

Job description of the National Research Coordinator and tasks of the National Study Center for IEA PIRLS 2026

The National Research Coordinator (NRC) plays a major role in IEA's PIRLS projects and is a country's main contact person for all aspects of the study. The NRC's main responsibility is the implementation of the study in the country, including the coordination of all tasks (see tasks listed below). The NRC is required to have an excellent command of English (IEA's working language).

More specifically, the NRC is responsible for:

- organizing the National Study Center (NSC) to perform the required PIRLS tasks;
- employing and/or supervising staff, including assigning/distributing required roles (listed below);
- ensuring availability of required hardware and software and other necessary equipment and materials;
- communicating with the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, IEA Amsterdam, IEA Hamburg, and RTI International;
- participating in the international NRC meetings (conducted in English);
- contributing to the PIRLS 2026 Encyclopedia by providing a country chapter;
- contributing to the PIRLS 2026 International Report by participating in the review process and making sure the country's data are accurate; and
- preparing and disseminating a national report for PIRLS in synchronization with the release of the PIRLS 2026 International Report.

In addition to the NRC, further staff is required in each country to successfully conduct the study.

Required Roles and Expertise

- **Content and Curriculum Experts**
The content and curriculum experts are responsible for reviewing the updated PIRLS 2026 reading assessment framework from the national perspective, as well as participating in assessment development, reviewing items/scoring guides, and training for reliable scoring of constructed response items. It is desirable that the *Context Questionnaire Framework* and the questionnaires be reviewed by individuals familiar with educational policies and practices in the country.
- **Sampling Coordinator**
The sampling coordinator works with the PIRLS sampling experts to adapt the international sampling design to national conditions. They are responsible for conveying specific national analysis priorities (e.g., analysis of particular population subgroups) that may affect the sampling design to the IEA/RTI sampling experts.
- **Data Manager**
The data manager manages all data related issues, organizing and implementing within-school sampling procedures, overseeing data entry/data submission, and verifying the quality of all data products. They also are responsible for or assist with preparing the software to be distributed for the electronically administered assessments.
- **Office Staff**

Further officer staff may be needed for general office administration, which may include tasks such as contacting schools, making travel arrangements, etc.

The above mentioned roles can be performed by one or several individuals depending on the resources available to the national center.

Additionally, each NSC will need to coordinate the following roles:

- **Translators/Translation Reviewers**
Translators and translation reviewers are responsible for adapting and/or translating the assessment instruments (achievement test and context questionnaires) into the national language(s) and for reviewing the translations internally. The NSC may also involve the translators and translation reviewers in the finalization of instruments following international translation verification. Translation, documentation, and both internal and external verifications are conducted using the IEA *StudyExpert*.
- **School Coordinators**
Each school participating in PIRLS nominates a school coordinator who provides information about classes, teachers, and students in the school and organizes and supervises the assessment administration. School coordinators organize checking and preparing devices to be used, launching the software on the compatible devices, and uploading the data to the study server, unless external computers/tablets are used or the process is otherwise organized by the NSC. The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center provides an international version of the *School Coordinator Manual*, which the NRC translates and/or adapts to create a national version for use in the participating schools. It is the NRC's responsibility to train school coordinators to effectively perform their tasks.
- **Test Administrators**
Participating schools are also required to have individuals that administer the assessment in the selected classes. In some situations, the school coordinator may also perform this task. The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center provides an international version of the *Test Administrator Manual*, which can be adapted and /or translated for use in the participating schools. Test administrator assistants can also be appointed to support during the test administration.
- **IT Support**
A help desk should be setup or IT support personnel made available to provided assistance to school coordinators and test administrators if experiencing any issues while preparing for and during the test administration.
- **National Quality Control Monitor**
The national quality control monitor observes and reports on actual testing sessions in 10% of selected schools. IEA Amsterdam provides international versions of the *National Quality Control Manual* and the *Classroom Observation Record*, which can be adapted and /or translated for implementing the national quality assurance program.
- **Scorers**
The scorers apply PIRLS scoring guides to determine whether student answers to the constructed-response items are correct. An online scoring system will be used for scoring PIRLS, as well as for the trend and cross-country reliability scoring.
- **Data Entry and/or Scanning Staff**
If any paper-based context questionnaires are used, it will be necessary to have individuals that enter the data into data files and/or scan the instruments and compile the data into data files.

