

# **SAMPLE GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION TO APPLY THE GAML/EDSC CRITERIA TO REPORT ON SDG 4.1.1**



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## Introduction

The number of countries reporting on internationally comparable indicators on SDG 4.1.1 is not as high as desirable. For example, in the latest UIS data release available to the public online, only 37 countries report learning (using reading as a proxy) at the Grade 2 or 3 level, and 101 countries at the end-of-primary level at least once in the last six years. These numbers contrast sharply as compared to the 203 countries reporting primary school enrolment, indicating a mere 18% reporting at the lower primary level compared to reporting enrolment figures.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, more importantly, the number of countries reporting is not increasing quickly enough. During 2013-2016, only 30 countries reported for SDG 4.1.1a, increasing marginally to 36 in the most recent three years. At this pace, it would take 35 years for the lower primary learning indicator, and 11 years for the end of primary learning indicator, to catch up to the enrolment reporting rates.

To some degree, this lack of reporting, especially for SDG 4.1.1a, is somewhat expected. Learning assessments for the end of primary and lower secondary have a relatively venerable history, whereas learning assessments suitable for SDG 4.1.1a are a much newer area of work. Furthermore, there seem to be stronger technical difficulties in measuring at the lower primary level. For example, at this level, language and orthography issues that are inherent to the process of learning to read (more so than mathematics) are not merely an artifact of the assessment methodology and tend to get in the way of the measurement of skill, or more accurately, get in the way of the use of the measurement of learning as a comparable proxy for school system quality. However, inherent and naturally given as this difficulty may be, it has had unfortunate consequences.

At the meeting of the UN-IAEG (Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators) on 23 October 2023, the indicator for SDG 4.1.1a was “demoted” from a Tier I to a Tier II indicator due to lack of coverage.

The community of interest concerned with foundational learning, such as the Global Coalition for Foundational Learning, immediately expressed deep concern, due to the possible signalling that this “demotion” might imply to countries. The subtlety that the “demotion” is due to insufficient reporting rather than a lack of fundamental importance of the issue, is likely to be lost, with countries taking the demotion as a signal of lack of importance. As a result, no less than four blogs from opinion leaders in the sector were published within the two or three weeks after this decision, questioning the decision and/or proposing ways forward. One of them included many or most of the key global leaders of development agencies’ education departments. The IAEG decision did not close the door on reversing this decision. Specifically, the IAEG and opinion leaders, agreed on the need to increase reporting to at least 50% of countries where the indicator is relevant (according to the most current definition of Tier I).

On 6-7 December 2023, representatives and interested parties related to the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning, sponsored by UIS, met for the tenth time in its history, at a previously scheduled meeting in Paris. Naturally, given the change in status of SDG 4.1.1a, the issue of how to increase coverage received considerable attention, both formal and informal (sidebar conversations among key leaders). There was a common cause at the meeting to increase coverage, while also maintaining the necessity for methodological rigor. Key presentations on minimum criteria required to report, and on linking to agreed minimum proficiency levels, were made by consultants and advisors Abdullah Ferdous (AIR), Colin Watson (ACER), and Maurice Walker (ACER) at two important sessions of the meeting, available here. These presentations made specific suggestions on criteria that assessments would need to meet in order to report. At the same time, the fact that various assessments exist (such as UNICEF's FLM as part of the MICS surveys, various citizen-led assessments, and EGRA, to mention three examples) but were not being used for reporting, was noted. It was suggested that these could boost the count. (And this was the thrust of much of the blog commentary from stakeholders in Autumn 2023.) But it was noted by UIS at the meeting that these often did not meet standards that there were rigorous enough, or that the degree of rigor was unknown due to lack of standardized documentation. (See Appendix A for a discussion of this issue.) Thus, there were considerable discussion and requests from the floor, and from UIS itself, for further clarification and unification of criteria that could be compiled by UIS.

Furthermore, the implications of the GAML recommendations were discussed and adopted at the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting (virtual) of the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) on SDG 4 Indicators – now known as the Education Data and Statistics Commission (EDSC - on 11 December 2023, via a presentation from UIS Director Montoya.

As of early 2025, UIS has made available the document on the called-for Criteria, “GAML/EDSC criteria for use of an assessment to report on SDG 4.1.1.” version 4, [here](#).

These criteria were anticipated to be mostly technical, and to lay out the technical justification and background for the Criteria. It was decided by various stakeholders that UIS prepare a set of simple guidelines on how a country or its technical assistants could submit an assessment for consideration by UIS for reporting under SDG 4.1.1. Colin Watson and team, at ACER, volunteered to share such a set of simple guidelines, as they were preparing for Ghana, as an example and possible base for a generic version that could be used to submit an assessment for UIS consideration. This document represents that effort.

