

**Call for Expressions of Interest
from potential private sector partners to engage in
the development and implementation of the OECD's
International Vocational Education and Training
Assessment (PISA-VET)**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in partnership with Business at the OECD (BIAC) invites expressions of interest (EoI) for private sector engagement with the PISA-VET assessment.

This document provides the terms and scope of the proposed in-depth engagement with private sector actors for the development and implementation of the PISA-VET assessment.



1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE INITIATIVE

1.1. PISA-VET assessment: mission and aims

1. The PISA-VET assessment project supports countries in strengthening their skills systems by developing, piloting and implementing an internationally standardised assessment of outcomes of initial VET programmes, the analysis of the results of which will enhance comparative policy insights on how to improve the relevance, quality, equity and effectiveness of initial VET programmes.
2. The aim of the initiative is to enhance comparative policy insights on improving relevance, quality, equity and effectiveness of initial VET programmes. The initiative will do this by delivering a comprehensive dataset on VET learning outcomes and the factors related to these outcomes. This dataset will go beyond participation and employment rates and provide internationally comparable data on the performance of VET systems in key occupational areas. The initiative will also facilitate peer learning opportunities between countries and help to raise the image and promote the profile of VET.
3. The PISA-VET assessment will provide policy insights on a range of outcomes and related factors, including:
 - comparative skill levels of students across countries and programmes
 - differences between countries and programmes
 - how to account for differences in programme design and learner background and differences between learners and programme types.

1.2. Development Phase: a focus on five occupational areas and employability skills

4. Five occupational areas have been selected as the focus of the assessment's Development Phase, as follows:
 - Automotive Technician
 - Business and Administration
 - Electrician Craft /Industry
 - Health Care
 - Tourism and Hospitality.
5. These occupational areas have been chosen for the assessment because each of them comprises a student population that is large enough in most participating countries to come to reliable and valid judgments on VET programmes that are important for the labour market. These occupational areas are each of significant economic and social importance now and are likely to remain so well into the future. Moreover, the areas demand mainly professional skills that are sufficiently comparable at the international level and are linked to VET programmes that are comparable across countries. In addition, there are sufficient resources available to support measurement of competences within these occupational areas.

6. This mix of occupational areas achieves a balance between those occupational areas requiring mostly Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) -related competences and those requiring mostly competences outside of STEM fields.

7. Gender dimensions are a crucial feature of the assessment and, taken together, the five occupational areas selected for the Development Phase represent an acceptable gender balance in terms of student population. Two of the occupational areas (electrician and motor vehicle mechatronics) are typically male dominated, one of the occupational areas (health care) is female dominated and two (business and administration and tourism and hospitality) represents both male and female learners by and large equally. The assessment at the same time promotes a less gender-stereotyped view of the occupational areas and associated VET programmes.

8. The occupational areas are being further narrowed down during the Development Phase of the initiative as the target population is being defined. This is particularly the case for Business and Administration, Healthcare and Tourism and Hospitality, which cover a broad range of occupations and associated VET programmes.

Employability skills

9. The Success in the world of work requires transversal competences in addition to job-specific knowledge and skills. In a changing world of work, employers increasingly seek employees who adapt easily and are able to apply and transfer their skills and knowledge to new occupational contexts. It is thus important to supplement the assessment of occupation-specific skills with information on a broader set of cognitive and social and emotional competences. While certain of these employability skills are important across the occupational areas, others are more relevant and potentially occupation-specific in some areas than in others.

10. **Task performance** as defined by the OECD's *Survey of Social and Emotional Skills (SES)* includes a range of constructs that describe the propensity to be self-controlled, responsible to others, hardworking, motivated to achieve, honest, orderly, persistent and rule abiding. It includes the subdomains of self-control, responsibility and persistence.

11. **Literacy**, as defined by *the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)*, is the ability to understand and use information from written texts in a variety of contexts to achieve goals and develop knowledge and potential. This is a core requirement for developing higher-order skills and for positive economic and social outcomes. Previous studies have shown reading literacy to be closely linked to positive outcomes at work, to social participation, and to lifelong learning.

12. **Problem solving**, as included in *the OECD's PIAAC* as "Problem solving in technology rich environments", and/or "Adaptive problem-solving", as well as *the OECD PISA's* "Creative problem-solving". The former refers to the ability to use technology to solve problems and accomplish complex tasks. It is not a measurement of "computer literacy", but rather of the cognitive skills required in the information age – an age in which the accessibility of boundless information has made it essential for people to be able to decide what information they need, to evaluate it critically, and to use it to solve problems. In the PIAAC survey, higher-order skills are identified along with basic proficiency.

