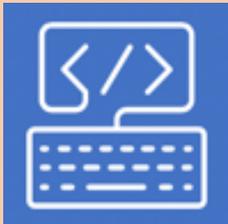
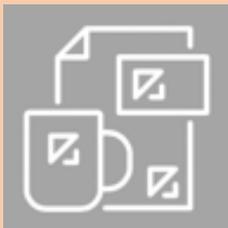


Supplement: December 2025 Update



ALIGNING LANGUAGE EDUCATION WITH THE CEFR: A HANDBOOK



Supplement to Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook

Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook has been prepared for those who are teaching, testing and developing materials in language education, as well as stakeholders concerned with education policy matters and decision-making. This December 2025 Supplement provides an update to the original *Handbook* which was published in April 2022.

The *Handbook* is available online from the following websites:

www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/cefr-handbook

<https://ealta.eu/resources/>

<https://ukalta.org/journal-articles-and-cefr-related-material/>

<https://www.alte.org/Materials>

The Handbook and its Supplement are published jointly by the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA), the UK Association for Language Testing and Assessment (UKALTA), the British Council, and the Association for Language Testers in Europe (ALTE).

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CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1. The place of ethics and social justice in the CEFR	6
2. Aligning learning and teaching with the CEFR: the need for an expanded perspective	7
3. Reflections on, and implications of, the implementation of a comprehensive learning system	10
3.1. Applying the Handbook Alignment approach – represented graphically	10
3.2. Defining key terms and concepts more fully	14
Curriculum	14
Delivery	14
Assessment	14
The Language Model	15
The Development Model	15
The Measurement Model	15
4. Educational technologies and AI	16
4.1. For learners	17
4.2. For teachers	17
4.3. For assessment providers	18
4.4. For policy makers	18
4.5. AI and alignment	18
4.6. For assessment providers	19
5. References	20
Appendix 1: Additional references on alignment	21
Appendix 2: Errata list for Chapter 5 (2020:47–64, English edition)	21
Appendix 3: Guidance for translators	22

List of figures

Figure 1: Steps in the alignment process for curricula	11
Figure 2: Steps in the alignment process for materials (delivery).....	12
Figure 3: Steps in the alignment process for assessment.....	13
Figure 4: An overview of the link between the CLS and the underlying integrated models.....	16

List of tables

Table 1: Approaches to standard setting.....	10
Table 2: AI in standard setting.....	19

Introduction

This Supplement to *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook* has been prepared by the Steering Group who published the original *Handbook* in April 2022. It aims to:

- clarify issues raised
- add suggestions from users of the *Handbook*
- draw on lessons learnt during the alignment process.

Feedback from users has been collected in the various presentations given by members of the Steering Group, as well as at the seminar hosted by CRELLA (University of Bedfordshire) in Luton in September 2023 and the conference hosted by Blanquerna (Universitat Ramon Llull) in Barcelona in October 2024. The Steering Group has also taken on board comments and suggestions provided by leaders of teacher training events, such as those organized by the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE) and the CEFR Alignment Summer School jointly organized by EALTA and Trinity College London.

Of these events, the Barcelona conference was the widest in scope. It attracted more than 120 participants from 24 countries across four continents. The programme comprised five plenary sessions, 35 presentations and eight posters. The presenters' PowerPoint slides are available at: https://ealta.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/CEFR_Handbook_programme_overview_final.pdf.

The following topics and issues were raised and discussed:

- the history of the CEFR, its evolution and legacy
- the emerging/evolving nature of the construct/s of language and communication
- the value of cross-disciplinary engagement
- the need for adaptation, customization, tailoring of the CEFR
- the critical importance of 'context' and how it shapes alignment processes and CEFR uses in Europe and beyond
- the importance of shared understanding, language and discourse
- the CEFR – and CEFR alignment – as an instrument of social justice
- the role that technology might play in the near future
- the need to encourage dissemination initiatives and collaboration.

The rich feedback collected so far confirms the usefulness of the *Handbook* as a guide for CEFR alignment projects, but it also points to the need for improvements in terms of its *content*, *format* and *accessibility*.

In terms of *content*, there seems to be some agreement that Chapter 1 should include a reflection on the CEFR and its role in changing social, linguistic and cultural topographies, and address the full implications of adopting a comprehensive learning system (CLS). At the same time, the *Handbook* has been seen to work best with those who are already familiar with the CEFR, which suggests that additional navigational advice on how to get from A to B, perhaps with a glossary with key terminology, would increase its user-friendliness. In addition to these issues, there is an urgent need to explore alternative alignment methods, modes and tools which incorporate online, digital, corpora or AI resources.

In terms of *format* and *accessibility*, it has been suggested that a web-based version of the *Handbook* should be published and that the addition of infographics and flowcharts would make it easier to use.

The Steering Group has set up a series of short, medium and long-term objectives for the future of the *Handbook*. One of the short-term objectives was to develop this Supplement. Another was to guest-edit a special issue of the *CEFR Journal* to cover the alignment of language education with the CEFR, to be published early 2026. These short-term initiatives will be accompanied by efforts to reach out to language teacher educators and language teachers via international networks.

A new Steering Group has been recruited to address medium and long-term objectives, such as further translations, a glossary and multimedia resources. The members of the new group represent the institutions behind the original 2022 *Handbook* and are: Armin Berger (EALTA), Nathaniel Owen (UKALTA), Graham Seed (ALTE), and Carolyn Westbrook (British Council), with Dave Allan (formerly Director of NILE) acting as an independent expert.

Neus Figueras (EALTA)

Lynda Taylor (UKALTA)

Nick Saville (ALTE)

Barry O’Sullivan (British Council)

David Little (Independent expert)

Members of the 2022 Steering Group

1. The place of ethics and social justice in the CEFR

Chapter 1 of the *Handbook for CEFR Alignment (2022)* introduces the background to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* and particularly the role of the Council of Europe in the genesis and development of the CEFR.

