



## **Leagues Tables: Flawed Rankings or Key Benchmarks?**

**AHELO - the OECD Assessment of  
Higher Education Learning Outcomes**

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**Going Global 4**  
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# What we know...



**The massification of participation in higher education has meant much more heterogeneous abilities and expectations of students than in the past**



**In most countries, financing has kept pace with the increase in participation, limiting the impact on spending per student**



**Proxies of higher education quality exist, but none are perfect**

- **Rankings often biased towards input factors and research**
- **Subjectivity of reputation factor**
- **Cultural sensitivity of satisfaction factor**
- **Labour market outcomes sensitive to conjuncture and local economic conditions**

**Learning outcomes as a promising direction**



**So  
what?**

- **Defining them (Tuning process in Bologna area)**
- **Incorporating them in quality assurance processes**
- **Measuring them (AHELO)**

# The AHELO initiative

## What is AHELO?

A ground-breaking initiative to assess HE learning outcomes on an international scale, by creating measures that would be valid:

- For all cultures and languages;
- And also for the diversity of HE institutions.

## Why undertake the study?

After decades of quantitative growth in HE, consensus on the need to ensure quality for all (Athens, 2006)... but information gap on learning outcomes

➡ Carry out a feasibility study to provide a proof of concept (Tokyo, 2008)

## Why is AHELO important?

- Employs a wide range of measures
- Provides faculties, students and government agencies with a more balanced assessment of HE quality – not just research-driven rankings!
- No sacrifice of HEIs' missions or autonomy in their subsequent efforts to improve performance.

# A multi-dimensional definition of quality

## Addressing the needs of various users and uses

- “Bottom line” of performance
- “Value-added” to assess the quality of services
- Contextual data to reveal best practices and problems, and to identify teaching and learning practices leading to better outcomes

## Both in discipline-related competencies ...

- Easily interpretable in the context of departments and faculties ...
- But require highly differentiated instruments

## And in generic skills

- Less dependent on occupational and cultural contexts, applicable across HEIs ...
- But reflect cumulative learning outcomes and less relevant to the subject-matter competencies that are familiar to HEIs, departments or faculties

# AHELO at a glance

## Goal?

To assess whether reliable cross-national comparisons of HE learning outcomes are **scientifically possible** and whether their **implementation is feasible**.

## What?

Not a pilot, but rather a research approach to provide a proof of concept and proof of practicality.

## Why?

The outcomes will be used to assist countries to decide on the next steps. No pre-determined conclusion.

## When?

Testing window: late 2010- 2011.

## Who?

Target population of students who are near, but before, the end of their first 3-4 year degree.

## How?

OECD guiding international expert committees  
Contractors in charge of developing the assessment instruments.

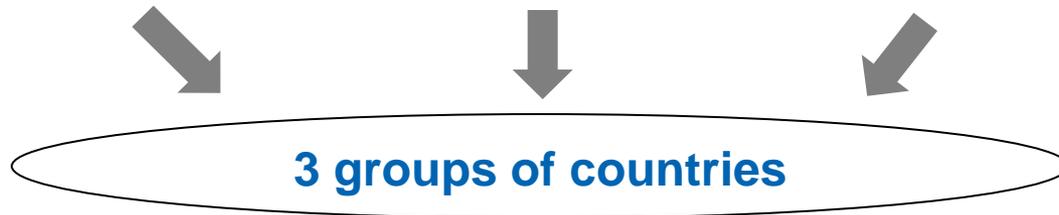
# AHELO tests of instruments

## 3 assessment instruments

<b>Assessment generic skills</b>  Finland, Korea, Kuwait Mexico, Norway, United States, Colombia (tbc)	<b>Assessment discipline-specific skills in engineering</b>  Including Australia, Japan, Sweden	<b>Assessment discipline-specific skills in economics</b>  Including Belgium (Fl.), Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Russian Fed.
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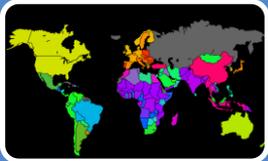
## Contextual instruments

**Contextual indicators and indirect proxies of quality  
To analyse determinants of LO and their development**



# AHELO is managed by the OECD IMHE Programme

## Institutional Management in Higher Education



A network of 246 members from 48 countries



HEIs, government and agencies



Policy analyses and services to members



An institutional voice within OECD

**Thank you**

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