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—

Partnered Remote Language Improvement (PRELIM) 3 project report

Rose Aylett and Martyn Clarke

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About the authors

Rose Aylett

Rose Aylett is a freelance training consultant and CELTA tutor, based in Liverpool, UK. She has been working in ELT for almost 20 years, predominantly in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and has a long-standing professional interest in critical pedagogy, global citizenship and social justice education. Her MA thesis (completed in 2020) explored critical literacy within teacher education, and informed NILE ELT's Global Citizenship in Language Education course, for which she is the course leader.

Rose is a former IATEFL Global Issues SIG Coordinator and editor of the GISIG e-zine FUTURITY. She speaks regularly at national and international conferences about how to teach controversial issues, promoting critical dialogue in the classroom, and the integration of critical perspectives into ELT.

For the last four years, she has worked alongside Martyn Clarke to manage the PRELIM projects on behalf of NILE.

Martyn Clarke

Martyn Clarke has been an ELT professional for 30 years working in Europe, South and Central America, South East Asia and Africa. As a consultant teacher trainer and advisor, he has experience in numerous education development projects around the world including both pre-service and in-service programmes. He has designed and taught on UK under- and post-graduate teacher development programmes for universities in the UK and teacher/management development seminars and workshops across Europe and the Middle East. He has written education development courses for numerous organisations including the British Council, Oxford University Press and EAQUALS. Martyn has managed a number of overseas education projects at local and national levels and was the Director of Operations for a group of language schools in the UK and Ireland. He is a co-author of the EAQUALS Academic Management Competency Framework.

At the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), Martyn is the Programme Leader for the MA in Professional Development for Language Education, the module leader for the module in Academic Management in Language Education, and an affiliate trainer and manager on NILE projects.

For the last four years, he has worked alongside Rose Aylett to manage the PRELIM projects on behalf of NILE.

Contents

Executive summary

The third Partnered Remote Language Improvement project (PRELIM 3) took place between January 2023 and April 2024.

The objectives of PRELIM 3 were:

- To work in partnership to produce a package of teacher support resources designed specifically for the classroom context of the partner ETA's members, aligned with features such as physical realities, class size, prevailing pedagogical norms, teacher skills, knowledge and experience, availability of technology, national curriculum requirements.
- To implement a distribution and support programme for the package of resources in ETA schools in the partner country.
- To support monitoring, evaluation and learning activities throughout the project.

This was achieved through 25 individual partnerships between United Kingdom Language Institutes (UKIs) and English Teacher Associations (ETAs) worldwide. Funded by the British Council, PRELIM 3 was managed by NILE and supported by English UK and the International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

The first phase of the project involved relationship building and undertaking initial diagnostics to develop the UKI's understanding of their ETA partner's context. Research was conducted into the existing classroom materials being used by teachers and learners. Using this data, partnerships then set about developing a bespoke resource package to be used by ETA teachers with their learners. Materials were designed in alignment with the local context and curriculum, and included guidance to help teachers use the resources effectively. Where feasible, the materials were also intended to explore cultural features of the ETA context and the local culture of the UKI home base.

In Phase 2 of the project the resource packages were piloted with small groups of teachers, before being disseminated more widely (via either digital or physical means). Throughout the piloting and dissemination process, partners monitored and evaluated material use, collecting further data to improve the materials on the basis of teacher and learner feedback. This iterative process ensured the continual improvement of the resource package over the course of the project.

Each resource package developed and disseminated over the course of the project is unique (in terms of content, structure and organisation) and has come about as a result of the distinctiveness of the different ETA contexts and resulting partnerships.

This report was compiled by NILE as a summary of the main findings of the 25 reports from the individual PRELIM projects. It aims to highlight some of the lessons learned through PRELIM 3, to support future projects of a similar nature.