Informed by its human rights and legal standards, the Council of Europe's education programmes aim to enhance the democratic competences of citizens, promote respect for human dignity and diversity, and combat discrimination. This has direct implications for efforts to safeguard equity, diversity, inclusion and access (EDIA) for all members of society, but especially for those individuals and groups who are under-represented in education/ employment, or who are marginalized in some way due to factors such as ethnicity, faith/belief, gender, etc.

In keeping with the Council of Europe's concern for the rights and responsibilities of the individual citizen, together with its broader commitment to promoting EDIA in pursuit of social justice, the CEFR views the language user/learner as an autonomous social agent.

The concept of plurilingual and intercultural education which underpins the CEFR explicitly associates language teaching and learning with the Council's foundational values and political goals, especially social integration, respect for diversity, and intercultural dialogue. This touches upon ethical considerations and matters of social justice as they relate to the teaching, learning and assessment of languages across the European region, and more widely.

Successful teaching, learning and assessment of languages depends on the close alignment of elements that have traditionally been regarded as independent of one another: curriculum, teaching/learning materials, teaching approaches, teacher training, and assessment. If one of these elements is disconnected from the others, then the whole system is under threat and has the potential to impact negatively on individuals, groups, educational institutions, and wider society.

The *Handbook for CEFR Alignment* gives specific examples of how one or more elements may be disconnected, with potential negative implications for issues of equality and social justice. For example, if a new or revised curriculum is introduced but adequate training for teachers is not provided, then an important delivery element is being neglected, with potential negative impact on teaching and learning communities and putting at risk the successful introduction of the new/revised curriculum. If curriculum and assessment are disconnected from one another, or if the curriculum and teaching/learning materials are not well-aligned, this may also undermine the delivery element leading to negative washback and impact. Just one aspect of delivery, such as the physical teaching and learning environment, can risk reducing the effectiveness of what may be an otherwise well-aligned learning system.

Even if aspects of curriculum and assessment are broadly well-aligned, these examples illustrate the importance of attending carefully to multiple aspects of the delivery element. An added dimension for all three elements is the need to attend to EDIA considerations as they concern curriculum, delivery and assessment, e.g. through the implementation of reasonable adjustments for teaching/learning or accommodations for testing and assessment.

2. Aligning learning and teaching with the CEFR: the need for an expanded perspective

The *Handbook* adopts a comprehensive approach to alignment with the CEFR: it is concerned not only with tests and examinations but with all other components of language education programmes. It uses Barry O’Sullivan’s concept of the [Comprehensive Learning System](#) (2020) to justify this approach:

For education programmes to work well, they need to be treated like a connected system. There are three core elements to the system: curriculum, delivery and assessment. Therefore, the curriculum, how it's taught, and how learning is assessed should all follow the same clear approach and be based on a shared understanding of how people learn and progress. If these parts don't work together, the whole system can fall short.¹

The CEFR levels with their scaled descriptors provide a clearly defined model of language ability and progression and point us towards a measurement model, while the CEFR’s advocacy of a plurilingual approach to education, its view of language learning as language use, and its conception of the language user/learner as an autonomous social agent imply a philosophy of learning. The *Handbook* argues that effective alignment with the CEFR entails that the same set of scaled descriptors is used to: (i) specify the communicative learning outcomes of the curriculum; (ii) determine the content and structure of teaching/learning materials; and (iii) guide the development of assessment procedures. It says nothing in detail, however, about the philosophy of learning and (more especially) what that philosophy implies for classroom practice. This is a dimension of the *Handbook* that requires further reflection and elaboration – by no means a straightforward task, because the components of the philosophy of learning themselves require further reflection and elaboration. What follows is offered as a possible way of addressing the issue.

¹ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/comprehensive-learning-system>

The CEFR explains the concept of plurilingualism thus:

as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands ... he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. (1.3; Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4)²

According to this view, each new language takes root in the soil provided by the languages that are already present; and because languages “interrelate and interact”, the repertoire as a whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. The CEFR further explains that the nature of plurilingual development requires us to modify the aim of language education, which is:

no longer seen as simply to achieve “mastery” of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the “ideal native speaker” as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory in which all linguistic abilities have a place. (1.3; Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5)

The CEFR itself acknowledges that “[t]he full implications of such a paradigm shift have yet to be worked out” (ibid), and 25 years after its publication, plurilingual approaches remain works in progress. The concept of plurilingualism nevertheless carries two inescapable implications for language education policy and practice. First, language teaching must find ways of enabling learners to make explicit use of the languages they already know; and second, the home languages of minority-language learners must be allowed to play a central role in their educational experience.³

If the development of plurilingual repertoires entails that each new language grows in the soil provided by the languages already present, it follows that spontaneous and authentic language use has a central role to play. This coincides with the CEFR’s description of language learning as a variety of language use:

Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving **language processes** to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9; the words and phrases set in boldface, to which “contexts” in the second sentence should probably be added, refer to the principal components of the CEFR’s descriptive scheme.)

This description highlights learners’ individuality partly because the individual citizen is the subject of the Council of Europe’s foundational document, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and learners are seen as social agents because, for the Council of Europe, the purpose of language learning is to extend the range of the learner’s autonomous behaviour. This explains the Council’s commitment to the pursuit of autonomy in (language) education, which was first articulated in the adult education projects of the 1970s (Janne, 1977; Holec, 1979) and remains central to its current education policy (Council of Europe, 2023).

² The concept of plurilingualism is closely related to linguistic multi-competence (see, for example, Cook 1991, 1997), which took shape as the CEFR was being developed.

