

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF THE AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PROJECT

1.0 BACKGROUND

Selected countries in West and Central Africa with support from the World Bank and Association of African Universities, launched a Regional Higher Education Project called the Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE) Project in 2014. Under the ACE I Project, 61 programmes attained international accreditation, over 11,000 master's and 2,000 PhD students enrolled in postgraduate programs, including over 6,000 regional students. Moreover, close to 6,000 students and faculty participated in internships in companies relevant to their field of study, and the 22 ACEs generated a combined external revenue of over US\$50 million over the five years of implementation. Following the successful implementation of the ACE I Project, the World Bank initiated the ACE for Development Impact Project (or simply, ACE Impact Project) to scale up and increase the impact of ACEs on achieving key outcomes that are fundamental to economic growth and social development.

The main objective of the ACE Impact Project is to improve the quality, quantity and development impact of postgraduate education in selected universities through regional specialization and collaboration. The project seeks to contribute towards Governments' objectives of reducing the higher-level skills gaps and improving applied research and technology uptake in priority sectors. Further, the project would contribute to the strengthening of the best African universities within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Agricultural Sciences; Health Sciences, as well as in Applied Social Sciences and Environment. The ACE Impact Project covers 11 countries (Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Djibouti, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Niger, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Republic of Senegal, Republic of The Gambia, and Republic of Togo). The total investment across the countries is expected to approach USD 350 million. The Association of African Universities (AAU) is the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) for the project. The responsibilities of the RFU include the coordination and facilitation of regional activities, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building for the selected centers of excellence and sharing of good practices across the countries.

The ACE Impact Project is a Results-Based Financing initiative, under which Centres must achieve Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) to "earn" funds from an available funding envelop (USD 6 million over five years). As indicated in the project title, the initiative is committed to strengthening higher education training and applied research programs, with a focus on the Development Impact of these activities. DLI 2 is designed to measure the Development Impact of each Center through independent, external evaluation. In addition to the centre-level DLI, according to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), this indicator measures the development impact of the ACEs both at national and regional levels in terms of the extent of their contribution to their sector/industries. The indicator assesses the quality of the postgraduate graduates and the applied research of the ACEs.

The AAU as the Regional Facilitating Unit (RFU) is responsible for the verification of DLI 2, which entails an external evaluation of the Development Impact of each ACE Impact Center

and Emerging Center¹ by an External Evaluator. **For additional information, see the guidance note on DLI 2 in Annex 1.**

To ensure quality and transparency in the evaluation of DLI 2, the RFU, in collaboration with the World Bank, constituted a Working Group as an advisory body to provide guidance on the criteria and methodology for evaluating DLI 2 that the independent external Evaluator(s) can engage with for the exercise.

Accordingly, the External Evaluator(s) / Consultant may engage closely with the working group throughout the evaluation process. **The terms of Reference for the Working group in Annex 2.**

2.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The focus of the consultancy is to conduct an independent, external Evaluation of the extent to which the ACEs have contributed towards development Impact as per the agreed indicators. Secondly the evaluation will make an overall independent assessment about the past performance of the project, paying particular attention to the impact of the project activities against its objectives.

Finally, the consultancy will identify key lessons and propose practical recommendations for follow-up actions.

3.0 SCOPE OF THE WORK

- Design methodology that would lead to an assessment of impact of the undergraduate, postgraduate and graduate courses and/or the applied research of the Centers (**See proposed criteria in Annex 3).**
- Establish the extent to which the ACEs are making progress towards the Development Impact in relation to the agreed criteria.
- Analyze the expected and spillover effects and outcomes of the Development Impact.
- Identify key lessons and draw up recommendations that would input into future evaluations, mainly those targeted for Year 4 of the project.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The Consultant may employ a mix of methods/ tools to achieve the stated objectives. These can include a variety of methodologies necessary for evaluation studies using standard methods and tools.

The Consultant may engage with the Working Group, the AAU, and all relevant supportive service/ data providers relating to this work to discuss how the data will be analyzed and show how various factors contribute to the outcomes and impact.

The methods may include:

1. Practical learning experience
2. Participatory and self-assessment methods
3. Qualitative and Quantitative methods

¹ Colleges of Engineering supported under the ACE Impact project do not earn DLI 2

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

4. Desk review of relevant project information available on the Project digital reporting system
5. e-Survey of all key partners/ stakeholders
6. Interviews with select key partners/ stakeholders.

5.0 DELIVERABLES

- Draft detailed workplan and an inception report to be agreed with AAU/WB and the Working Group prior to the assignment.
- A detailed scoring process that allows centers and stakeholders to contribute to defining their development impact. The scoring process should be shared with centers prior to evaluation for self-assessment and preparation purposes.
- Final report presented to the AAU/WB and Working Group indicating: (i) the progress towards Development Impact for each ACE Impact Center and Emerging Center; and (ii) the lessons learned from development impact successes and challenges, together with recommendations for the future.
- PowerPoint presentation on key highlights of the progress towards Development Impact of the ACEs
- Policy brief that AAU/WB/participating countries can use for advocacy.

6.0 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The evaluation team will be composed of experts with the following profiles and qualifications:

- Demonstrated experience in conducting evaluations of higher education projects that span across various countries
- Broad experience with universities, international and regional research, and development projects in Africa will be a requirement.
- Demonstrated practical field level support for regional / international organizations in Africa on the development and use of monitoring and reporting tools.
- Experience in and knowledge of capacity development and higher education in Africa
- Demonstrated and internationally recognized consultancy service delivery.
- Full working knowledge of English and of French languages.

7.0 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to evaluate and rank the proposals submitted.

No	Selection Criteria	Points
1.	Technical approach	50
2.	Institutional Capacity	20
3.	Past performance	15
4.	Staffing/ CVs	15
Total		100

- The budget / cost will be considered only to differentiate among similar bids of high technical quality.
- Technical proposals should not exceed 15 pages.
- The financial reports should be prepared in United States Dollars. The budget should be prepared by activity and summary also provided.

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

- CVs for experts should not exceed 4 pages each.
- The evaluators shall be fully independent from both project and stakeholders here within.

8.0 ASSIGNMENT DURATION AND LOCATION

The assignment will be undertaken for a maximum period of four (4) months effective the time of signing the contract until the submission of the final report. The services are expected to commence in **May 2021**.

NB: Upon successful completion of this evaluation, the contract could be extended to allow for the consultant to later evaluate the extent to which the Centers have achieved Development Impact at the end of year 4.

9.0 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS AND REPORTING

While the Consultant will be under the direct supervision of the Project Manager at the Regional Facilitating Unit for the duration of the consultancy, the firm will be expected to undertake the assignment in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Project.

10.0 RESOURCES AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT / FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CLIENT & AAU

Consultant

1. Familiarize with the relevant AAU and particularly the ACE Impact Project documents.
2. Develop close working relationship with AAU/ RFU to ensure smooth running and liaison in the process of the assignment.
3. Facilitate any necessary meetings with AAU, WB and ACEs for triangulation, data collection and feedback sessions in the evaluation process
4. Submit the draft and final consultancy report, in soft copy

RFU - AAU

1. Provide access to all necessary databases, documents and processes to facilitate the assignment, including an in-depth study of renewed ACEs.
2. Provide guidelines for reporting and consultation at different stages of the assignment.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Preparatory Phase:

May / June 2021

- Expert consultation with AAU/WB & DLI 2 Working Group (approx. 10 – 15 participants) to discuss the TOR and expectations.
- Finalisation of the survey tools, pretesting and launch of the surveys.

Implementation/ Follow-up Phase

- Mid-June – August 2021: Data collection/ analysis / preparation of case report
- Mid-September 2021: Review/ finalization of report/ preparation of synthesis report
- October 2021: Agreement on follow-up actions

12.0 LANGUAGE

The language of the assignment and all deliverables shall be in both English and French for Anglophone and Francophone participants and stakeholders, respectively. Therefore, excellent English and French communication skills (oral, written and presentation) are required.

KEY DOCUMENTS FOR THE EVALUATION

[Project Documents – ACE – African Higher Education Centres of Excellence \(aau.org\)](http://aau.org)

Annex 1: Guidance on DLI 2 Development Impact

Introduction

The Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) is a regional higher education project supported by the World Bank and *AFD*. The project supports approximately 50 Centers of Excellence, Emerging Centers and Colleges of Engineering in 11 West African countries (and Djibouti).

ACE Impact is a Results-Based Funding project, in which Centers must achieve Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) to “earn” money from an available funding envelop (~ USD 6 million over five years). As indicated in the project title, the project is committed to strengthening higher education training and applied research programs, with a focus on Development Impact of these activities. DLI 2 is designed to measure the Development Impact of each Center through independent, external evaluation.

Within the ACE Impact Project Appraisal Document, one of the Indicators for the Project Development Objective is:²

- **Indicator Name:** Number of ACEs that have had substantial development impact (as measured by an independent evaluation of each center’s impact on development at mid-term and end of project).
- **Definition/Description:** This indicator measures the development impact that the ACEs are having both nationally and regionally in terms of the extent of their contribution to their sector/industries. The indicator assesses the quality of the postgraduate graduates and the applied research of the ACEs. Impact reported will be on a 1-5 scale with evaluation criteria including:
 - number of student internships
 - number of graduates hired in the sector
 - number of short courses delivered in response to sectoral stakeholder requests
 - evaluation of Sectoral Advisory Board annual reports, and
 - interviews with sectoral stakeholders
- **Methodology for Data Collection:** Evaluation report per ACE, developed from assessing the ACEs progress reports; interviews and surveys of relevant stakeholders.

DLI 2 Verification Protocol ³

In the ACE Impact Project Appraisal Document, the Verification Protocol for DLI 2 is proscribed as:

- **Description:** Independent, external evaluation of the development impact of the ACE Impact center conducted in Year 3 and beginning of Year 4. (Renewal centers will however have their assessment in Year 2 and Year 4)
- **Data source/ Agency:** Centers’ progress reports; SAB reports; and Interviews
- **Verification Entity:** RFU/External Evaluators
- **Procedure:** Independent, external evaluation of the development impact of the ACE center conducted during Year 3 (Year 2 for renewals) and end of Year 4 of project

² Page 62, ACE Impact 1 PAD

³ Page 78, ACE Impact 1 PAD

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

implementation. External evaluators assess and score development impact of the center. In Year 3, score is based upon progress towards development impact. In Year 4, score is based upon development impact.

The criteria for evaluation will include:

- Relevance and impact of graduates on society, including the share of graduates hired in the target sector and feedback from key employers
- Relevance and impact of research on society
- Progress on DLIs
- SAB annual reports
- interviews with center graduates and sectoral stakeholders.

The detailed scoring rubrics will be defined in the Regional Operations Manual.

The value of this DLI varies between countries from US\$25,000 equivalent to US\$35,000 equivalent per point in the score (point scale 1 to 5). The country specific value is in the Financing Agreement.

Additional Considerations

The ACE Impact Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU; Association of African Universities) has the responsibility for coordination of DLI 2, the Evaluation of Development Impact for each ACE Impact Center and Emerging Center (Colleges of Engineering supported by ACE Impact do not earn DLI 2).

In February 2021, a Working Group convened to provide input to the RFU on the detailed verification process and the rubrics that will be used for evaluating Development Impact, and to the terms for the Evaluation Experts. The Working Group will include:

- At least one Center Leader from a Center supported under ACE 1
- At least one Center Leader from a Center not supported under ACE 1
- One Emerging Center Leader
- 2 Representatives of AAU
- 2 Representatives from the World Bank
- One Evaluation Expert.

As indicated in the ACE Impact Project Appraisal Document, the following criteria will be included for the evaluation of Development Impact under DLI 2:

- **Students**
 - number of student internships
 - number of graduates hired in the sector
 - relevance and impact of graduates on society
- **Sector**
 - Impact of research
 - number of short courses delivered in response to sectoral stakeholder requests
 - interviews with Sectoral Advisory Board, employers and other sectoral stakeholders
 - interviews with Center graduates
 - evaluation of Sectoral Advisory Board annual reports,
- **Project level**

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

- Achievement of other ACE Impact DLRs

The Working Group will identify potential mechanisms to evaluate the criteria identified above. A mixed methods approach could include:

- Desk reviews of: Center Reports; workplans; SAB Minutes; DLI attainment
- A standard survey distributed to all ACEs, students, SAB members
- Interviews – conducting either via video/telephone, or in person (this adds both cost and time)
 - Center leadership
 - SAB
 - Students
 - Graduates
 - Project Steering Committee members and/or national Focal Points
- Analysis of technology transfer, including
 - number of startups launched, and number of employees
 - number, and value, of prototypes and products launched in the private sector
- Other criteria as identified by the Working Group, and ultimately agreed to by the external evaluator(s)

The RFU will, taking note of the Working Group report, develop Terms of Reference to engage independent, external Evaluation Experts who will undertake the evaluation required for DLI 2. It is anticipated that the external Evaluators engaged for the 2021 mid-project DLI 2 evaluation of development impact will also conduct the end-of-project DLI 2 evaluation. The mid-project DLI 2 is anticipated to be done remotely – via desk evaluation of project documents and surveys, and of virtual interviews.

The Terms of Reference should be finalized by April 15, 2021, and the Evaluator(s) should be engaged by May 15, 2021.

The Evaluator selected by the RFU will publish the final rubric for the evaluation of DLI 2 by June 30 2021.

Annex 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE DLI 2 WORKING GROUP

MEASURE OF THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF EACH CENTRE THROUGH INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION.

Introduction

The Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) project is a regional higher education project with 11 participating countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The anticipated budget, with funding from the World Bank (WB) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD), is approximately \$350 million over five years. The project will support 43 Centers of Excellence, 5 Emerging Centers, and 4 Colleges of Engineering focused on postgraduate education, applied research and addressing development challenges.

ACE Impact is a Results-Based Financing project, under which Centres must achieve Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) to “earn” funds from an available funding envelop (USD 6 million over five years). As indicated in the project title, the initiative is committed to strengthening higher education training and applied research programs, with a focus on Development Impact of these activities. DLI 2 is designed to measure the Development Impact of each Center through independent, external evaluation. In addition to the Center -level DLI, according to the Project Appraisal Document, one of the Indicators for the Project Development Objective⁴ is the Number of ACEs that have had substantial development impact.

The ACE Impact Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU), Association of African Universities (AAU) is responsible for the verification of DLI 2, which entails an external evaluation of the Development Impact of each ACE Impact Center and Emerging Center by an External Evaluator (Colleges of Engineering supported under the ACE Impact project do not earn DLI 2). **For additional reference, see the guidance note on DLI 2.**

To ensure quality and transparency in DLI 2, the RFU, in collaboration with the WB, is constituting a Working Group to provide input into the detailed verification process and the rubrics that will be used for evaluating Development Impact by an External Evaluator.

Constitution of the Working Group

The complex nature of DLI 2 requires close interface among stakeholders to ensure quality and timely achievement of the indicator as per the project arrangement. The RFU and WB will constitute a working group which will include:

- At least one Center Leader from a Center supported under ACE I
- At least one Center Leader from a Center not supported under ACE I
- One Center Leader from an Emerging Centre
- 2 Representatives of the AAU
- 2 Representatives of the World Bank
- 1 Expert from the ACE Impact project
- One Evaluation Expert.

⁴ Page 62, ACE Impact 1 PAD

Roles, Responsibilities and Main Tasks

- Contribute to draft Terms of Reference for engaging an independent evaluator in line with the verification protocol for DLI 2 as stipulated in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) which will be finalized by the RFU.
- Provide an advisory role and guidance on the methodology for evaluating DLI 2 to be used by the independent external evaluator(s)
- Assist to disseminate outputs to the Centers to provide transparency on DLI 2
- Provide input to the Evaluator's work and answer any related questions.
- Identify potential risks and provide recommendations on implementation of the DLI 2 review.
- Provide brief regular reports to the RFU per an agreed schedule with the first one to be received by March 31st, 2021.

Meetings

The Working Group will meet as required via teleconference or in person. The Regional Facilitating Unit will provide secretarial support for the group. This will include any required administrative and technical functions. The RFU will also make available any additional documents that would be required by the Working Group to execute their tasks. These would include:

- Project Appraisal Document.
- Project Operations Manual; and
- List of Centers among others

Deliverables

1. Draft Terms of Reference for independent evaluator for the DLI 2 with concise evaluation methodology
2. Synthesis Report, including recommendations for Evaluation criteria which presents opportunity for feedback on DLI 2
3. Report on Deliverables to the ACE Stakeholders, including a Webinar and during upcoming Regional Workshop

Reporting

The Working Group will report in the first instance to the RFU, and to the World Bank and AFD. Reports will also be made available to the Project Steering Committee and Centers.

General Timelines for DLI 2 to guide the Operations of the Working Group

- Working Group First meeting by **1st March 2021**
- Draft Terms of Reference and Evaluation criteria should be finalized by **April 15, 2021**
- Evaluator(s) engaged by **May 15, 2021**.
- Final rubric for the evaluation of DLI 2 to be published by the selected evaluator(s) by **June 30, 2021**

Annex 3: Full List of DLI2 Criteria as proposed

General Comments

Sector: Refers to the broad array of stakeholders and positions that address a common field of study. Fields of study and their relevant sectors are unique to each Center

Jobs / internships: A broad category that represents any avenue during and after a student graduates from a Center where he/she contributes to their sector in a meaningful way. These would include positions in academia, public sector, private sector, or continuing education (PhD, post-doc, etc.).

