
SDG 4.1.1 Minimum Proficiency Levels: Definition and blueprint for assessment

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Purpose

To support the application of **reporting criterion 1 – Alignment to the MPL and construct validity**, by providing:

- i. a clear definition of the MPLs and
- ii. a blueprint for each educational stage – a) at the end of lower primary (Grades 2/3), b) at the end of primary, and c) at the end of lower secondary – in line with the GPF and reporting criterion 1.

The definitions and blueprints of the MPLs are intended as the **official documentation** to be used by the UIS and by respective stakeholders in the SDG 4 monitoring process, **to establish alignment of an assessment with reporting criterion 1** for reporting on SDG indicator 4.1.1.

This document brings together two key reference documents:

- **The Global Proficiency Frameworks (GPF)** for reading and mathematics are the reference documents for the **definition of the MPLs** for the three educational stages (SDG 4.1.1a: MPLa, SDG 4.1.1b: MPLb, SDG 4.1.1c: MPLc).
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020a). [Global Proficiency Framework for Reading \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org)
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020b). [Global Proficiency Framework for Mathematics \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org)
- **The MPLs unpacked document** is the main reference document for the **MPLa, MPLb and MPLc blueprints**.
- Australian Council for Educational Research (2022). (2022). Minimum Proficiency Levels Unpacked. WG/GAML/4. https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/11/WG_GAML_4_MPLsUnpacked_A_CER.pdf

Defining the MPLs

For reading and for mathematics for each of the three educational stages referred to in SDG 4.1.1 (MPLa, MPLb, MPLc)

Relationship of the MPL definitions with the GPF descriptors

- Definitions for the three educational stages (end of lower primary, end of primary and end of lower primary) are most closely aligned with the GPF description of a skill that ‘meets global minimum proficiency’ for Grades 2, 5 and 8, which accords with the UIS reporting criteria.
- Having a single MPL for each educational stage clarifies the situation where multiple Grades are the potential target of each MPL because of variation in educational systems, practices and conditions across the globe.
- The GPF differentiates skill development in reading and mathematics over 9 grades (Grade 1 through to Grade 9) and then differentiates three different levels of skill, (‘partially meets’, ‘meets’ and ‘exceeds’) within each Grade.
- The GPF descriptors provide guidance about the target skill and difficulty level – they are not rigid rules.
- The summary definitions of the MPLs show how to interpret the GPF descriptors in a way that provides appropriate flexibility in the kinds of items that can target these skills while staying true to the intention of each skill descriptor.

Defining the MPLs

The MPLs for reading and mathematics are elaborated in four ways:

- 1. Nutshell statements** provide a general definition and overview of the skills expected at each educational stage.
- 2. Expanded statements** highlight the key skills expected at each educational stage.
- 3. Skill specifications** outline the scope and difficulty of the skills expected at each educational stage as defined in the GPF constructs, subconstructs, descriptors and examples of ‘meets global minimum proficiency’ at Grades 2, 5 and 8 in accordance with UIS Reporting Criterion 1.
- 4. Sample items** give a more concrete sense of the target skills and degree of difficulty required for each educational stage.

Difference in MPLs for reading and mathematics

- Skills develop differently in reading and in mathematics. This is reflected in the GPF and in reporting criterion 1.
- The **reading** domains of decoding and listening comprehension are considered pre-cursor skills for reading, typically appearing in young learners, and therefore limited to MPLa. Some basic reading comprehension is also expected for MPLa.
- Reading MPLb and MPLc focus entirely on reading comprehension.
- In **mathematics**, skills develop concurrently in all 5 domains (number and operations, measurement, geometry, statistics and probability, algebra) covered in the definition of the mathematics MPLa, MPLb and MPLc.
- The reporting requirements for reading and mathematics therefore differ in terms of grade-specifications.

Providing a blueprint for the MPL

The MPL blueprint shows how an assessment can be used to report against the MPLs for reading and mathematics

The MPL blueprint includes:

- the learning area (reading or mathematics)
- the target MPL (a, b or c)
- the scope of the skills that must be targeted
- the range of difficulty required
- how many items are required and how they can be distributed across the specifications
- **Blueprint examples** are provided to present different ways for meeting the UIS reporting criteria
- To reliably establish the proportion of learners meeting MPLa, MPLb or MPLc, an assessment should target the proficiency level descriptions for ‘meets global minimum proficiency’ for the respective educational stage.
- However, a broader range of skills described as ‘exceeds’ and ‘partially meets global minimum proficiency’ should be included to allow for the fine-grained nuances and minor distinctions between the proficiency level descriptions in the GPF.