³ Inspired by the work reported by Little and Kirwan (2019), the Council of [Europe’s Romani–Plurilingual Policy Experimentation \(2022–2025\)](#) found that the inclusion of Romani language and culture in the education of Roma children had a transformative impact on their motivation, engagement and performance.

The agency of the individual language user/learner is captured, of course, in the CEFR's use of "can do" descriptors, which define autonomous behaviour at the successive levels of proficiency.

These considerations imply that alignment arguments should explain how the programme in question takes account of the CEFR's concept of plurilingualism, its view of language learning as a variety of language use, and its characterization of the language user/learner as an autonomous social agent.

The question then arises: *How might an alignment argument based on the CEFR's philosophy of learning be integrated with an argument based on levels, scales and descriptors?* One possible answer to this question is provided by the CEFR's division of language use into four modes – reception, production, interaction and mediation – which distinguishes clearly between non-reciprocal and reciprocal communication. Reception and production are non-reciprocal: listening and reading, spoken production (making an announcement, giving an address) and written production are all performed solo. The receptive and productive modes are traditionally the focus of written exams and tests. Consider the following descriptors:

B1 Reading – I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language

B1 Written production – I can produce straightforward connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.

It is not difficult to flesh out each element of these descriptors relative to the needs of a specific educational context so that they can be used simultaneously to describe a learning outcome, imply appropriate teaching materials and learning activities, and provide an assessment task.

The reciprocal modes of interaction and mediation are more challenging because they involve two or more persons, which means that they are unpredictable. Even when you have a shared communicative goal, you can never know with certainty what your interlocutor(s) will say next. Consider the following descriptors:

B1 Oral interaction – I can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken

B1 Mediating communication – I can support a shared communication culture by introducing people, exchanging information about priorities, and making simple requests for confirmation and/or clarification.

These descriptors may be adopted as curriculum goals and the skills they entail may be included in assessment. But the abilities they capture cannot be directly taught; students can only acquire them gradually by interacting and mediating in their target language. And this can happen only if every lesson is conducted in the target language and structured in ways that draw students into the contingency of the teaching/learning conversation as equal partners. Arguably the best way of developing students' autonomy as learners and users of the target language, such a teaching/learning dynamic implies a central role for collaborative project work and portfolio learning. Its essential features are captured in the scaled descriptors for mediation in the CEFR *Companion Volume*.⁴

⁴ The view of language learning and the language learner summarized in this text coincides with the [Motivation Manifesto](#) published by the European Centre for Modern Languages in September 2025, which proposes that "learners are empowered by their language learning if they belong to a welcoming and supportive learning community, are encouraged to share control of the learning process, and are simultaneously users and learners of their target language(s)."

3. Reflections on, and implications of, the implementation of a comprehensive learning system

While it is important to progress through all the stages in any alignment project, they will not look the same for curriculum, delivery and assessment. To illustrate this, see Figures 1, 2 and 3 below, each of which is designed to offer illustration of the process for each of the three elements.

3.1. Applying the Handbook Alignment approach – represented graphically

Before starting the alignment, systematically review the curriculum needs (whether new or existing) in terms of the educational needs and also in terms of the elements of the CEFR that are likely to apply to the curriculum. Once this review has been undertaken, the next task is to identify the resources required to undertake the alignment work. These resources will include both funding and personnel. Those involved should have extensive experience with the CEFR and/or the curriculum development context. The first stage is to undertake a formal **Familiarization** exercise. Here, the task is to ensure that all project team members are sufficiently familiar with **both** the CEFR and the curriculum development context.

The team then enters the **Specification** phase in which the element (curriculum, delivery or assessment) is systematically reviewed with regard to the scales and levels of the CEFR. No definitive decisions are expected at this stage, though a rough estimate of the alignment can be claimed at the conclusion of this stage. In the following **Standardization** stage, which will establish whether a clear understanding of the relevant CEFR levels is reflected in the new or existing resource, we return to the issue of familiarization but this time the focus is more targeted (i.e., focusing on the scales and descriptors identified in the previous stage).

The **Standard setting** stage will determine valid decision judgements or cut scores. It is at this point that the different elements require somewhat different approaches to alignment.

Table 1: Approaches to standard setting

Standard setting		
Curriculum	Delivery (textbooks etc.)	Assessment
	Expert panel reviews the activities proposed in the curriculum/ materials to provide evidence that these will result in language output/practice that is likely to be at the appropriate level and content.	The expert panel makes judgements on cut-scores and boundaries using established procedures.

Note that the completion of the standard setting section of the forms for both curriculum and delivery claims will differ significantly from the highly technical evidence expected for any assessment.

Finally, the team focuses on the **Validation** of the alignment claims. This is done by systematically completing the forms provided in the *Handbook's* additional volume.

When all of this has been done, the team should turn its attention to the dissemination of the findings to appropriate stakeholders. The relevance of this will depend on the context and on the element, with some stakeholder groups in some contexts requiring significant technical evidence (e.g., government regulatory bodies), while others require less (e.g., school teachers require a lower level of evidence to select appropriate textbooks).