13. **Collaboration** as defined by *the OECD's Survey of SES*, is the capacity to collaborate successfully with others and to do so by maintaining positive relations and minimising interpersonal conflict. Showing active emotional concern for others'

well-being, treating others well and holding positive generalised beliefs about others are all examples of collaboration.

14. The focus on these “core” employability skills does not preclude the possibility of assessing other skills that are transversal in nature but show different complexity, characteristics and shape from a certain occupational area to another (e.g. communication in healthcare, numeracy in motor vehicle mechatronics etc).

How students will be assessed

15. The international assessment prioritises the production of comparable measures of students’ procedural knowledge, practice-oriented skills and other professional skills in the specific occupational areas. The main focus of the assessment is thus the professional competence to act in practice and in the context of real work situations. The assessment of the competences specific to each of the five occupational areas may use three different types of instruments:

- Scenario-based questions of technical and practical knowledge.
- Digital simulations of problem-solving at the workplace.
- Live demonstrations with expert judges.

16. The Development Phase of the initiative will determine which type of instrument is most suitable for the measurement of the different competences.

Target Population

17. The target population for the assessment are students of initial formal VET programmes in the five occupational areas at the upper-secondary to short-cycle tertiary education levels (ISCED Levels 3 and 4). In particular, VET programmes will be selected based on their comparability in terms of learning outcomes (levelled across levels 3-4 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (or equivalent for those countries not using EQF). This includes students in school-based programmes and in programmes that combine school-based and work-based learning (e.g. apprenticeships). The students will be assessed in the last six months of their programmes.

18. The focus of the Development Phase of this assessment will be on learners in formal initial VET programmes in the five proposed occupational areas that have comparable learning outcomes, regardless of ISCED levels.

19. The precise target population for each occupational area will be narrowed down during the development of the frameworks. At that stage, the focus will be on a set of VET programmes or qualifications within the selected occupational areas that are comparable in terms of learning outcomes.

20. In recognition that for some systems adults are a significant and increasing proportion of the VET student population, adult learners returning to VET after beginning working life, may be included in the assessment, but they will be kept separate for analytical purposes – given their different educational backgrounds and work experiences.

Contextual data

21. The competences that students demonstrate through their performance on the assessment can be significantly influenced by multiple factors, including the family background of the student and their formal and informal education opportunities as well as

institutional and system level factors. It is important to collect information on these contextual factors in order to correctly interpret differences across groups of students or countries.

22. The assessment will collect data on these contextual factors through the following instruments:

- Student questionnaire – each student that takes the test will also complete a background questionnaire.
- Teacher questionnaire – all of the teachers responsible for the selected occupational areas in the sampled institution will complete a background questionnaire.
- Institution questionnaire – the head of or administrator for each sampled institution will complete a background questionnaire.
- Employer questionnaire – the person most knowledgeable about the student in the work-based learning environment will complete a background questionnaire.
- System level data questionnaire – each participating country will provide system level data on its VET system.

23. The assessment framework will outline the set of constructs to be included in these questionnaires and the modules that will form the basis of the assessment. These modules are organised around three distinct pillars:

- VET programme learning outcomes.
- Foundations for successful VET programmes.
- Demographic factors for assessing equality and equity.

1.3 Development Phase Activities

24. During 2023, the OECD is working with more than one hundred experts nominated by participating countries together with other specialists to develop the framework for the assessment. In partnership with BIAC, the OECD is also seeking inputs to the development of the framework from businesses, corporations and employers more generally. The framework makes clear how the assessment is split between the core occupational areas, the employability skills and the contextual data. In particular, the framework:

- Defines the domains that the assessment targets.
- Outlines and defines the set of competences students are tested on.
- Provides specifications that orient the task design.
- Indicates appropriate data analysis and reporting approaches, including the description of different proficiency levels along a proficiency scale.

25. This initiative takes the OECD and the participating countries into unchartered territory. However, the initiative has the potential to pay huge dividends in terms of improving the labour-market relevance, quality and social status of vocational education and training. To achieve these benefits, the OECD, the participating countries and especially businesses and employers must confirm the validity of the metrics and the international comparability of results that will come from this assessment.