## Ghana Ministry of Education/NaCCA: National Standardized Test Primary 4 English Submission to UIS – eligibility to report against SDG 4.1.1a (Reading)

Proportion of children in grades 2/3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, by sex

Criterion reference	Description of how criterion has been met	Hyperlinks to relevant, publicly available document	Page/ Section number
<b>Criterion 1 – Alignment to the MPL and construct validity</b>			
<b>Reading Lower Primary</b>			
1.1a (R)	30 of the 35 items included in the assessment are aligned to the GPF in reading, meeting the minimum of 20.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER_item_review:_NST_P4/GPF_grade_2_text/item_alignment_review">www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER item review: NST P4/GPF grade 2 text/item alignment review</a>	Whole document
1.2a (R)	20 of the 35 items are aligned to the reading comprehension domain in the GPF grade 2, meeting the minimum of 10.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER_item_review:_NST_P4/GPF_grade_2_text/item_alignment_review">www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER item review: NST P4/GPF grade 2 text/item alignment review</a>	Whole document
1.3a (R)	The assessment contains 6 item assessing R1.1 and 19 items containing R1.2, therefore assessing both grade 2 subconstructs.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER_item_review:_NST_P4/GPF_grade_2_text/item_alignment_review">www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER item review: NST P4/GPF grade 2 text/item alignment review</a>	Whole document
1.4a (R)	All 30 items aligned to the GPF assess reading comprehension, which meets this criterion.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER_item_review:_NST_P4/GPF_grade_2_text/item_alignment_review">www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER item review: NST P4/GPF grade 2 text/item alignment review</a>	Whole document
1.5a (R)	n/a – timed fluency not part of reported assessment		
1.6a (R)	n/a – group administered assessment		
1.7a (R)	Students in Ghana are instructed and assessed in English from P1, though the home language may be different. The implications of this are discussed in the national report.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_Teaching_and_Learning_Policy_Primary_1-6">www.nacca.gov.gh_Teaching and Learning Policy Primary 1-6</a>	Section 4, pp11-13
		<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 6, page 80
<b>Criterion 2 – Item content and quality</b>			
2.1	Primary English SMEs (in-country and international) reviewed items to confirm their suitability for inclusion in the assessment. All items suitably assess the P4 national curriculum for English and international standards (MPLa.)	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_test_development_protocol">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – test development protocol</a>	Section 1, page 17
		<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER_item_review:_NST_P4/GPF_grade_2_text/item_alignment_review">www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER review: NST P4/GPF grade 2 text/item alignment review</a>	Whole document
2.2	The experts for 2.1 included Ghanaian nationals.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_SMEs_required_characteristics">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – SMEs required characteristics</a>	Section 1, page 18
2.3	All items were developed under advice from SMEs.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_test_development_protocol">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – test development protocol</a>	Section 1, page 17
2.4	Ghanian SMEs vetted items to ensure suitability for context. Confirmation that all items were suitable is stated in the national report.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_test_development_protocol">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – test development protocol</a>	Section 1, page 17
		<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 2, page 14
2.5	SME item writers were experienced and undertook test development refresher training from OUWA assessment specialists.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_SMEs_required_characteristics">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan - SMEs required characteristics</a>	Section 1, page 18
2.6	The items were field tested on a representative sample of P4 students.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 2, page 25

Criterion reference	Description of how criterion has been met	Hyperlinks to relevant, publicly available document	Page/ Section number
2.7	n/a – all items are multiple choice, so scoring guide is a list of keys, which were quality assured for accuracy		
2.8	Psychometric item analysis was conducted on the field test data using classical test theory (CTT).	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 4, pp 40-70
2.9	Psychometric item analysis was conducted on the field test data using item response theory (IRT).	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 4, pp 40-70
2.10	The item difficulty of all items included in the final test forms was reviewed and assessed as appropriate for GPF G2 (as a proxy for MPLa) and for GPF G5 (as a proxy for MPLb).	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 5, pp 71-78
2.11	All assessment items had a difficulty level of between 0.20 and 0.90 based on the field trial.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 4, pp 40-70
2.12	Item discrimination was reviewed prior to items being selected for inclusion in the live assessment.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 5, pp 71-78
2.13	All assessment items included in the assessment have a point biserial value of at least 0.20.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Field Trial Report</a>	Section 5, pp 71-78
<b>Criterion 3 – Population coverage and sampling – census-based assessments</b>			
3.1 (P)	The target population for the NST is all public-school students in Primary 4.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 1, page 10
3.2 (P)	The following subgroups are systematically excluded: students in private schools, out-of-school children (OOSC) and visually impaired students. Exclusions are justified in the Final Operational Plan and NaCCA's intention to include private school and visually impaired students going forward are outlined in the Operational Plan for 2026. Ghana's Education Outcomes Project (2023-2025) aims to reintegrate OOSC students.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_target_population">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – target population</a>	Intro. pp 1-2
		<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_GEOP_summary_arrangements_for_reintegrating_OOSC">www.nacca.gov.gh_GEOP summary – arrangements for reintegrating OOSC</a>	
3.3 (P)	The population assessed for MPLa (Primary 4) is 457,000. This represents c. 72% of all students enrolled in Primary 4 (28% are educated privately). Of these, 49% were female and 51% were male. These proportions are consistent with F/M P4 age students in the wider population.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 1, page 10
3.4 (P)	n/a – relates only to SDG 4.1.1b		
3.5 (P)	n/a – relates only to SDG 4.1.1c		
<b>Criterion 4 – Assessment administration and data custodianship</b>			
4.1	A test administration manual was produced to ensure NST assessments were administered in a standardised way. This was	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Test_Administrators_Manual">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Test Administrators' Manual</a>	Whole document