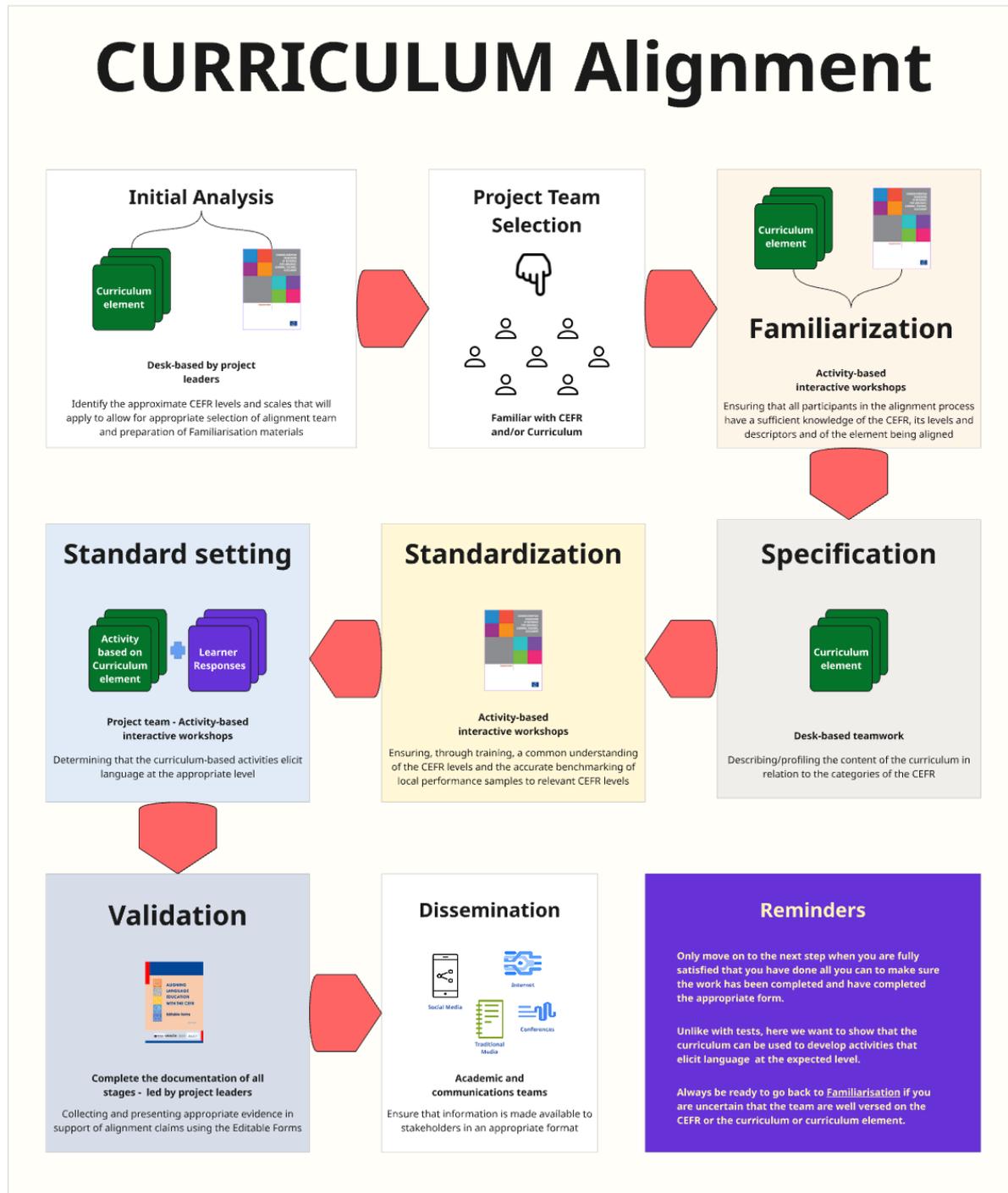


Figure 1: Steps in the alignment process for curricula

MATERIALS Alignment

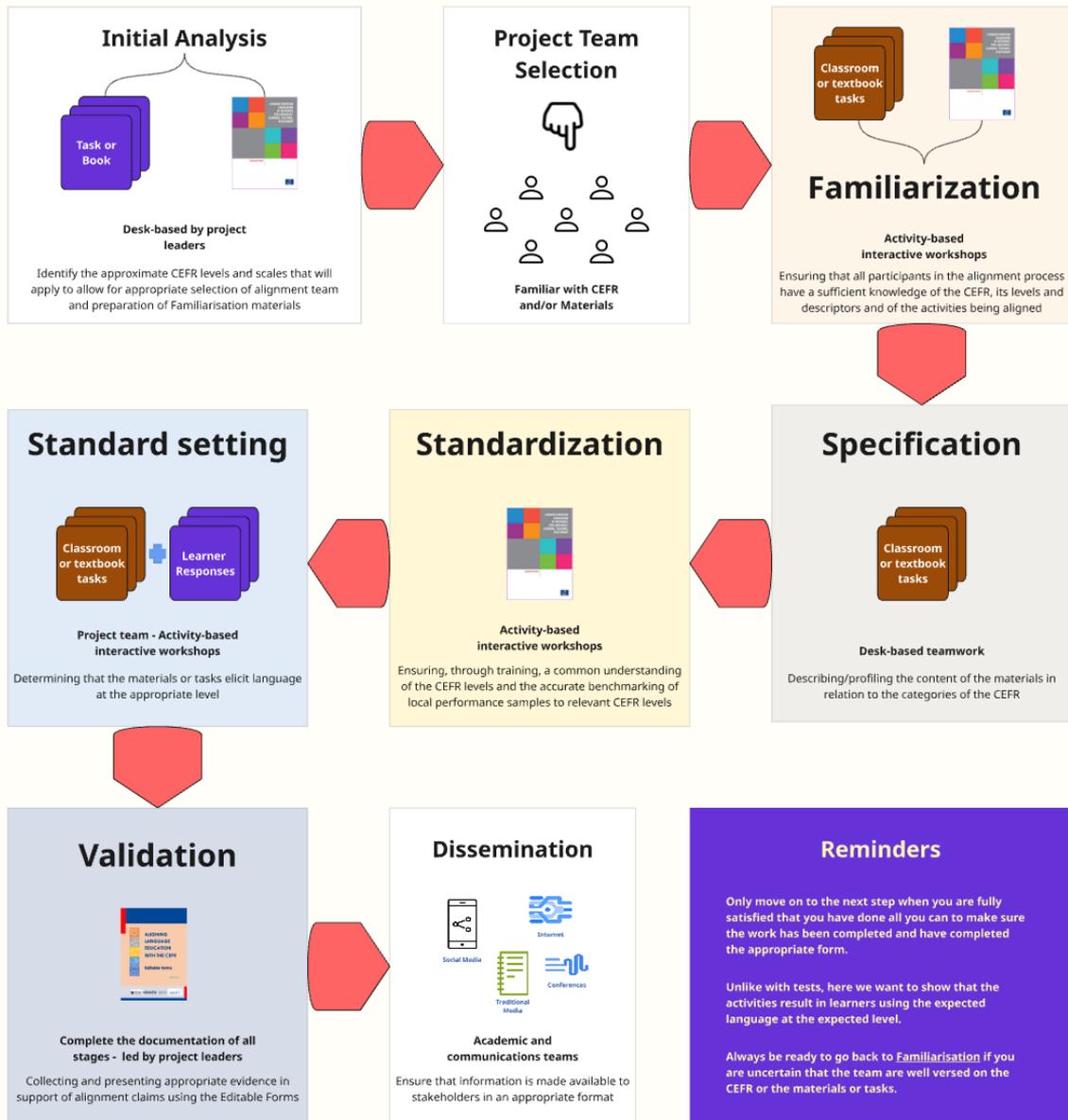


Figure 2: Steps in the alignment process for materials (delivery)

ASSESSMENT Alignment

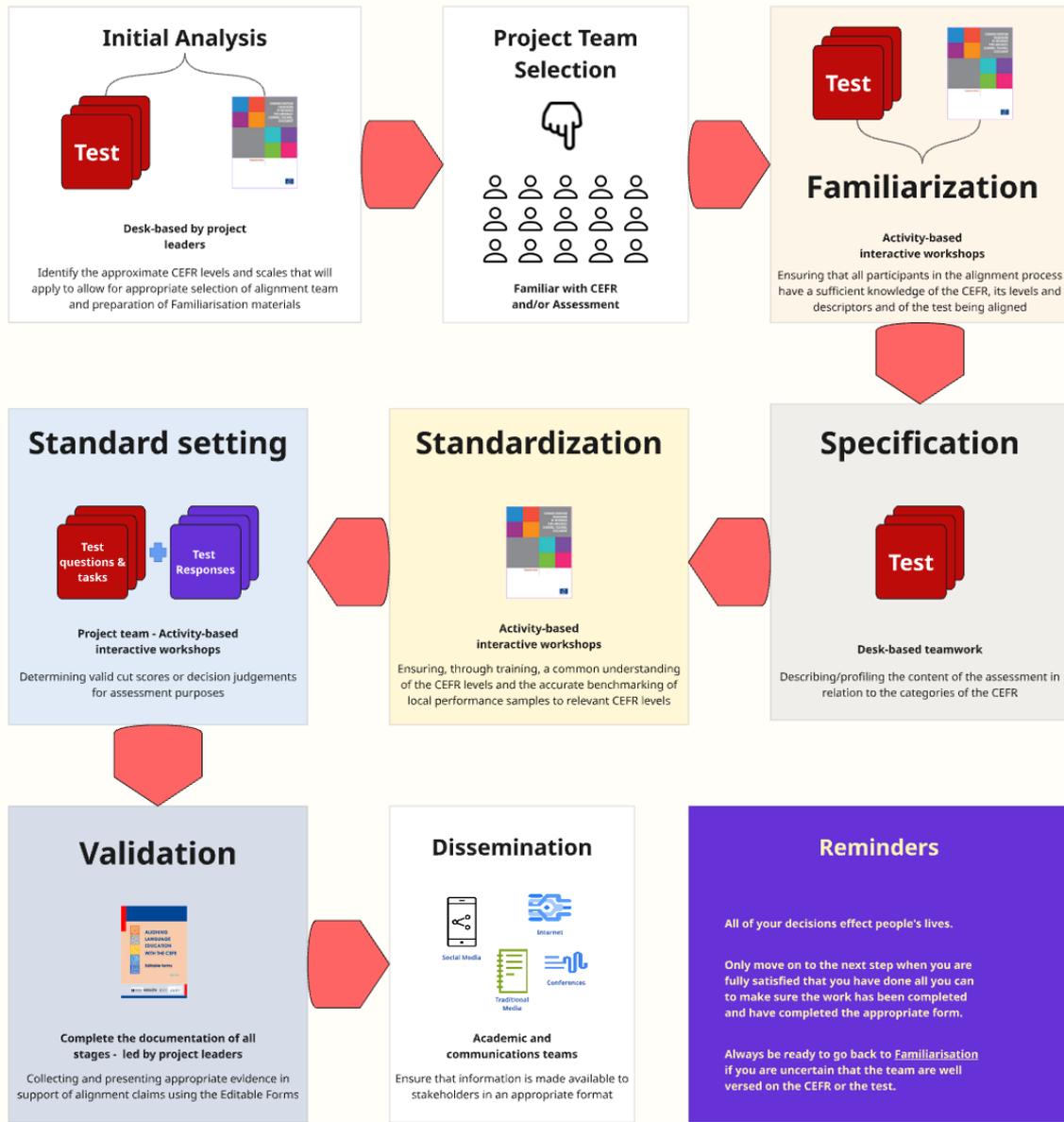


Figure 3: Steps in the alignment process for assessment

3.2. Defining key terms and concepts more fully

The concept of the CLS outlined in the *Handbook* highlights the need for a unified perspective to the three core elements in language education, curriculum, delivery and assessment, understood as described below.