To address this, the OECD has established a step-by-step approach to the development of the assessment framework and the instruments with multiple opportunities for countries and other key stakeholders to review progress and decide on subsequent work.

26. Once the framework has been approved by the OECD's responsible bodies (the Education Policy Committee and the PISA Governing Board), work will commence on the development of the cognitive instruments for data collection.

27. The first tests will be administered in a handful of countries through a methodological study, the analysis of which will determine the extent to which the instruments and approaches provide valid metrics and internationally comparable results. The results of the Development Phase will be presented in a report in 2025 which also includes the plan for a Pilot Phase, the next stage in the development of the initiative.

1.4 Pilot Phase

28. Subject to the agreement of the OECD's responsible bodies and following the successful completion of the Development Phase and the recruitment of a minimum number of countries that can commit resources to undertake further instrument development and data collection, the Pilot Phase would be launched in 2025. This Pilot Phase would include the further development and validation of the assessment instruments trialled during the Development Phase, the implementation of the data collection in participating countries, the analysis of the data and the preparation of an international report.

29. An operational document produced at the end of the Development Phase will describe the Pilot Phase of the initiative, including:

- any further instrument development that may be required
- target population and sample design
- details of survey operations and implementation arrangements
- outputs expected from the study
- data analysis and reporting plan
- the costs involved.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

30. This call for EoI launched in partnership between the OECD and BIAC serves to invite interested parties among businesses, corporations, industries and employers (the “Entities”) to register their interest in engagement with the OECD (or the “Organisation”) in the context of the PISA-VET assessment. The purpose of this EoI is for the Organisation to identify eligible Entities who may be invited to engage in the development and implementation of the PISA-VET assessment. The EoI and any further information communicated to the Entities, or which come to their knowledge in the course of the EoI and the performance of the engagement are confidential and are strictly dedicated to the purpose of the EoI.

31. Given the essential role of businesses, corporations, industries and other employers in VET, it is vitally important that the PISA-VET assessment initiative benefits from their involvement. The initiative is currently in its development phase and the employers’ understanding of skills needs, their expectations of VET graduates and their experiences of training VET learners will provide crucial information to help the Organisation to design a relevant assessment and to ensure the validity and credibility of the assessment.

32. As such, in-depth partnerships with Entities, especially those from sectors/occupations targeted by the initiative (automotive technicians, electricians, business and administration, health care and tourism and hospitality), will help ensure that PISA-VET assesses the right skills in the right way and collects the right information from learners, teachers, and institutions. Their engagement will also contribute to ensuring that the results of PISA-VET will be widely accepted by the VET community and can have a real impact down the line – including to improve the image of VET around the world.

Two groups of stakeholders identified for engagement

33. The following two groups of Entities are highlighted for this engagement. These groups merit specific consideration given the benefits of engagement by them in this initiative:

- Business is a key stakeholder in the economy and society, including as a main driver of economic growth, employment and investment. The private sector is an indispensable source of data and information on markets and societies, including on how policies lead to outcomes, and can help spread policy recommendations.
- Not-for-profit civil society organisations and high net worth individuals (HNWI) represent the views of the “social economy” and their potential to pioneer new business models, provide essential services, contribute to a fairer, green and digital transition, engage youth, and build communities.

Specific types of Entities

34. More specifically, the principal types of Entities considered for partnership under this initiative (including business and non-business private sector entities) are:

- Corporations – refers generally to a company or group of people authorised to act as a legal person and recognised as such in law. These are commercial enterprises, either publicly listed or privately owned, that are intended to make a profit for their

owners. They typically operate in a regulated legal compliance and financial environment (particularly if they are publicly listed).

- Employer and Industry Federations representing the private sector, which may also serve as social partners in their respective countries and through engagement in international organisations.
- Private Foundations – refers to private non-profit entities such as foundations and trusts, whose assets are provided by donors and whose income is spent on socially useful purposes. Such entities typically operate in a similar environment as companies when it comes to operating standards in developed countries but the legal, bureaucratic, and political framework for foundations and trusts in the developing world tends to be more varied.
- Individuals – refers primarily to High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs). Partnerships with such individuals and their families are typically focused on philanthropy, through individual gifts, family foundations or other vehicles such as donor advised funds.

