

# DESIGNING LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

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## SUMMARY NOTE 3:

### Measuring Non-Academic Learning

#### ➔ KEY QUESTIONS:

- How do we define non-academic learning?
- How do we select and adapt tools for measuring non-academic learning?
- How do we contextualise tools?



# Defining Non-Academic Learning

## Principles and Measurement Challenges

**There are many ways to define and categorise non-academic skills.**

There are also many terms which overlap. Non-academic skills may also be referred to as, 21st century skills, life-skills, socio-emotional learning, or non-cognitive skills. Broadly defined these terms all refer to skills that do not align with specific subjects or areas covered in the curriculum, but which are considered important both to the academic success of a learner, as well as to their holistic development.

Whatever the terms used or typologies adhered to, the first step in measuring non-academic learning is to define what is to be measured. This can be more challenging than for academic skills as there is not a curricular framework to use as a reference. Definitions and perceptions of non-academic skills are also more likely to vary between individuals, meaning that consultation in defining constructs is even more important.

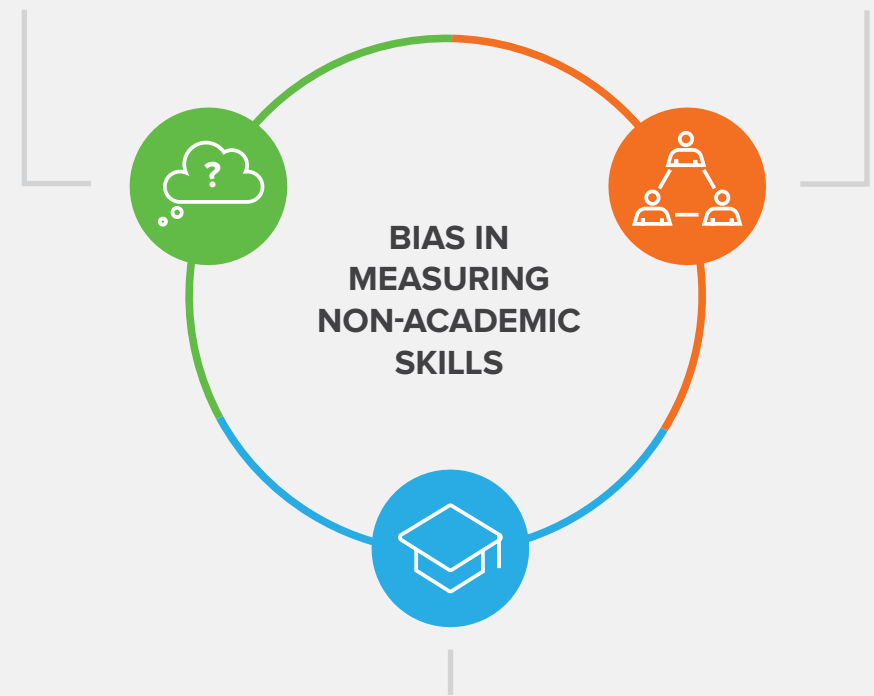
These differences may also raise challenges in measuring non-academic skills. Because non-academic skills are not necessarily linked to specific activities in a class or curriculum learners can struggle to understand or find a point of comparison for a question. Because non-academic skills are linked to social norms, a social-desirability bias may be introduced. Additionally, as it is more difficult to directly assess non-academic skills, there is a greater risk of introducing academic barriers, by which an assessment measures the mode of test taking (e.g. writing) rather than the construct itself.

### Reference Bias

'Do learners have a point of comparison to reflect on the question?'

### Social Desirability bias

'Will learners adapt their answers to appear differently to the tester?'



### Academic Barriers

'Do learners need academic skills to answer the questions?'

# Measuring Non-Academic Learning

## Selecting and Adapting Tools

Once you have defined the constructs that you wish to measure you can look to adapt tools that already exist.

The questions and steps here can help you narrow down a selection of items and tools that can be contextualised for use.

1

### What kind of a measure will you use?

- Self-reported questionnaires, completed by the student
- Informant-report questionnaires, completed by others who know and observe the student
- Performance-based tasks that operate similarly to academic assessments, enabling evidence about the construct to be observed and quantified.

2

### What tools exist? How do they overlap with the constructs you wish to measure?

- **Step 1:** Record the constructs assessed for each option considered.
- **Step 2:** Identify the commonalities and overlap with the target construct and how the construct measured by the instrument differ (significantly or subtly) from the domain.
- **Step 3:** Map the constructs of the assessment instrument against the domain.
- **Step 4:** Record the locations and populations that the instrument has been used for and consider how that might be different from the target for the Schools2030 assessment. Does the construct express differently in the places where the instrument has been used?
- **Step 5:** Try to obtain psychometric data or reports about how the instrument performed from the previous uses of the instrument. Was it valid and reliable? What evidence supports the validity and reliability claims? Were any issues identified? Where multiple options are available those with accompanying data and information should be preferred.