Curriculum

Traditionally, a **curriculum is seen as a structured plan that lays out what students will learn, the goals they should meet, and how teachers will help them get there.** It's the official guide provided by schools or education authorities. However, there's also a *hidden curriculum* — the unwritten lessons students pick up simply by being in school, like social rules and values. Beyond that, there's *informal learning*, where students practice skills (like language) outside the classroom. The internet, and in particular the use of large language models such as ChatGPT, offers many chances for this kind of learning, but these opportunities are often missed in traditional education. A well-designed curriculum of the future — both formal and informal — can make learning more consistent and fair while helping students prepare for school, work and life.

Delivery

Curriculum delivery simply means how teaching happens in practice. It includes three key things.

1. **The teachers:** how they're chosen, trained, and supported throughout their careers in implementing the curriculum.
2. **The learning materials:** textbooks, handouts or online resources that teachers and students use.
3. **The learning environment:** including traditional classroom-based, experience-based and/or digital.

Think of it as everything that comes together to make learning possible — the people, the tools, and the physical space where education happens.

Assessment

Assessment in education can serve many different purposes. It might include placement tests (to determine a student's starting level), progress checks or final exams. Assessments can range along a continuum between:

1. **formative (learning-focused):** these don't give grades but instead provide feedback to help students improve
and
2. **summative (judgment-based):** these assign grades or scores, usually to measure achievement or decide if a student is ready to move forward.

In short, assessments guide teaching, help track learning and help make decisions about student progress.

Figure 4 shows how the three core elements of the Comprehensive Learning System (Curriculum, Delivery and Assessment) relate to the underlying models outlined in the Socio-Cognitive Approach (S-CA) to test development and validation as described by Chalhoub-Deville & O'Sullivan (2020). They argue against taking a measurement only (or measurement dominated) approach to validation and instead propose an integrated approach consisting of three underlying models focusing on Language, Test (or other element: Curriculum or Materials) Development, and Measurement.

In the same way that the test development model will differ from models of curricula or materials development, the measurement model will also differ both in term of how it is manifested (high profile in test development, low to no profile in curricula and materials development). The critical thing to remember is that the system should be underpinned by a single, clearly articulated language model. In our case, this will be driven by the CEFR, though other reference frameworks, such as the CEFR-J (from Japan) or China's Standards of English (CSE) may be more appropriate for specific contexts.

Note, that in this figure, it should be clear that the learner is at the centre of everything, as the social, educational and inter-cultural needs of the learners should drive the definition of the construct (i.e., the aspect of language knowledge or use to be studied or assessed). While all stakeholders contribute to our understanding of the context-of-use, the learner must be seen as the conduit between it and the target element.

The Language Model

This is the foundation of our entire language learning system. It shapes what we teach, how we teach it, and how we measure progress. Without this, we don't really have a complete system at all.

The plan needs to be built on solid ideas about how language works and how people learn and use languages. While tools like the CEFR (Common European Framework) are helpful references, they're too general to use as-is – every system needs to adapt them to fit local needs.

It's also important to remember that no language programme can cover everything about a language. Every system has to make thoughtful choices about what to include. This careful selection process – making the programme right for your specific situation – is what we call *localization* (O'Sullivan 2019).

The Development Model

Every part of a language learning system follows its own design model or plan. When creating teaching materials, lesson plans or tests, developers use these guides that explain both the theoretical and practical steps involved.

While there aren't necessarily 'right' or 'wrong' ways to do this (though some approaches may work better than others depending on the specific situation), all developers must focus on two key things:

1. being clear and open about their methods
2. ensuring everything works together to create a complete, effective learning system.

What links all these is the commitment to transparency and fairness expected of developers, as well as their commitment to creating a viable comprehensive learning system.

The Measurement Model

A good language model will always be underpinned by an established measurement model or scale.

Since the CEFR has such an underpinning model, any language model which has been systematically derived from it will automatically retain its measurement model. A good example of this is the CEFR-J from Japan. This was a twenty-year project in which the CEFR was taken as the starting point and a fully locally appropriate localization was undertaken to make it more useful for use in the Japanese context.

For example, they realised that the majority of learners in Japan tended to be at the A1 or A2 level, so they subdivided these levels using newly created can-do statements that were statistically linked to the original scales.

Maintaining a meaningful measurement model is directly related to assessment since it is one source of validity evidence that can support test score use. However, it is likely to be less clearly relevant to the development of curricula or materials, though by basing a system on a language model based on the CEFR we are automatically including a measurement model in our design.

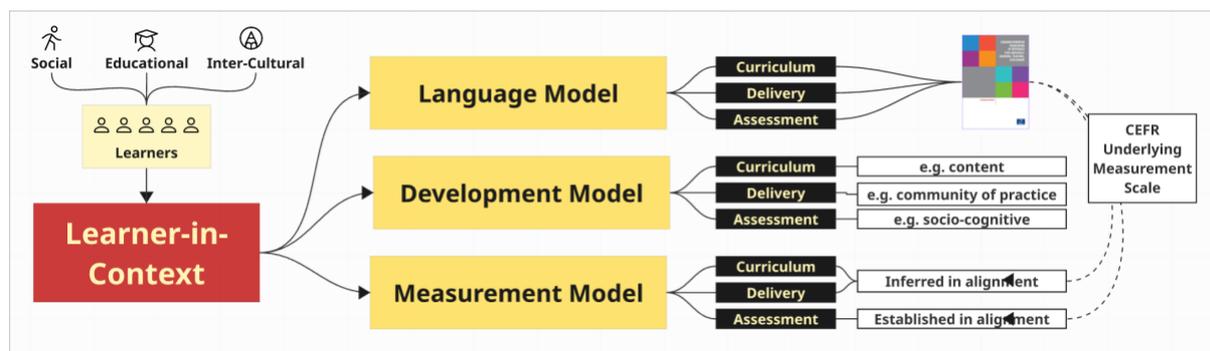


Figure 4: An overview of the link between the CLS and the underlying integrated models.