National Study Tasks

There are **two** rounds of instrument development, achievement test and context questionnaire administration, and analysis activities for the PIRLS assessment. First, instruments are developed and field-tested using the planned procedures for the data collection. After the field test is conducted, responses are scored, and the results analyzed, the final instruments are selected for the data collection. After the data collection is conducted, the responses are again scored, the data is analyzed and reviewed, and the results are reported.

Stage 1: Preparing school sample (school sample usually is selected at the same time for the field test and for the data collection), contacting schools, and sampling classes for the field test and then for the data collection

- Specifying the school sampling design with the help of study sampling experts
- Providing the school sampling frame including all sampling-related information
- Contacting the sampled schools to obtain cooperation
- Identifying and training school coordinators for each sampled school
- Requesting information about classes and their teachers from the sampled schools
- Sampling one or more classes per school (using IEA's proprietary software)
- Listing the students and their teachers in the sampled classes
- Printing tracking forms and/or labels
- Assigning instruments to students, teachers, and school principals

Stage 2: Preparing the field test instruments and then the data collection instruments

- Contributing to assessment item writing (e.g., during NRC meetings) and to reviewing assessment items and context questionnaires
- Translating, reviewing, and producing national instruments, including applying national adaptations and documenting them
- Submitting the translated national instruments (achievement items and context questionnaires) to IEA Amsterdam for international translation verification
- Submitting the national instruments to the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center for adaptations verification and national instrument localization
- Testing and finalizing/approving the assessment player(s) and online system version of context questionnaires
- Printing any paper-based national context questionnaires

Stage 3: Administering the field test and then the data collection

At the National Study Center:

- Preparing and sending field test materials and later data collection materials to the participating schools
- Nominating an international quality control monitor for the data collection, if required by IEA
- Carrying out the *National Quality Assurance Program* for the field test and then again for the data collection
- Responding to the *Survey Activities Questionnaire* after the data collection
- Responding to the *Curriculum Questionnaire*

At the participating schools:

- Preparing devices for the field test and then again for the data collection. This includes testing the compatibility of the devices to be used and launching the assessment administration software on the compatible devices. This step is either done at the schools, at the NSC, or at an external outsourced company. The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center provides an international version of the “Preparing Computers” instructions, which are then translated and/or adapted in order to create a national version of the instructions
- Administering the field test and then the data collection
- Calculating student response rates and holding make-up sessions
- Uploading the assessment data and returning the field test/data collection materials to the NSC

Stage 4: Scoring student responses to the constructed-response items (for the field test and then again for the data collection)

- Managing the online scoring system
- Training scorers
- Scoring the constructed-response items, including documenting the cross-country scoring reliability and the trend scoring reliability (trend countries only)
- NOTE: The cross-country reliability scoring is conducted in English. All scorers who can score student responses written in English should participate. It is advised that at least one scorer in each country has sufficient English language proficiency for this task

Stage 5: Creating the data files and reviewing the data (for the field test and data collection)

- Entering test administration information (using IEA’s proprietary software)
- Entering the data from any paper context questionnaires (using IEA’s proprietary software), if needed
- Tracking data submission from respondents using digital system(s)
- Verifying the data
- Submitting the required field test materials and then the data collection materials to the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, IEA Hamburg, and RTI International
- Reviewing the country’s field test data provided in the item and questionnaire almanacs for accuracy, reviewing the data collection data provided in the item and questionnaire almanacs for accuracy
- Reviewing the PIRLS 2026 International Report

Stage 6: Preparing national reports

- Conducting national analysis of the data
- Writing the national report
- Disseminating the national report (in synchronization with the release of the PIRLS 2026 International Report)