Blueprint example MPLa: Reading

Blueprint 1 spreads the minimum number of 10 retrieve items evenly across two subconstructs at Grade 2 plus 5 listening comprehension and 5 decoding items, giving good coverage to the learning area.

Blueprint 2 has 20 retrieve items spread across both subconstructs for retrieving. This provides good skill coverage for retrieving by including some easier and harder items but does not give coverage across the whole of the reading learning area.

Blueprint 3 has 10 retrieve items spread across both subconstructs at Grade 2 with the remaining 3 retrieve items at Grades 1 or 3, plus 5 decoding items targeting Grades 2 and 3.

Table 7: Blueprint examples of meeting the minimum MPLa requirements

Construct	Subconstruct	Blueprint 1	Blueprint 2	Blueprint 3
Retrieving Information	R1.1	5 items <i>All at Grade 2</i>	10 items - 5 at Grade 2 - 3 at Grade 1 - 1 at Grade 3 - 1 at Grade 4	5 items - 3 at Grade 2 - 2 at Grade 1
	R1.2	5 items <i>All at Grade 2</i>	10 items - 3 at Grade 2 - 3 at Grade 1 - 2 at Grade 3 - 2 at Grade 4	10 items - 7 at Grade 2 - 1 at Grade 1 - 2 at Grade 3
Listening Comprehension	C2.1	2 items - 1 at Grade 1 - 1 at Grade 2		
	C2.2	2 items - 1 at Grade 1 - 1 at Grade 2		
	C2.3	1 item - 1 at Grade 2		
Decoding	D1.1			
	D1.2	5 items - 2 at Grade 1 - 3 at Grade 2		5 items - 2 at Grade 2 - 3 at Grade 3
Total		20 items	20 items	20 items

Minimum and excellent standards: Sufficient items and coverage

Excellence is supported by:

- Increasing the number of items above the minimum specifications of 20 items in a learning area to allow for some potential loss of mistargeted items to ensure the minimum specifications are met
- Good coverage of the domains, constructs and subconstructs, so that student achievement data reflects the scope of the learning area. This may be particularly useful where stakeholders have identified a widespread gap or weakness in student achievement.
- Good coverage of the range of student abilities – including skills that are below and above the targeted MPL, to provide information about the range and distribution of students’ skills, to inform policies and practices to improve student achievement.
- Increasing the number of items in an assessment needs to be balanced against the length of the assessment and practical constraints.

Excellent blueprint example MPLa: Reading

Blueprint 4 includes 25 items which is 5 more than the minimum of 20 items with 12 retrieve items all at Grade 2 evenly spread across both subconstructs. The blueprint includes 7 listening comprehension items and 6 decoding items which are at Grade 2 or adjacent grades to target the scope of the learning area.

Blueprint 5 includes 33 items which is 13 more than the minimum of 20 with 16 retrieve items plus 10 listening comprehension and 7 decoding items which can be at Grades 1, 2 or 3 to target the scope of the learning area.

Table 8: Blueprint examples of excellence in relation to the MPLa requirements

Construct	Subconstruct	Blueprint 4	Blueprint 5
Retrieving Information	R1.1	6 items - 6 at Grade 2	8 items - 6 at Grade 2 - 2 at Grade 1
	R1.2	6 items - 6 at Grade 2	8 items - 6 at Grade 2 - 2 at Grade 1
Listening Comprehension	C2.1	4 items - 2 at Grade 2 - 2 at Grade 3	4 items - 2 at Grade 1 - 2 at Grade 2
	C2.2	2 items - 1 at Grade 1 - 1 at Grade 3	4 items - 1 at Grade 1 - 3 at Grade 2
	C2.3	1 item - 1 at Grade 2	2 items - 2 at Grade 2
Decoding	D1.1		
	D1.2	6 items - 3 at Grade 2 - 2 at Grade 3	7 items - 2 at Grade 1 - 3 at Grade 2 - 2 at Grade 3
Total		25 items	33 items

Access the SDG 4.1.1 Minimum Proficiency Levels: Definition and Blueprint for assessment

https://tcg.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/02/GAML11_3.1_MPL-definition-and-blueprint.pdf

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