4. Educational technologies and AI

Educational technologies (EdTech) combined with educational uses of artificial intelligence (EdAI) were not extensively covered in the *Handbook* in 2022, but since the arrival of Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT in 2022), they have become a high priority in language education.

They are relevant to the aims of the *Handbook* and to the additional information in this Supplement and offer benefits for learners, teachers and assessment providers.

The technology can assist in designing and delivering comprehensive learning systems, as explained in this Supplement, but users are advised to seek evidence of appropriate validation and clarity on how the software should be used to ensure that it is safe and trustworthy (as recommended in the codes of ethics and codes practice of the language associations which are currently being updated to reflect developments in AI). Organizations that have published ethics guidelines in the use of AI include Cambridge, British Council and the European Commission⁵.

⁵ https://www.cambridge.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/Ethics_in_AI_CPELE_web.pdf;
https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/human-centred_ai_lessons_for_english_learning_and_assessment.pdf;
https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-12/ethical_guidelines_on_the_use_of_artificial_intelligence-n0722649enn_0.pdf

By offering automation and personalization, educational technologies using AI are already reshaping the linguistic landscape of education (e.g., AI supported scoring systems – see the *Handbook* 6.6). In future, further integration may harness the full potential of multilingual policies and contribute to the development of learners’ plurilingual repertoires in innovative ways and address longstanding concerns for inclusivity (e.g., to support learners with specific needs and preferences).

4.1. For learners

Personalization is at the heart of the *learner-centric vision* of the action-oriented approach and a significant contribution of AI to language learning is to enable this in practical ways, e.g., through the use of intelligent tutoring systems that align curriculum goals and content to a learner’s current proficiency level and learning preferences. Such systems can help learners to remain engaged and motivated while being appropriately challenged and with feedback that is diagnostic and formative.

Virtual teaching assistants and chatbots can support learners by facilitating *practice out of school*, and by providing opportunities to develop interactive skills and to focus on learning factors, such as motivation, self-confidence and autonomy.

For multilingual learners, customization of this kind can allow rubrics and instructions to be fine-tuned to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

4.2. For teachers

AI-driven digital tools can assist teachers in delivering the action-oriented approach in a number of innovative ways.

- By *automating routine tasks* and by providing useful data for planning lessons and designing communicative learning tasks.
- By providing *analytics dashboards* in user-friendly interfaces that help teachers identify gaps in learning and can suggest evidence-based interventions.
- By making teaching responsive to specific needs.

For instance, speech analysis tools can evaluate pronunciation, fluency and intonation, while AI scoring engines can assess writing and provide feedback on grammar, coherence and content. In both cases the specific information that is available for teachers can be used in providing formative feedback and in scaffolding the next stage of learning.

While AI can augment the role of teachers, it is not intended that it should replace the ‘human touch’ that is vital in real-world communication and in building intercultural understandings between people. In this respect, *hybrid solutions* that use the technology to support, rather than replace, humans are likely to be crucial.

Examples of hybridity with humans and the technology effectively working together include: tutoring systems that combine AI tutors with human teachers (e.g., blended in class and online activities); formative assessment systems combining AI-based processes with teachers’ judgements.

Two examples of applications that implement hybrid learning platforms using AI are: Write&Improve from Cambridge University Press and Assessment, and AiBC from the British Council.

1. Write&Improve + Class View is designed to help learners practice and improve their English writing, both independently and also with the help of their class teacher. www.writeandimprove.com
2. AiBC provides interactive dialogue tasks that support teachers in the British Council's English Online hybrid learning platform and providing formative feedback practice for learners. <https://englishonline.britishcouncil.org/>

4.3. For assessment providers

Assessment providers began using digital technology in the 1990s to facilitate aspects of the *assessment cycle*, with a primary focus on the automation of core processes. Early uses included automation for assessing writing, but in recent years this has been extended to other skills and to other aspects of the assessment cycle, including automated item generation (AIG), online delivery and at-home test taking with remote proctoring.

Automated processes can increase the efficiency of assessment systems and potentially improve reliability. For example, assessment of productive skills traditionally required human markers, and considerations of practicality and scalability have constrained the types of formats and tasks being used. AI-based systems, on the other hand, offer automated solutions that are scalable and adaptive, opening up innovative possibilities that were previously not feasible, e.g., automatic generation and calibration of task to CEFR levels; development and delivery of plurilingual assessment tasks.

More generally, AI has the potential to support a wider range of assessment purposes, to extend coverage of communicative constructs and to deliver innovative task types, e.g., bringing language teaching, learning and assessment together in integrated ways and for formative purposes – as in learning-oriented assessment, scenario-based assessment. Capturing and using specific types of data as *evidence of and for learning* are central if these benefits are to be realized,

4.4. For policy makers

EdTech using AI has the potential to deliver transformative change in multilingual language education, However, challenges and risks associated with these technologies need to be addressed by users. Policy makers need to ensure that AI-enhanced language education is safe, trustworthy and can be clearly explained to stakeholders. Educational leaders will need to engage with practitioners to extend existing codes of practice and incorporate ethical frameworks being developed in wider societal contexts. In terms of assessment, concerns for fairness and social justice need to be reconsidered in light of generative AI; privacy, bias, and the *digital divide* are among the issues that need to be taken into account.

4.5. AI and alignment

If you are using AI, it is best to introduce it into the process of designing a learning system at the earliest stage i.e., curriculum design and development phase. Generative AI, such as a large language model (LLM) can help revise an existing curriculum or built one from scratch. Through well-constructed prompts, an AI-driven model can create a well-structured and context-appropriate curriculum that is aligned to specific CEFR scales and levels. This can then be edited by human experts, saving time and resource.

