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the process. My name is _______________. I am a _______________ [give position]. I am helping to gather some information for an international study of learning outcomes in which students will work on an assessment.

During the focus group we will do two activities – first you will complete the assessment and then we will discuss your experience of doing so. In total the focus group will last for 2 hours.

I want to assure you that the results from the activities you do today will not have an impact on your grades or your standing in the university you are attending. The purpose of this process is for us to understand whether the task you will engage in elicits the kinds of thinking it was designed to elicit. We are solely interested in your experience of taking the assessment.

Once you have completed the assessment I will ask you some general follow-up questions. Also, to make sure that I have captured all the information about your experience of taking the assessment, I will audio-record our session. Since what you have to say is very important I [or ‘my colleague’] will be taking notes along the way to make sure that I/we do not leave out anything.

Finally, before we start, I need you to sign a confidentiality agreement. It states that you are not to reproduce any part of the assessment that you are about to see and that you cannot discuss information from the assessment with anyone.

I am now going to give you the assessment, which is comprised of 2 tasks. Task 1 is the constructed response task and Task 2 is the multiple choice questions. You have 60 minutes in which to complete both of these tasks and you should spend approximately 30 minutes on each task. Please treat this assessment as you would any other kind of assessment. This means you should not communicate with any other participants while you are completing the assessment and you should do your best to complete both of the tasks within the time limit.

If you require any extra pens, pencils or paper during the assessment, please raise your hand. You cannot ask me any questions during the assessment but you will have plenty of time to talk to me afterwards.

Before we start, do you have any questions?

You have 60 minutes to complete the assessment.

You have ten minutes remaining.

Thank you, your 60 minutes have finished. Please stop writing now.
Appendix A: Focus group script (continued)

I am now going to give you two questionnaires. Please complete both of them – the first one about Task 1 and the second one about Task 2. Please work alone to complete the questionnaires and I will collect them when you have finished.

I am now going to switch on the audio-recording device so that I can record our discussion. This is to make sure that I do not miss anything that you say.

I am now going to ask you some questions about each of the tasks in the assessment. It is important that you tell me exactly what you think about the assessment so please be honest in your responses.

We are now going to talk about Task 1. Please look at the task on your assessment materials.

We are now going to talk about Task 2. Please look at the task on your assessment materials.

What about you [his/her name]? What did you think of this task?

I am now going to ask you some questions about the assessment as a whole. Once again, it is important that you tell me exactly what you think about the assessment so please be honest in your responses.

What about you [his/her name]? What did you think of the assessment as a whole?

Thank you very much for your participation in this focus group. Your comments have been very valuable and will be used to improve the assessment.
Appendix B: Assessment feedback questionnaire

Print-ready student Assessment Feedback Questionnaire provided on following page.
**OECD AHELO feasibility study**  
**Assessment feedback questionnaire**

Are you male or female? Male ☐ Female ☐  
What is/are your major area(s) of study? ____________________________  
How old are you in years? _____  
What is your average grade? _____  
What is/are your country(s) of citizenship? _______________________  
What is your first language? ________________________________

### About task one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was good linkage between the questions in each task</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task challenged me to think</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The materials stimulated my interest in the task</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to the content being assessed</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task made me apply knowledge and skills in real-world ways</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task covered topics relevant to my program</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task assessed an appropriate range of knowledge and skills</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to my program of study</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to future professional practice</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task required me to apply capability gained in my program</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment materials were easy to understand</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time available was sufficient for me to complete this task</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were the best aspects of this task?

What aspects of this task were most in need of improvement?

### About task two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was good linkage between the questions in each task</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task challenged me to think</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The materials stimulated my interest in the task</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to the content being assessed</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task made me apply knowledge and skills in real-world ways</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task covered topics relevant to my program</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task assessed an appropriate range of knowledge and skills</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to my program of study</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task was relevant to future professional practice</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The task required me to apply capability gained in my program</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assessment materials were easy to understand</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time available was sufficient for me to complete this task</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were the best aspects of this task?

What aspects of this task were most in need of improvement?
Appendix C: Focus group data spreadsheet

The focus group data spreadsheets for Engineering (Figure 26) and Economics (Figure 27) will be sent to you separately.

**Figure 26: Engineering focus group data spreadsheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Gender (M or F)</th>
<th>Age (in years)</th>
<th>Country of Citizenship</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Major area(s) of study</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 27: Economics focus group data spreadsheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Gender (M or F)</th>
<th>Age (in years)</th>
<th>Country of Citizenship</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Major area(s) of study</th>
<th>Average Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was Task 1? [ ]

What was Task 2? [ ]

Which form was used? [ ]
Appendix D: Moderator’s interview schedule

OECD AHELO feasibility study
Moderator’s Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator’s name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus group date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of students (gender, ethnicity, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of institution (location, size, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-specific questions</th>
<th>Students’ answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Number 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the instructions provide adequate information for you to understand what is expected of you in performing the task? If not, please explain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the task make sense to you? If not, please explain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you decide which items and information to use in responding to the task?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What was your strategy for working through the task?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you find the task interesting? Please explain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D: Moderator’s interview schedule (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-specific questions</th>
<th>Students’ answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Number 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the instructions provide adequate information for you to understand what is expected of you in performing the task? If not, please explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the task make sense to you? If not, please explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How did you decide which items and information to use in responding to the task?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your strategy for working through the task?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you find the task interesting? Please explain.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D: Moderator’s interview schedule (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group questions</th>
<th>Students’ answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the tasks relate to what you have learned during your university studies? To what extent?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the tasks relate to what people who are finishing their studies at university should know? To what extent?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there anything important (in terms of content) that you think was missing from the assessment? Please explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you want to say about the assessment?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Online focus group data form

You will be sent a link to the online focus group data form.

Figure 28: Online focus group data form
## Appendix F: List of translation/adaptation modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Justification</th>
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</table>

*If you require more space, please photocopy this page.*
Appendix G: Confidentiality agreement

You need to ensure that each participant in the focus groups signs a confidentiality agreement before they are shown any assessment materials. Two template agreements are copied below.

OECD AHELO PROJECT

I understand that the signing of this form is an acknowledgment of my responsibility to protect the security of the assessment materials I will see today. I declare that I will not reproduce any part of the assessment and that I will not discuss the contents of the assessment, or any other information about the assessment, with anyone outside of this focus group.

I have read and accept the conditions as outlined above.

Signed: ___________________________ Dated: ________________

OECD AHELO PROJECT

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