Criterion reference	Description of how criterion has been met	Hyperlinks to relevant, publicly available document	Page/ Section number
	reviewed by SMEs to ensure it was clear and would lead to standardised administration.		
4.2	The test administration manual included information on acceptable deviations from the recommended procedure. It detailed steps to take in the event of maladministration.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Test_Administrators'_Manual_maladministration_exemplification_and_protocol">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST 2024 Test Administrators' Manual maladministration exemplification and protocol</a>	pp 24 and 25
4.3	The Final Operational Plan set out the requirements for selecting and training test administrators and monitors.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_administrator/monitor_characteristics.Administrator/monitor_training">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan administrator/monitor characteristics. Administrator/monitor training.</a>	page 35
4.4	Administrator training was carried out prior to the administration of the tests. The process is described in the national report.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 1, page 10
4.5	Supervisor and monitor training was carried out prior to the administration of the tests. The process is described in the national report and the monitoring report.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a> <a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_2024_P4_and_P6_National_Standardized_Test_(NST)_Monitoring_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_2024 P4 and P6 National Standardized Test (NST) Monitoring Report</a>	Section 1, page 10
4.6	There was insufficient time to carry out practice sessions for administrators and monitors.		
4.7	A process was in place for replacing administrators/monitors under specific circumstances. 18,000 P4 test administrators were available to administer NST in 16,000 schools overseen by 80 district supervisors and 522 monitors.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_administrator/monitors_characteristics_training">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – administrator/monitors characteristics_training</a> <a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_2024_P4_and_P6_National_Standardized_Test_(NST)_Monitoring_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_2024 P4 and P6 National Standardized Test (NST) Monitoring Report</a>	page 35
4.8	Monitoring visits were carried out in all 16 regions and 216 districts under the leadership of GES Regional and District Directors. Across the nation, there were 1204 monitoring visits, representing 7.525% of all schools. This was felt to be sufficient for adequate monitoring.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_moderation_visits">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – moderation visits</a> <a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_2024_P4_and_P6_National_Standardized_Test_(NST)_Monitoring_Report">www.nacca.gov.gh_2024 P4 and P6 National Standardized Test (NST) Monitoring Report</a>	page 35
4.9	A data quality assurance plan was in place and described in the Final Operational Plan.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan_-_data_security,_data_cleansing,_data_verification">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan – data security, data cleansing, data verification</a>	page 50-51
4.10	Two minor incidents of inappropriate administration were identified through monitoring or reporting of concerns.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 8, page 105
4.11	No incidents of maladministration resulted in the exclusion of the data from the national data set. These are reported in the national report and did not affect the representativeness of the sample.	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report">www.nacca.gov.gh_national report</a>	Section 8, page 105
4.12	n/a – as a national assessment, informed consent was assumed.		



Criterion reference	Description of how criterion has been met	Hyperlinks to relevant, publicly available document	Page/ Section number
<b>Criterion 5 – Reliability</b>			
5.1	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.2	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.3	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.4	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.5	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.6	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.7	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.8	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
5.9	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep">www.nacca.gov.gh_national_rep</a>	
<b>Criterion 6 – Benchmark-based linking to the MPL</b>			
6.1 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.2 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.3 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.4 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.5 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.6 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.7 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.8 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
6.9 (PCM)	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM">www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM</a>	
<b>Criterion 5 – Maintaining standards over time</b>			
7.1	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan</a>	
7.2	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan</a>	
7.3	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan</a>	
7.4	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan</a>	
7.5	TBC	<a href="http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan">www.nacca.gov.gh_NST Final Operational Plan</a>	

#### Documents to be submitted with evidence

- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_ACER item review: NST P4/GPF grade 2 text/item alignment review](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_ACER_item_review_NST_P4/GPF_grade_2_text/item_alignment_review)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_Teaching and Learning Policy Primary 1-6](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_Teaching_and_Learning_Policy_Primary_1-6)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_national report](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_national_report)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_NST Final Operational Plan](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_Final_Operational_Plan)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_NST 2024 Field Trial Report](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Field_Trial_Report)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_GEOP summary](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_GEOP_summary)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_NST 2024 Test Administrators' Manual](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_NST_2024_Test_Administrators'_Manual)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_2024 P4 and P6 National Standardized Test \(NST\) Monitoring Report](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_2024_P4_and_P6_National_Standardized_Test_(NST)_Monitoring_Report)
- [www.nacca.gov.gh\\_PCM](http://www.nacca.gov.gh_PCM)