3

### Contextualisation

- Choose one, or several tools, to be adapted and **contextualised**

# Designing Contextually Relevant Tools

## A consultative process

The understanding and measurement of non-academic constructs is heavily dependent on culture and context. What is understood by a construct in one context may not be the same as what is understood in another context. It is essential to work with assessment users and their communities to understand how a tool can be adapted to reflect context and culture.

This should be a multi-stage process built on a series of focus group discussions. It is important that those who will deliver assessments, as well as those who will use the data, are involved in this process.

Once instruments are developed, they should be put through both qualitative and quantitative piloting. Qualitative piloting focuses on understanding the user experience of the tool, ensuring it is understood as intended. The quantitative piloting ensures that the tool is producing reliable and valid data.

Tools which are not contextually relevant will not generate valid data on holistic learning. This is particularly true for the measurement of non-academic skills.

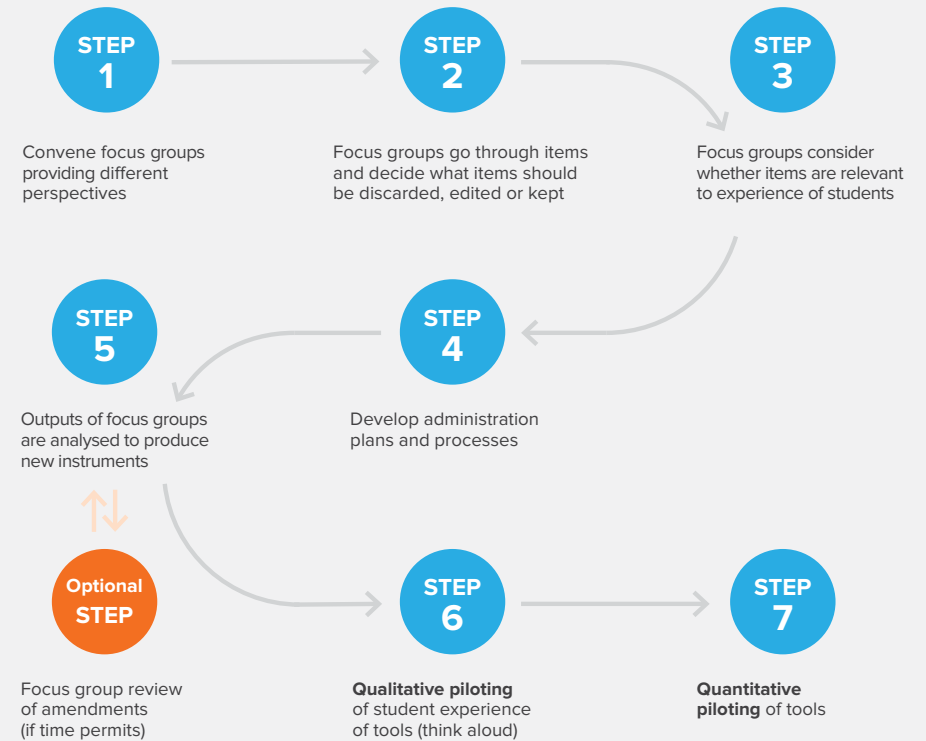


Figure 4 Steps involved in contextualising tools

# Sample Non-Academic Assessment Tools

## International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA)

ISELA assesses self-concept, stress management, perseverance, empathy, relationship management, and conflict resolution. It was designed for use with children aged 6 - 12 years old. It uses responses to scenarios and observed performance at some tasks.

Available at:  
<https://inee.org/measurement-library/international-social-and-emotional-learning-assessment-isela>

For more information, contact: [learningassessment@savechildren.org](mailto:learningassessment@savechildren.org).

## Holistic Assessment of Learning and Development Outcomes (HALDO)

HALDO assesses both academic and non-academic constructs. It is designed to assess four domains: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and executive functioning. It is designed for use with children aged 4-12.

For more information, contact: [learningassessment@savechildren.org](mailto:learningassessment@savechildren.org)

## Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scale (SEARS)

SEARS measures self-regulation, social competence, empathy and responsibility. It can be used for a wide range of ages. There are instruments that can be administered by parents or carers, teachers and children to provide different perspectives. They are based on observations or self-assessment, which are scored on a four-point scale.

For more information, visit:  
<https://www.parinc.com/Products/Pkey/406>

## Measuring Early Learning Quality Outcomes (MELQO)

MELQO assesses working memory, inhibitory control, self-regulation, social cognition, social competence and emotional well-being. It is a freely-available measure developed by a number of multilateral organisations, predominantly the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Brookings Institution. It is designed for use in early childhood education environments.

For more information, visit:  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248053>

## Explore SEL tool

The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory is hosted by Harvard University. It has produced an online tool for exploring SEL domains. They have drawn together the available SEL frameworks to show how each conceptualises SEL and how the frameworks relate to each other.

Helpfully, where available, they link to assessment tools that relate to each framework. It takes some time to explore and see which frameworks are close to the construct definitions that you are using, but can be a helpful place to identify available tools.

Access the tool at:  
<http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu>