

Data collection from schools and children

1. Prior experience of collecting data from education settings

Over the last five years the AlphaPlus team have securely delivered more than 30 major trials (and many smaller ones) with over 155,000 learners and more than 75 test administrators, and 15 residential marking operations with over 125,000 scripts marked by our skilled markers. As well as this, we have successfully run four non-statutory trials with more than 20,000 learners during the pandemic. We are on STA's frameworks for question writing and test trialling/pre-testing for KS1 and KS2 national assessments in England, and our team also support the recruitment of participants for training and evaluation projects. Our trialling experience includes:

- National trials for Welsh Government for the National Assessments (onscreen linear and adaptive trials for students aged 6-13, in reading and mathematics, in mediums of Welsh and English) of approximately 55,000 learners, plus paper-based pre-testing of around 6,000 learners
- On-paper trials for awarding organisations including OCR (around 1500 for OCR)
- International trials of national assessments (e.g. writing, delivering and marking tests in moral education for 5000 learners in UAE)
- Publisher trials (e.g. 50,000 learners for GL Assessment)

In answer to the question "The maximum number of settings you have collected data from and the time frame":

- Welsh Government National Testing:
 - Sept-Nov 2017, Procedural Numeracy, 325 schools, c 20,000 learners over 7 weeks
 - May-June 2018, Procedural Numeracy, 60 schools, 5800 learners over 4 weeks
- Abu Dhabi Moral Education Programme:
 - Feb-Mar 2018, 49 schools, 5,000 learners over 4 weeks

In addition to all of the above, AlphaPlus has recently started working with the Scottish Government to deliver Scotland's two existing national standardised assessment systems – the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) and their Gaelic Medium counterpart, Measaidhean Coitcheann Nàiseanta airson foghlam tron Ghàidhlig (MCNG). This will involve supporting schools across Scotland with our helpdesk team.

AlphaPlus routinely collaborates with partners, including evaluators and delivery teams.

2. Prior experience collecting data as part of an impact evaluation

We have expertise and experience in evaluating the impact of policy and its implementation, for example, the impact of changes to the curriculum and its assessment on teaching and learning. Our team bring subject and sector experience and expertise as well as an in-depth understanding of educational research methodology.

We offer expertise in the use of a range of evaluation strategies, including case studies, surveys, meta-analysis of secondary data and literature reviews. We have experience in using interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and observations for the collection of data.

Example projects include:

- **Evaluation of the Stimulating Physics Network (SPN):** A two-year evaluation of the impact of SPN using baseline and follow-up questionnaires, case-study school visits, 150 telephone interviews, and statistical analysis of GCSE physics qualification outcomes and data from the national pupil database.
- **Evaluation of the Capital Physics programme:** A one-year evaluation of the outcomes of the Capital Physics programme.
- **Evaluation of future bar training programme and qualifications** for the Bar Standards Board.
- **Scientist Training Programme Improvement Review** for Health Education England.
- **Research Schools Evaluation:** A survey of schools within the Research Schools' Networks for The University of Nottingham (commissioned in turn by the EEF).
- **Longitudinal Skills Study:** Appointed by BIS as part of a consortium to deliver a major research project into acquisition and retention of adult basic skills.
- **A Level and GCSE Evaluation:** This was a large, 4 year evaluation to investigate the impact of the changes to A levels and GCSEs as part of the wider 11-19 reforms.

3. The size and expertise of your field force

AlphaPlus' delivery projects are run from our main Manchester office. We have a core team of six staff who manage delivery and marking of school assessments and trials. They are supported by a team of 4 statisticians, and a similar number of support staff. These numbers do not include senior managers or directors.

However in addition to full-time staff, AlphaPlus maintains an associate pool of over 500 experienced educational professionals. Our business model depends on leveraging our associate pool to provide an experienced team tailored to the needs to a particular project. All our test administrators (invigilators) and markers are drawn from the associate pool. We are able to assemble large teams of experienced professionals in very short order, as evidenced by our track record in Welsh national testing and other projects.

Once a prospective test administrator (TA) contacts us, we follow a strict recruitment process. Prospective TAs are sent an "Information and application" pack which contains:

1. Information about AlphaPlus
2. Information about the project/framework (including elements of the administration guide which are available at this point and deemed non-confidential – in order to give potential applicants an idea of what is required)
3. Advert & job role requirements (e.g. linguistic, geographical, educational background, technological expertise) and estimated number of TAs required for project
4. Explanation of the application process
5. The date and location of the mandatory training event(s)
6. Associate contract

And the following requirements for the TA to complete:

1. Equalities Monitoring Form

2. Structured letter of application
3. CV
4. Consent form (DP, etc.)
5. Declaration of Interest Form

Applicants are interviewed by the recruitment manager or a Director, and an initial yes/no progress decision made. Following a check of satisfactory completion, we initiate DBS checks and file contract paperwork. All test administrators must undergo training at the beginning of each new project.

