

Framework for Estimating National Costs PIRLS 2026

October 2022

This framework for estimating national costs has been developed to describe the types of tasks, infrastructure and staff needed within countries in order to run the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2026. The total national costs for running PIRLS will depend on individual country circumstances and cost structures.

As the PIRLS 2026 assessment will be fully digital, countries will need to ensure that their devices for administering the assessment are compatible with the PIRLS 2026 Player (IEA *StudyExpert*).

PIRLS 2026 will have a field test in March–April 2025 with the main data collection planned for March–June 2026 (Northern Hemisphere) and September–December 2026 (Southern Hemisphere).

The major budget requirements needed to implement the PIRLS assessment in each country are described below. For additional information on the required roles and expertise, as well as the necessary tasks to take place in each participating country, please refer to the job description of the National Research Coordinator and tasks of the National Study Center for IEA PIRLS 2026.

National Study Center

A PIRLS National Study Center (NSC) is established in each participating education system. The PIRLS NSC is organized and led by the National Research Coordinator (NRC) and usually is staffed with one or two full time employees plus some part time staff to assist them at particular times during the project life-cycle (e.g., content and curriculum expert, sampling coordinator, data manager, and office staff).

Additional temporary employees will also be necessary. These short-term tasks and positions include:

- translating and reviewing the assessment instruments and manuals;
- ensuring that each participating student is provided with a PIRLS compatible device (school computers tested for PIRLS compatibility or external computers tested and prepared);
- preparing the assessment instruments (install/copy software, label materials, and—if any—print paper materials, etc.) and providing these to the participating schools;
- school coordinators/test administrators;
- national quality control monitor(s);
- scorers for the constructed-response items;
- data entry and/or scanning personnel for any paper-pencil administered context questionnaires, if applicable;
- encouraging school participation (to ensure participation rate requirements for reporting are met) and clerical assistance.

Please consider that staff who work directly with the International Study Center and IEA require a high level of proficiency in written and spoken English.

Equipment

PIRLS 2026 assessments instruments (achievement test and context questionnaires) will be developed, translated, and administered via the *IEA StudyExpert* software.

The *IEA StudyExpert* software for preparing national versions of the achievement test and context questionnaires works with Windows 10 or higher and requires an internet connection.

The assessments will be delivered to students via PIRLS Players. The planned delivery methods are online administration and individual PCs/USBs. Each device should have a power supply (to ensure sufficient charging), keyboard, and mouse. The minimum device requirements for the PIRLS 2026 Player will be confirmed at a later stage.

For online administration:

Each device needs to be connected to the internet. The PIRLS Player will be cross browser compatible for any OS that can run Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, or Google Chrome.

For individual PC/USB administration:

No network or internet connection is required for the assessment administration, as everything is contained on USB sticks. It is crucial to use quality USB sticks. Specifications regarding the minimum OS and storage capacity will be confirmed at a later stage.

Data upload will require internet connection and can be done from a single computer connected to the internet.

If you plan to administer any of the context questionnaires for schools, teachers, and parents on paper, they will be developed using the latest InDesign layout program available via Adobe Creative Cloud. To administer context questionnaires on paper, participants will need to have an Adobe Creative Cloud account to access the InDesign software.

Systems provided by IEA (*IEA StudyExpert*; within-school sampling software; system for online school, teacher, and home questionnaire administration; online scoring system; data management software) are designed to work on PCs.

The NSC should have Microsoft® Office® 2016 or above and Adobe Acrobat Reader available. Communication with the international centers will be via email and materials will be exchanged by uploading/downloading to/from the IEA's and the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center's secure servers, for this, an internet connection is required.

Traveling

Over the course of the assessment cycle, there will be nine national research coordinator (NRC) meetings to attend. Some of the NRC meetings are planned to be in-person and the others are planned to be virtual. Each in-person meeting will be held in a different participating country and will last for approximately one working week (5 days). Additionally, there will be two data management training seminars held by IEA, in Hamburg, Germany, lasting three to four days. IEA will provide training in the use of IEA software developed especially for the current PIRLS cycle. The data management training seminars should be attended by the data manager and/or the NRC.

Some domestic traveling within the country also needs to be budgeted for. This includes training school coordinators/test administrators, monitoring schools during the field test and the main data collection (National Quality Assurance Program), and coordinating the work with any outsourced agency or agencies, etc.

Sampling

Depending on the structure of educational/governmental systems within each country, costs may occur during the sampling frame preparation.

Assessment Instrument Preparation

For the field test and main data collection, the major undertaking is translating and/or adapting the assessment instruments and manuals into the language(s) of instruction in each country. First, the instruments and manuals will need to be translated/adapted for field testing the newly developed items and then updated for the main data collection.