Types of engagements with Entities

35. The Call for Expressions of Interest covers three types of engagements:

- **Knowledge partnerships:** engagement by the Entity in the PISA-VET assessment through consultation, multi-stakeholder dialogues and platforms, as well as engagement with advocacy groups or other similar communication initiatives and collaboration on the project.
- **Sponsorships:** the provision by the Entity of a financial contribution or other benefits, such as in-kind benefits, in support of the PISA-VET assessment, in exchange for a form of brand visibility or other defined benefits in the context of the sponsored activity.
- **Grants:** resources additional to the Budget provided to the Organisation for the implementation of its Programme of Work by an entity other than an OECD Member. Grants by non-governmental stakeholders are financial contributions towards the PISA-VET assessment and may involve brand visibility, but unlike in the case of sponsorship this is generally not the primary objective.

36. Respondents to this call may express interest in any single type of engagement, any combination of the types of engagement or all of the types of engagement.

37. Expressions of Interest shall provide a response that describes how the Entity will support each type of engagement they have expressed interest in. Respondents may propose alternative types of engagement to those outlined in this document. If alternatives are proposed, Respondents must explicitly describe these and discuss how these would support the initiative, taking into account the aims and activities mentioned above.

2.1. How the partnerships and engagements will be managed

38. To ensure that the work is open to all Entities with relevant experience, the OECD, together with *Business at OECD* (BIAC), has put in place an engagement architecture through which any employer, corporation and business could engage; i.e. this open call for

interest through BIAC, which sets out the kinds of contributions required and the criteria that would be used for assessing them.

Intellectual property

39. The outcomes from this work on the PISA-VET assessment, such as the assessment and analytical framework, the instruments developed and the data collected, including the contributions of the private sector, would be the property of the OECD and would be made publicly available, so that no Entity could gain an unfair advantage through participation. Moreover, the OECD will secure an independent evaluation of the validity of the metrics developed through this initiative to ensure the VET sector that the metrics are not biased towards specific employers.

Transparency

40. The OECD's partnerships with the Entities would be transparent and framed effectively in the context of the aims of the initiative. The inputs from the Entities' representatives would be considered alongside inputs from other experts engaged in the initiative (e.g. government representatives, researchers, international organisations) as part of a set of possible options for consideration by the governance structures we have already established for decision-making on the project, namely the Expert Group on the International VET Assessment and the Working Party on International VET Assessment. This would be done using valuable and reliable information and across an agreed set of metrics or variables to see which alternative is the most favourable. The governance structures would be aided in their consideration through recommendations from the Expert Group, which will have ample opportunities to evaluate and discuss the alternatives.

2.2. Where to find more information about the PISA-VET assessment

41. Interested parties are encouraged to visit the PISA-VET assessment website for background information about the initiative. The website is available on this link: www.oecd.org/pisa/vet.htm

42. A specific Call for Expressions of Interest section has been made available on the OECD website which contains a number of more technical documents which may be relevant to respondents, and which can be accessed [here](#). Information is also available on the BIAC website: www.businessatoecd.org. Any further information requested by interested parties during the Call for Expressions of Interest period will be made available through this section of the website, so that all interested parties may have access to the information. Interested parties are therefore encouraged to visit this section of the website for updates during the Call for Expressions of Interest period. The following documents are available on the site:

- PISA-VET Technical Proposal
- PISA-VET draft framework

3. HOW TO SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

43. EoIs shall be entirely drafted in either English or French (see the suggested template at Annex A of this document) and shall be received by the Organisation by not later than the deadline date of 31 January 2024.

44. In accordance with the OECD's Greening initiative, interested parties should submit their EoIs to the following email address:

Ms Yuri Belfali
Head, Early Childhood and Schools Division
Directorate for Education and Skills
OECD
Yuri.belfali@oecd.org

45. Due to measures in response to COVID-19, paper copies are not accepted.

Contents of the EoI

46. Respondents must provide:

- A Letter of Interest (see the suggested template attached at Annex A of this document), signed by the respondent which contains all of the necessary information regarding the type of engagement offered and, to the extent possible and where applicable, certificate(s) identifying the respondent, including its name, legal form, address, registration number or equivalent, date founded, areas of activity and number of employees.

47. Please note that the respondent, should it be invited to engage in the initiative, will be asked to sign the relevant documentation to formalise its participation in the initiative.