4. Details of any systems or processes that you have in place to communicate effectively with schools

We communicate by email, phone and post. Recruiters use their own names, email addresses and telephone numbers, but are clear that anyone in the team can help a school if they contact us with a query. All outbound communication by phone or email is initiated by and logged in the CRM system (see below). Inbound communication is also logged in the CRM.

We operate a customised instance of Microsoft Dynamics CRM to manage all aspects of school recruitment and communication. Features include:

- Import of school (called “centres” in the CRM) details from the GIAS service (Edubase replacement).
- Configuration of trials and trial strands for each project.
- Enrolment of centres onto trial strands.
- Defining cohorts (e.g. classes) for centres and allocation of cohorts against assessments.
- Optionally, allocation of candidates into a cohort.

All communications (email and telephone) with centres (schools) are logged directly into the CRM, providing an audit trail associated with each school. Use of the CRM reduces manual tracking of schools and school communications.

5. Details of any innovations or strategies refined by your organisation that would support collection of high-quality data

Achieving good response rates is primarily about having well-trained, supportive staff and well-established processes. Our staff have delivered 30 major trials in the last five years. We have detailed processes for communicating with schools.

6. Key members of staff who would lead the management of assessment projects

Name	Pen Portrait
Gavin Busuttill-Reynaud	Gavin is an educational assessment specialist with a successful track record working in the UK and on international development and consultancy projects. Gavin joined AlphaPlus Consultancy as a Director in 2006, bringing to the team experience, gained as engineering process manager, in

	<p>extracting business value from major IT investments through process redesign, system integration, innovation and training. Gavin has experience in using continuous process improvement techniques applied in a range of demanding quality assurance arenas ranging from high stakes assessments to secure satellite communications. Gavin has worked on projects for a wide range of UK and overseas public and private organisations, including Ofqual, UK Department of Education, UK Department of Business Industry and Science, Welsh Assembly Government, Singapore Ministry of Education, Government of Anguilla, City & Guilds, SQA, NCFE, VTCT, Takamol (Saudi Arabia) and Saudi Skills Standards (SSS).</p> <p>Gavin is Board Member and Executive Committee Member of the eAssessment Association (www.e-assessment.com) and has presented his work at e-assessment conferences including; The eAssessment Question, eAssessment in Practice and the eVocational conference.</p>
Andrew Boyle	<p>Andrew Boyle is AlphaPlus' Director of quantitative research. In addition, Andrew is an accomplished assessment researcher, a Fellow of the European assessment association and AEA-Europe, and a member of the English exams' regulator Ofqual's Vocational Advisory Group.</p> <p>Andrew has worked for many organisations in UK education including the exams regulator Ofqual and its predecessor QCA. He has also worked for several major UK awarding organisations, including Cambridge Assessment and City & Guilds. In such roles, Andrew has successfully delivered many contract research projects, including several on major national initiatives. As well as writing clear reports, Andrew is also used to discussing research and evaluation findings with senior policy makers, including Chairs and CEOs of national bodies.</p> <p>Andrew's research interests include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-assessment • regulation and its impact upon assessment • international comparative research • vocational qualifications
Dave Mellor	<p>David Mellor is AlphaPlus' Director of Assessment. Prior to joining AlphaPlus David was Director of Assessment and Curriculum at AQA and was responsible for leading their large Assessment and Curriculum team. AQA is the UK's largest awarding organisation for schools. His main interest is in understanding the different assessment requirements needed for different subjects in order to develop valid assessments that support good teaching and learning and that can be reliably delivered.</p> <p>David has worked in education since leaving university, first as a teacher and then for a charity and since 2000 for the largest provider of general qualifications in the UK. He held a variety of roles within AQA which have mostly focused on implementing improvements to systems, processes, structures and assessment products.</p> <p>In his latest project at AlphaPlus he has been working on designing and developing year 9 international assessments for a major publisher focusing</p>