For the main data collection, trend countries will also need to transfer/review the existing translations of the PIRLS 2021 trend texts and directions into the online translation system for PIRLS 2026. New countries will need to translate/adapt the trend texts.

The translated and/or adapted student assessment and questionnaire will then be transferred from the online translation system into the PIRLS 2026 Player, to be administered to students, first for the field test and then again for the main data collection. The NSC is responsible for testing the PIRLS Player. If the individual PCs/USBs method is planned, a USB stick with the PIRLS 2026 Player needs to be installed for each participating student.

Any context questionnaires administered via paper and paper manuals will need to be printed.

All materials will need to be labeled, packed, and distributed to the participating schools.

The following information are estimates on the scope of translating/adapting the assessment instruments and manuals. The numbers of any context questionnaires and manuals for printing will need to be adjusted based on the actual sample size in the country.

For the field test, NSCs will need to prepare national versions of:

- Eight texts with items (equivalent to approximately 15 pages each)
- Four context questionnaires (equivalent to 20 pages each)
- *School Coordinator Manual* (25 pages)
- *Test Administrator Manual* (25 pages)
- Preparing Computers/Tablets for PIRLS instructions (20 pages)
- *National Quality Control Monitor Manual* (15 pages)

If you will not be administering the context questionnaires online, based on a sample size of 25 schools and 800–1200 students, you will need to print at least:

- 25 copies of the teacher questionnaire
- 25 copies of the school questionnaire
- 800–1200 copies of the home questionnaire plus 3 extra copies per class
- 1 *School Coordinator Manual* and *Test Administrator Manual* per participating school

For the main data collection, NSCs will need to prepare national versions of:

- Eighteen texts with items (equivalent to approximately 15 pages each)
- Four context questionnaires
- *School Coordinator Manual*
- *Test Administrator Manual*
- Preparing Computers/Tablets for PIRLS instructions
- *National Quality Control Monitor Manual*

If you will not be administering the context questionnaires online, with the minimum sample size of 150 schools and 4,500 to 5,000 students, NSCs will need to print:

- At least 150 copies of the teacher questionnaire (unless administered online)
- At least 150 copies of the school questionnaire (unless administered online)
- Between 4,500–5,000 copies of the home questionnaire (unless administered online)
- At least one *School Coordinator Manual* and *Test Administrator Manual* for each participating school.

Shipping/Mailing Costs

The USB format assessment instruments need to be shipped to the participating schools and back to the NSC. A safe and efficient shipping method should be selected for the materials to remain secure at all times. Additional mailing might be necessary between the NSC and the schools, such as communication on the test administration dates or providing any missing or damaged assessment

instruments. **NOTE:** There are two rounds of shipping the assessment instruments to and from the participating schools—first for the field test and then for the main data collection.

Scoring

Student responses to the constructed-response items will need to be scored in each participating country. In addition to the actual scoring, NSCs will need to budget for training the scorers and supervising the scoring process.

The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center will provide international scoring training and scoring guides for the field test and again for the main data collection. Attending the international scoring training is mandatory. Scoring guides may either be used in English or translated.

The following are estimates on the scope of scoring.

For the field test, based on the minimum sample size of 800 students, each country needs to score about 18,000 student responses. It is estimated that this requires about 22 working days for one person.

For the data collection, based on the minimum sample size of 4,500 students, each country needs to score about 83,000 student responses. Trend reliability scoring and cross-country reliability scoring adds about 10,000 student responses to score. It is estimated that the whole scoring process requires about 112 working days for one person.

Data Entry

The PIRLS 2026 assessment and context questionnaires data will be directly uploaded, so no manual data entry will be required for this. However, data from any paper context questionnaires must be entered into data files using the IEA's proprietary software. In addition to the actual data entry (punching), the punchers need to be trained.

The following are estimates on the scope of data entry for the context questionnaires administered on paper.

For the field test, with the minimum sample size of 25 schools and 800 students, the data will need to be entered from a minimum of:

- 25 teacher questionnaires (approx. 35 questions each)
- 25 school questionnaires (approx. 25 questions each)
- 800 home questionnaires (approx. 25 questions each)

For the data collection, with the minimum sample size of 150 schools and 4,500 students the data will need to be entered from a minimum of:

- 150 teacher questionnaires (approx. 35 questions each)
- 150 school questionnaires (approx. 25 questions each)
- 4500 home questionnaires (approx. 25 questions each)

Scanning

If a country chooses to scan the paper instruments to capture data instead of the described manual data entry, the budget needs to be adjusted based on the scanning technology and staff available. All data, however, need to be submitted to IEA Hamburg in the required format.

Reporting

Each country needs to plan for producing a national report at the end of the assessment cycle. This includes the costs of preparation and publishing the report, a press conference for its release and/or any other form of the PIRLS results dissemination.