48. The information provided to the OECD by Entities in the course of this Call for Interest will be used solely for the purpose of evaluating the Entities' interest and suitability for participation in the PISA-VET initiative. Any personal data received by the OECD from Entities in the course of this Call for Interest shall be processed in accordance with the OECD internal rules on data protection, which are the only rules governing Personal Data protection that are applicable to the OECD. They are currently set out in the *Decision of the Secretary-General on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of their personal data*, Annex XII of the Staff Regulations, Rules and Instructions applicable to Officials of the Organisation¹;

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/general/OECD-Decision-Processing-Personal-Data.pdf>

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

49. A key aim of this call for interest is to ensure the selected partners make up a balanced group of private sector partners from a variety of sectors and business sizes and types, particularly in the occupational areas selected for the PISA-VET assessment.

50. Expressions of interest will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Demonstration of a clear potential benefit to the PISA-VET assessment and the planned work of the initiative.
- Alignment with the goal of the initiative and commitment to improving VET, both in terms of quality and in terms of attractiveness.
- Support the achievement of the project's objectives and complies with all the OECD's policies and guidelines in respect of financial and non-financial contributions to its work.
- Assurance of transparency, openness, inclusiveness, accountability, integrity, and mutual respect based on the engagement structure that has been decided for the activities.
- Assurance of effective management of the engagement by the entity in accordance with the engagement structure that has been decided for the activities, including by monitoring and mitigating potential conflicts of interest and other forms of risks to the OECD and the initiative.

51. Benefits arising from such engagements can include:

- The financial and non-financial contributions of the Entity to support the PISA-VET assessment.
- The impact that the initiative can have on the ability of Entities to contribute to improving VET, both in terms of quality and in terms of attractiveness.
- The leadership and influence that the Entities can bring to supporting the project's goal of raising awareness, visibility, and financing of VET.

52. Engagement with the Entities will be underpinned by a comprehensive risk management process with clear roles and responsibilities for decision making. Risk screening will include assessment against the criteria set out above, as well as additional criteria specifically relevant for partnerships.

53. The potential partnerships will each be assessed in the first instance on general OECD criteria. These criteria include:

- No adverse effect on Member relations.
- No perception of bias or anything that compromises the OECD (its subsidiary bodies and secretariat)'s independence.

54. In addition, each potential partnership will be assessed on core assessment areas, examples of which include:

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- Business policy and practice (e.g. appropriate marketing policy, sanctions lists, bribery, fraud, collusion, corruption, money laundering, tax avoidance, terrorist financing, labour rights).
 - Political exposure.
 - Environmental policy and practice.
 - Human rights, gender policy and practice,
 - Privacy and data security (where relevant for partnerships).
 - Mandatory due diligence processes will assess the fit with the criteria described above, as well as risks associated with each prospective partnership.
 - There being no present or future conflict of interest.
 - Compliance with the OECD's ethical principles.

55. To facilitate the evaluation process, the OECD will form a technical review panel with BIAC to assess each of the responses to the call for expression of interest. The selection criteria outlined above will be used to evaluate the expressions of interest. The technical review panel may assign weights to each criterion, if required. The panel will be assisted in its review by the central services of the OECD which will complete, among other things, a reputational risk screening of each private sector entity that submits an expression of interest. The OECD may organise interviews with Entities to discuss the contents of their expression of interest.

Annex A

Suggested template for Expression of Interest

MODEL LETTER

[insert the text onto the letterhead of the interested party]

Ms Yuri Belfali

Head, Early Childhood and Schools Division

Directorate for Education and Skills

OECD

Yuri.belfali@oecd.org

Date:

Dear Yuri Belfali,

I am writing to inform you that [insert name of interested party] would like to contribute to the work on the International Vocational Education and Training Assessment (PISA-VET) in the following ways: *[delete any of the proposed types of engagement that do not apply]*

- **Knowledge partnerships:** our engagement in the PISA-VET assessment through consultation, multi-stakeholder dialogues and platforms, as well as engagement with advocacy groups or other similar communication initiatives and collaboration on the project. *[please include details]*
- **Sponsorships:** our provision of a financial contribution or other benefits, such as in-kind benefits, in support of the PISA-VET assessment, in exchange for a form of brand visibility or other defined benefits in the context of the sponsored activity. *[please include details]*
- **Grants:** our contribution of a grant towards the costs of the PISA-VET assessment. *[please include amounts]*

I understand that if [insert name of interested party] is invited by the OECD to participate in the PISA-VET project, it will be necessary for us to enter into the relevant arrangements(s) in respect of this contribution.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[insert signature here*]

[insert name and job title of person signing the letter]

[cc Nicole Primmer, BIAC: primmer@biac.org and Minami Kakuda, BIAC: KAKUDA@biac.org]