	<p>on how these are designed to give maximum information to schools and students about their performance and hence identify areas of improvement for teaching and learning.</p>
Tom Mitchell	<p>Tom has worked in education and educational consultancy for the last 20 years, initially as a University Lecturer and research team leader at Brunel University, and latterly with AlphaPlus. In addition Tom ran a small e-assessment technology company for 10 years, developing and deploying innovative e-assessment products and strategies for customers in the private and public sectors.</p> <p>Tom marries strong technical skills with a practical understanding of educational and policy issues, and has led or contributed to a number of qualification, test and item development projects for AlphaPlus. These include leading on the development of new national standards in basic digital skills in England, leading on the design and content for an initial assessment for digital skills, leading the development of OSCEs for the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC), leading on the development and initial roll-out of new paper-based and onscreen assessments in the UAE schools sector, leading on the development of English reading and writing items for the new National Reference Tests, leading on the development of the literacy psychometric item and test development on the Quantitative Programme of Research for Adult English and Maths for BIS, and leading mathematics and English functional skills development for a range of clients. In addition Tom has led on AlphaPlus work on assessment reliability and validity for Ofqual, leading four Ofqual funded projects since 2010.</p>
Andy Lewis	<p>Andy is a skilled field research manager and business professional, with over 15 years' experience in education in the UK and abroad. His key skills are organisational, communicative, logistical, financial, marketing, staff recruitment and training, linguistic, teambuilding, welfare, people management, and statutory regulation.</p> <p>Andy is an adaptable, determined and confident individual who embraces new challenges and thrives in a results-driven environment. He is currently managing large-scale trials on the Wales National Tests projects, which are crucial to the development of online adaptive assessments for Key Stages 1 to 3. He is also leading a team to deliver a range of field research projects in the UK and abroad, including T Level Professional Development (for the Education and Training Foundation) and large-scale standardisation trials of new materials for GL Assessment. Andy also played a key role in the development and piloting of a new Moral Education Standardised Assessment in the UAE.</p>
Gerallt Hughes	<p>As Trials Coordinator, Gerallt's role is to coordinate, oversee and manage all activities relating to the administration of trials and pre-tests in schools and other educational settings, as well as to establish and maintain relationships with stakeholders. He joined AlphaPlus in January 2018, having previously</p>

	<p>worked in a variety of project management and programming roles within the cultural sector. To date Gerallt has been responsible in recruiting and coordinating with schools for Welsh Government's new National Literacy and Numeracy Program. He was also involved in the successful completion of phase 1 (2019) and phase 2 (2020) of Qualifications Wales NEA project, who commissioned 85 bilingual focus groups nationally - evaluating what learners think of the non-examination component of their GCSEs.</p>
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If you would like to discuss a project, please contact:

- Fiona Myles-Hook (fiona.myles-hook@alphaplus.co.uk); and
- Andrew Boyle (andrew.boyle@alphaplus.co.uk).

7. Any additional data collection or processing services your organisation might be able to provide

AlphaPlus provide all educational services related to assessment, including development of standards; development of qualifications; development of assessment specifications; writing all forms of assessments; delivering all forms of assessment; marking/coding/grading all forms of assessment; statistical analysis of assessment data (including psychometrics). In addition we provide related research and evaluation services (see Section 2 above). Furthermore we have extensive experience of managing and delivering and supporting on-screen tests.

8. Whether your organisation has any in-house tests or assessment instruments

AlphaPlus do not publish our own tests, rather we develop assessments for clients.

9. Information on your cost model

While we appreciate EEF's desire for unit costs, unfortunately the costs of a project depend upon a number of variables not covered by the examples given in the ITT. For example: geographic spread of schools/nurseries (this is a key parameter as it affects whether or not a TA can attend more than one school in a day, which has a big impact on costs); the training requirements (face-to-face training is preferred but expensive, and the extent of training required depends upon the nature of the assessment and the size and composition of the team); the length of the test window and whether schools are completely free to choose when to deliver the test or can be required to pick slots from a timetable; whether printing is part of the requirement (and if so is distribution and test paper design also required); whether licensing costs for an online testing platform are part of the requirement. Any commission to collect data would need to begin with a clear statement of requirements by the would-be purchaser so that we (and other potential suppliers) could provide a fixed price cost for data collection. We are happy to discuss the requirements informally and the help the purchaser come up with a statement of requirements.

AlphaPlus Consultancy is not an eligible body for VAT purposes in relation to the HMRC guidance on the VAT treatment of examination services. Our default pricing is provided on the basis of a standard rated VAT supply, charged on an ex VAT basis. i.e. any organisation trading on a

standard rated VAT basis will be charged the ex VAT price, plus VAT at the prevailing rate, with the 'input VAT' being reclaimed by the customer against the output VAT charge (where possible). At the point of tendering and contracting AlphaPlus are happy to discuss the legal basis for the supply of services which may mean that supply will fall outside the scope of VAT and hence be charged without VAT. In these circumstances AlphaPlus will be unable to recover any input VAT costs and the charge for supply of services may be higher than the ex VAT figures quoted. For VAT exempt pricing to apply, the supply must meet one of the two following scenarios:

1. Supply of services is funded by a registered charity making a direct charitable grant to AlphaPlus (e.g. direct grant by EEF to AlphaPlus Consultancy)
2. Supply of services is to an Eligible Body (as defined by HMRC in relation to Education services) and falls within the HMRC definition of examination services

In the case of the second scenario the prime contractor must provide written confirmation to AlphaPlus Consultancy of their Eligible Body status and that the scope of supply falls within the definition of examination services. Furthermore, the prime contractor must indemnify AlphaPlus Consultancy against any successful challenge by HMRC against the services being defined as examination services.

10. Brief details of data protection safeguards

All staff and test administrators sign up to the AlphaPlus data security policy and the AlphaPlus safeguarding policy. These provide detailed requirements which follow industry best practice.

11. Referees

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