The PISA National Project Manager: Roles and Resources

Introduction

A National Project Manager (NPM) is required for each country participating in PISA. The NPM has responsibility for the implementation of the project within the country, working in liaison with that country’s PISA Governing Board (PGB) member.

This document provides prospective PISA participants with a description of the scope of the NPM’s work and the national resources that will be required to complete this work. Refer to the 2012 NPM Manual for further details.

Profile of NPM

The NPM is responsible for undertaking or overseeing all tasks related to the development and implementation of PISA in his or her country. The position of NPM desirably will be full time, but it could be a lesser fraction, depending on the availability of other staff such as an administrative assistant, information technology (IT) specialist, or a data manager. It is strongly recommended that the NPM works on the project on at least a half-time basis to ensure continuity of activities.

It is essential that a person appointed NPM has:

- previous experience in planning, organising and conducting large-scale surveys;
- skill in identifying, selecting and managing a team of project staff with the experience and capability to carry out multiple tasks often needing simultaneous attention;
- a high level of oral and written communication skills in English, as all meetings and communications with the international contractors are in English;
- familiarity with statistics, sampling, survey quality control and data collection procedures, data file structures, data management, data processing procedures, and data analysis and reporting. It may be acceptable for a qualified candidate to have familiarity with only some of these areas insofar as members of the national team collectively possess the required expertise;
- ability to oversee translation, adaptation and verification activities;
- sufficient knowledge and confidence to represent the country at international meetings where aspects of the project will be discussed; and
- knowledge of and the confidence to deal with government agencies, school principals, parents and teachers within their own countries.
It is desirable that the person also has

- previous work experience in an education system, experience in educational assessment; and
- familiarity with statistical packages such as SPSS or SAS and Microsoft applications such as Word and Excel.

The PISA survey period

Each survey period involves two data collections – the Field Trial and the Main Survey. The 2011 Field Trial involved a sample of around 1500–2000 students and the 2012 Main Survey involved a sample of 5250 students. The proposed sample size for 2015 is not set. The following table summarises the schedule for the major components of the survey period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>First year of PISA 2015 survey period</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Item Development and Review</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Field trial preparation</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Field Trial</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Main Survey</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>PISA 2016 Report Preparation</td>
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Required resources – PISA ‘core’ and ‘optional’ components

The core of PISA is tests and questionnaires administered to students and a school questionnaire administered to participating schools. The NPM will need the staffing and material resources described below to complete the core PISA activities.

In addition, countries may reach agreement with the International PISA Consortium to implement optional components or variations. Countries implementing optional components or variations will of course require additional national resources.

Human resources

National Centre Staff

Within each participating country, a national centre is established. At national centres, the work involved in PISA will require at least the equivalent of two full-time staff averaged over the project, plus assistance with clerical support.

If the NPM is full time and has some expertise with survey design, data handling and analysis, the second full-time equivalent staff member might be a combination of an administrative officer (possibly half time), a data manager (one-quarter time) who manages all the data-related tasks, and an IT co-ordinator (one-quarter time) if your country is participating in the PISA 2015 computer-based mode. At times, there will be need for further administrative support.

In particular, the IT co-ordinator should have experience in troubleshooting hardware and networking problems, in resolving web-based and web service problems with nationally
used operating systems, in extracting and transmitting data from computers, in maintaining data and communications security in an Internet environment, in training others on computer and Internet usage and in conducting survey operations.

Committee/Expert Groups

The following committee and expert groups will need to be organised.

- A national advisory committee: This committee should be composed of leading national experts, in, for example, survey research and education management, to offer advice to the project and ensure that national views are represented.
- PISA assessments comprise survey items across three recurring domains: reading, mathematics and science literacy. In addition, Collaborative Problem Solving is planned to be part of PISA 2015. Within each PISA survey period new item development is focused on one of these domains, and the focus areas for PISA 2015 are Scientific Literacy and Collaborative Problem Solving. Therefore, representative groups of science and problem-solving experts especially experienced with computer-based assessments should be organised to contribute to and review the development of PISA 2015 assessment items.

The PISA survey also involves the administration of school and student background questionnaires and optional questionnaires, which need to be reviewed by national experts.

Meetings of the national advisory committee and expert groups should be arranged at regular intervals to review progress, procedures and results throughout the project. Costs of national advisory committee meetings should be factored into the PISA budget.

Translators

Translation/adaptation of materials: All test and questionnaire materials are prepared by the international contractor in English and French. For translation into other languages, the PISA standards require a process of double independent translation plus reconciliation. This means national centres will need, as a minimum, three translators for this procedure. In addition, translation of manuals and coding guides is required.

Desktop Publishing Staff

Personnel are needed who are sufficiently expert in using Microsoft Word to prepare complex documents, such as test booklets, according to strict guidelines that are designed to ensure international comparability of all survey materials.

Test Administrators

Test administrators will be recruited to administer the assessment at participating schools for both the Field Trial and the Main Survey. They are preferably external to the schools in which they will work. The PISA standards require that all test administrators are trained in person. They also should be comfortable working with computers if your country is administering PISA electronically.

The number of required test administrators will vary depending on the sample size in your country.

School Coordinators

A staff member from each sampled school will need to be recruited. The work of the school coordinator involves collecting and recording information about the target population within the school, disseminating information to the school community and assisting the test administrator in organising the assessment activity.
Staff for Data Processing Operations

A number of data processing operations that occur during the PISA survey period will require additional staffing. The following estimates are derived from previous surveys and apply to standard-size PISA samples of 35 schools for the Field Trial and 150 schools for the Main Survey.

- Coders of constructed response items: approximately 1000 hours of coding and training time at the Field Trial stage, and 3000 hours for the Main Survey.
- Coders of occupational response data: approximately 100 hours at the Field Trial and 300 hours for the Main Survey.
- Data entry staff: two to three staff working full time for four weeks following the Field Trial, and four to six staff working full time for six weeks following the Main Survey.

Facilities

When a national centre is established, it is important to ensure that the following facilities are available to the NPM and the national centre staff:

- PCs running Windows XP or later with Microsoft Office Professional version 2007 or higher. Two Microsoft Office applications are especially important for data processing—Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word;
- Access to a reliable, high-bandwidth Internet connection and e-mail facilities. The international contractor maintains a secure website that contains key dates, documents and survey tools. Access to this site is essential for NPMs to be kept up-to-date and involved with the progress of the survey;
- A secure space for conducting the Field Trial and Main Survey coding operations; and
- A secure space for the storage of equipment and materials at all times.

Production of materials

The following tasks are to be undertaken for material preparation for both Field Trial and Main Survey:

- Assembly and printing of assessment materials; and
- Dispatch of materials to test administrators and schools.

Dissemination

An important strategy in raising the awareness of PISA is the dissemination of promotional material and reporting back the results of the surveys. This could involve

- Production of local promotional and publicity materials; and
- Production of national reports of the survey results (Main Survey only): It is recommended that a national dissemination strategy is developed that takes account of the international reporting timeline (the final international report is due to be released in December 2016). Some countries aim to release their national reports at the same time as the international report.

Meeting and training attendance

NPM meetings: NPMs and other key national staff are expected to attend Internet-based or in-person international meetings four times during the survey period.

Training sessions: NPMs and other key national staff are expected to attend training sessions on data management and coding, held twice during the four-year survey period.