



Feedback on the JSA Foundation Skills Study

Adult Learning Australia

24 March 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the **JSA Foundation Skills Study** discussion paper prior to it being released publicly on 31 March 2023.

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) notes that the timelines for community response to the discussion paper are short (31 March – 21 April 2023) and further limited due to the Easter holiday period in that time.

We put forward the following suggestions to improve the language in the document and to enhance the clarity of questions and information that will be released publicly through the discussion paper.

Introduction

Definitions

1. Do you agree with the proposed definitions for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy?

While it is important to retain some international comparability with the OECD terminology, ALA recommends minor changes to the definitions before the discussion paper is released:

Literacy

Literacy is the ability to read and write in a variety of context 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 literacy to be closely linked to positive outcomes at work, to social participation, and to lifelong learning.

We have included the ability to write in the definition of literacy although UNESCO's most recent definition is much broader: "Literacy is a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing and using numbers throughout life and is part of a larger set of skills, which include digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills."¹ However, we believe adding - ability to write - is a sufficient inclusion in this case.

Numeracy

¹ 2 Feb 2023 <https://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/need-know>

Numeracy is the ability to use, apply, interpret, and communicate mathematical information and ideas. It is an essential skill in an age when individuals encounter an increasing amount and wide range of quantitative and mathematical information in their daily lives.

The numeracy definition has been shortened and the original last sentence combined into the final paragraph in this section below.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is the ability to problem solve and use digital technologies safely, securely and appropriately in learning, work and life.

We have shortened the definition above and combined aspects of the three literacies into the following additional statement:

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills are interdependent, and it is important to assess how these competencies interact, since they are distributed differently across subgroups of the population. These skills exist along a continuum ranging from basic to advanced.

2. Do you currently use or are you aware of any digital literacy measures to inform policies and/or programs?

No change

Existing foundation skills data

3. How do you currently use (or have previously used) data on foundation skills, including PIAAC data?

No change.

4. What data do you need to inform ~~questions related to~~ foundation skills policy and program development?

Question unclear. Delete the words shown with strike through.

5. What available data sources and data assets do you hold/create/use in relation to foundation skills that have not been covered above?

Additional word added.

6. What gap/s or challenges have you encountered with the data that is currently available?

No change

Include footnote indicating that 2022 AMEP data may not reflect usual uptake due to COVID.

Foundation Skills Survey

Options for undertaking the National Study

7. Is there an alternative approach/option that you think would be suitable for the study?

List a range of options here which could include multiple access points for the community such as by telephone, hard copy forms, online, registered community access points like libraries or community hubs so that people can get support to respond to the survey and use what works best for them.

8. Are there online tools for ~~testing~~ LLND that you think would be suitable to be adapted for the needs of the study?

Remove the word testing and replace with checking or reviewing.

9. What frameworks do you use in describing foundation skills (such as the Australian Core Skills Framework ACSF and Core Skills for Work)

Include Core Skills for Work as an example here.

10. What outputs would be most useful for you (such as reports, analytical articles, CURFs, other microdata)?

Explain CURFS and outline more about what is possible.

11. The proposed age range is persons aged 16-65 15-80 years. Does the proposed age range align with your needs?

No. The ABS original sample of persons aged 15-74 years is too restrictive in these times to provide the snapshot required. Apprentices start at the age of 14 years so 15 years must be the minimum year to commence the range and older people are returning to the workforce and needing digital skills to access work. Our recommendation takes a lifelong learning approach 15 – 80 years.

12. What level of statistical geographical output do you need? Why?

Explain what is meant by levels – and simplify the words ‘statistical geographical output’ as this is unclear.

13. Which groups would you like to see more extensive research into and why? For example, First Nations, recent migrants, mature age workers, Australians in rural or remote locations?

Include the words **and why**. Explain the purpose of focusing on specific cohorts.

Feasibility study for First Nations people

14. Do you have any examples of existing data collection activities with First Nations people that may be applicable to assessing foundation skills in a culturally safe manner?
15. How would you recommend JSA engage with First Nations Australians for the feasibility study?

16. What are the key research questions you have for this part of the study?

No change to these questions

ALA is seeking feedback from our First Nations members – they have notified us they will respond once the document is open for public feedback.

Timeframes for the survey

ALA recommends that the planned survey testing time between the Christmas/New Year 2023-24 holiday period is problematic and suggests the survey commence early February 2024 to enable a better time for sampling.

Proposed consultation approach

ALA is seeking nomination to the small expert panels to guide further development of the design of the survey and feasibility studies as well as the technical aspects of the survey.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. We look forward to participating in the National Foundation Skills Survey.

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