The human team would be expected to proceed through the five stages outlined in the *Handbook*, though each stage can be supported by an appropriately prompted AI model. See the table below for an overview of what this support might look like.

Table 2: AI in standard setting

Stage	Potential use and benefit of AI
Familiarization	Familiarization tasks can be designed and built using an LLM. This can result in more personalised and targeted tasks and feedback during the process.
Specification	AI can help by automating the process of alignment between the curriculum, materials or assessment being developed since this work is essentially mechanical in nature.
Standardization	Since Standardization is a more targeted extension of the Familiarization stage, the same AI-driven approach proposed there can be applied here, though the details will change.
Standard setting	Standard setting can be supported by generating simulated responses using AI that can contribute to the expert panel judgements. It can also be used to help developers generate and validate cut scores using simulated responses to the test tasks or items (for reception-focused activities).
Validation	The Validation phase involves the systematic gathering and documentation of the evidence collected in the previous four stages. The <i>Handbook</i> provides a set of pro-forma tables to do this and AI can be used to review those stages and auto complete the validity pro-formas. This needs to be double-checked by the human team to ensure satisfactory completion.

4.6. For assessment providers

In developing a new examination or improving the quality of an existing one, AI can now be used at all stages of the testing cycle – see the upcoming, revised *Manual for Test Development and Examining* (ALTE/CoE). For example, various types of AI, including Gen AI, can be used for the following:

- automatic task generation and calibration of items to the intended levels
- administration of Speaking and Writing tasks supported by AI to ensure standardization of administration
- AI-supported scoring of productive tasks to ensure consistency and dependability of grades aligned to the levels
- post-test analysis using AI to produce validation reports for users
- monitoring of an assessment system using AI to carry out data analysis to help evaluate its impact within the learning system.

5. References

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- O’Sullivan, B. (2019). Forward – Localization. In Lily I-wen Su, Cyril Weir, Jessica R. W. Wu (Eds.) *English Language Proficiency Testing in Asia: A New Paradigm Bridging Global and Local*. New York: Routledge
- O’Sullivan, B. (2020). *The Comprehensive Learning System*. London: British Council.

Appendix 1: Additional references on alignment

The following references may be of use when embarking on an alignment project.

Kanistra, P. (2025). *Evaluating the Item Descriptor (ID) Matching method in a face-to-face and a synchronous virtual environment*. Peter Lang.

Lewis, D. (2023). SIPS Embedded Standard Setting Technical Report. Stackable, Instructionally-Embedded Portable Science (SIPS) Assessments.

ICLE500 dataset, (Thwaites et al., 2024), containing 500 argumentative essays from the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE; Granger et al., 2020), each annotated with its corresponding CEFR level.

<https://www.uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/ilc/cecl/news/announcing-the-icle500-dataset>

Dataset available at

https://dataverse.uclouvain.be/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi%3A10.14428%2FDVN%2FRIOSSC&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR1I97AgH8fQ7yhCRPpTRnDt6kMI75B32XacR0nBJqxJWNWsYqvBir5kb0_aem_EZEiyP17h8ngfZ23M8SQ3Q

Appendix 2: Errata list for Chapter 5 (2020:47—64, English edition)

The following errata in cross-referencing in the 2022 edition of the *Handbook* have been identified.

Page 47, 5.1.1. Line 3 resource 3 should read resource 4

Line 17 resource 4 should read resource 6

Page 48, 5.1.2. Line 6 resources 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 should read resources 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12

Page 52, 5.2. Line 6 resources 2, 3 and 4 should read resource 4, 5 and 6

Line 7 resources 9 and 10 should read resources 9, 10 and 18

Page 56, Methodology box 1: line 4 resource 9 should read resources 13 and 14

The following resources, mentioned in the chapter are now publicly available:

16a. Kollias, C. (2023). *Virtual Standard Setting: Setting Cut Scores*. Series: Language Testing and Evaluation, Volume 46. Peter Lang Verlag.

16b. Kollias, C. (2021). *Variations in setting cut scores: How comparable are cut scores across media, methods, time, and instrument length?* Presentation at the XVII EALTA Congress.

https://ealta.eu/conference/2021/07a_Slides%20EALTA%202021/10_EALTA_2021_Kollias_FINAL.pdf

Appendix 3: Guidance for translators

Institutions, agencies or associations planning to translate the *Handbook* (including any additional documentation) into their language should express their interest in doing so by contacting a member of the Handbook Steering Group. This expression of interest should take the form of an official letter signed by a representative of the institution, agency or association stating that:

- appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that the translation is accurate
- the translation will take on board prior translations of the CEFR (and the CEFR CV) and any modifications/changes in terminology will be highlighted/listed in the “Notes on the translation”
- the translation will be carefully proofread before publication
- the translated document will retain the format, colours and references of the original
- the logo of the translating institution, agency or association (same size as those of the authoring institutions) will be included on the front cover, at the top right-hand corner, and at the bottom of the back cover
- access to the document will be free of charge, whether it is made available in print or online
- “Notes on the translation” summarizing issues that arose during the translation process, difficulties encountered with specific terminology, and the solutions adopted will be inserted before the Contents page. There are currently two examples:
 - a) the one produced by Instituto Cervantes, with a glossary https://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco_manual/manual-para-vincular-la-ensenanza-de-lenguas-al-mcer.pdf
 - b) the one produced by the Goethe Institute, with comments on the translation process and the decisions taken: [handbuch_anbindung-sprachunterricht-ger.pdf](#)
- the Steering Group will be informed on the progress of the translation which is expected to be completed within a 12-month period.

The Handbook Steering Group will be available for consultation during the translation process and will be given access to the final translated document for approval prior to publication.