Short Courses: Professional training courses offered by the Centers in response to sector demand. These are open to all students and professionals in the sector.

The Evaluation methods for these criteria are expected to account for the variation among all different Centers, and thus the evaluation for each of the ~50 Centers will not follow a “one size fits all” rubric. Rather, it is anticipated that there will exist variation in the criteria. Reasons that were brought up by the Working Group for why this variation is necessary are:

- Centers may contribute to Development Impact in different ways; thus, there should be some flexibility to how Centers are evaluated in their Development Impact based on the scope of their work. A suggestion was made to have stakeholders (including Centers coordination) identify which criteria would be most appropriate to evaluate their Development Impact out of an array of options.
- Some Centers are so advanced in research activities that there is no appropriate local market to match their research. Therefore, some Centers, by the nature of their fields and of their market, do not have strong communication with local/regional sectoral stakeholders while others do.

Survey design should reflect the variation in “jobs”, “sector”, and “dissemination”, which all have a broad scope. For surveys that assess information on these categories through written answers, potential examples could be provided as guidance, but the respondents should be allowed to employ their own definitions to elaborate their answers, so that Centers, students, and sector stakeholders can capture progress towards “development impact” in a manner more appropriate to them. Survey design should consider both relative scales and absolute scales.

The following criteria are a complete list of suggestions for measuring development impact. The list is not exhaustive and is only recommended for guidance. It is divided by development impact from (i) Center human capital and (ii) Center research. These categories may be changed or expanded upon by the external evaluator.

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

The following criteria have been discussed and put forward by the Working Group in relation to Center human capital:

#	Criteria	Additional Notes
1	Number of ACE student internships in sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to include academic related internships for more research focused Centers.
2	Number of ACE graduates placed in sector related jobs (targeted <i>for the first round which will cover renewals only</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See definitions of “sector” and “jobs”.
3	Impact of Center graduates in society and in the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to assess this with numbers, more qualitative measurement is needed that can come in the form of surveys and interviews. Identifying outstanding achievements may be considered.
4	Impact of Center studies on graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the Center graduate should be measured both in the short term and long term.
5	The quality and relevance of ACE skills that ACE graduates are bringing to internships/jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal is to survey a small sample of Center students and graduates, as well as employers and sector stakeholders
6	Examples of excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect examples of Center graduates who are outperforming in terms of relevance and quality of their Center skills in their jobs when compared to graduates from other higher education institutions.
7	Dissemination and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal is to understand how Center graduates are communicating and collaborating with others (including other graduates and sector stakeholders) in their sector, both in terms of information sharing and collaboration opportunities. • Refers to the transfer of human capital and “brain power”.
8	Relationship with ACE alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure how active Center and their alumni are in communication with each other and sharing feedback regarding the sector, or developing new projects together. This could be an additional tool to measure the influence and importance of the center.

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

The following criteria have been discussed and put forward by the Working Group in relation to ACE Research:

#	Criteria	Additional Notes
1	Number of short courses delivered in response to sectoral stakeholder requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This criterion highlights the feedback system and communication between the Center (targeted and the sector).
2	Impact of Center research on regional development of the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to assess this with numbers, more qualitative measurement is needed that can come in the form of surveys and interviews. Definition of this needs to be more nuanced and should include the impact that Center research and Center graduates have on policy within the sector.
3	Technology transfer (ex: startups and prototypes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to the number of startups and prototypes created by Center faculty, current cohort of students and graduates in the sector. Specific examples of prototypes are necessary, or else “prototypes” seems too broad Use rates of success and rates of failures, among others, as metrics to measure startups Identify and describe a small number of highly successful startups
4	KPIs referring to dissemination of activities, regional conferences, and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to clearly establish what the KPIs are and what to measure, and how to measure the Center’s ability to disseminate results.
5	Outreach and collaboration with society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Society” should be defined Suggestion to include social media as a method of evaluating outreach of research on society
6	Number of research grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the quality of the grants and the opportunities they allow the center to have
7	Dissemination of information within sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example: Outreach of short courses in terms of participation and involvement among other actors in the sector (the ability of sectoral stakeholders to become aware of these short courses, participate in them, benefit from them, and share the relevant skills and knowledge acquired)
8	Intellectual Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of patents, licenses, and technology use; IP competencies in the Center / Universities Collaborative projects with the private sector
9	Presence of the Center as a regional hub for ideas and excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with other centers, host institutions, and non-ACE institutions Examples of collaborative research exchange, either funded or unfunded Research coming in <i>and</i> out of the centers.