1
Project overview

The Partnered Remote Language Improvement project (PRELIM) is an initiative supporting the development of English language teachers globally, supported by the British Council, English UK, and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). Whereas PRELIM 1 (October 2020 – April 2021) and PRELIM 2 (October 2021 – April 2022) focused on the design and delivery of remote English and methodology courses for ETA teachers, PRELIM 3 involved the design and dissemination of a bespoke package of teacher support resources. From January 2023 to April 2024, 25 UK Language Institutes (UKIs) worked in individual partnerships with 29 English Teacher Associations (ETAs) in 25 countries to develop, produce and distribute these teacher support resources as widely as possible. A dissemination grant was made available to provide ETAs with financial aid in the distribution, monitoring and evaluation of the resource packages. Nineteen partnerships took advantage of this opportunity and the project was able to fund all proposals received.
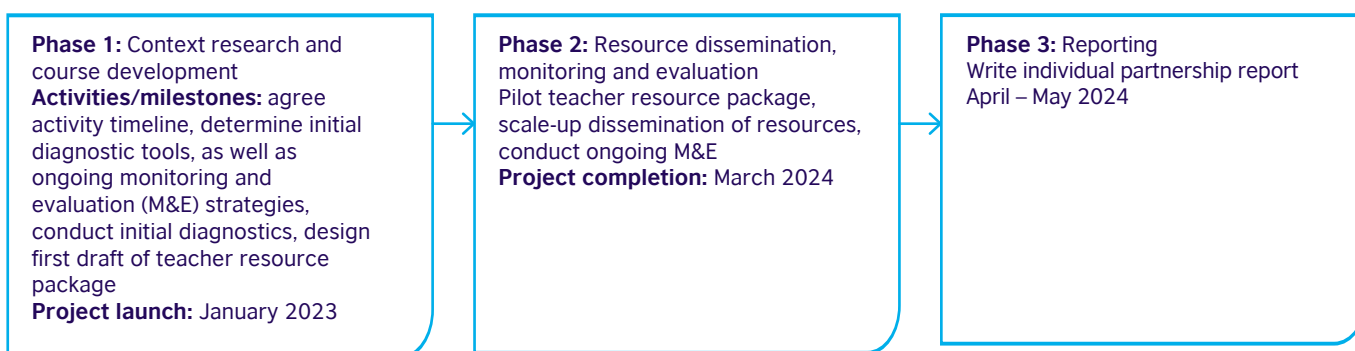
1.1 Project partners

Main project partners		British Council, English UK, International Association Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL)
Project Management		Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE)
Region	**Country partners**	
South Asia	Bangladesh	TESOL Society of Bangladesh (TSB) Capital School of English, Bournemouth, UK (Capital)
Sub-Saharan Africa	Angola	Angolan English Language Teachers' Association (ANELTA) St Giles Educational Trust, UK (St Giles)
	Cameroon	Cameroon English Language and Literature Association (ELTS-CAMELTA) Oxford International Education Group, UK (OIEG)
	Cote d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire National English Language Teachers Association (CINELTA) Stafford House, London (SH)
	Guinea	Guinea English Teachers' Club (GETC) Norwich Study Centre, UK (NSC)
	Mali	Malian Association of Teachers of English (MATE) West London English School, UK (WLES)
	Mozambique	Mozambique English Language Teachers Association (MELTA) Celtic English Academy, Cardiff, UK (CEA)
	Nigeria	English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN) Edinburgh College, UK (Edinburgh)
	Uganda	Uganda National English Language Teachers' Association (UNELTA) Wimbledon School of English, London, UK (WSE)
	Zambia	Language Teachers Association of Zambia (LATAZ) Hilderstone College, Broadstairs, UK (Hilderstone)

Europe Wider Europe and Central Asia	Lithuania	Lithuanian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (LAKMA) Bell, UK (Bell)
	North Macedonia	English Language Teachers' Association of the Republic of North Macedonia (ELTAM MK) inlingua Cheltenham, UK (inlingua)
	Turkey	Gazi University (GU) English Language Teaching Centre, The University of Sheffield (Sheffield)
East Asia	Indonesia	The Association for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia (TEFLIN) Peartree Languages, Cardiff, UK (Peartree)
	Thailand	Thailand TESOL Association (ThaiTESOL) Lewis School of English, Southampton, UK (Lewis)
	Viet Nam	VietTESOL Association (VietTESOL) Nottingham Trent University, UK (Nottingham)
Middle East and North Africa	Kuwait	TEFL Kuwait (TEFLK) International House London, UK (IH London)
	Occupied Palestinian Territories	Palestinian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (PATEFL) CELT Centre for English Language Teaching, Cardiff, UK (CELT)
Americas	Argentina	Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Bahía Blanca (APIBB); Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Santiago del Estero (APISE); Asociación Salteña de Profesores de Inglés (ASPI); Argentinian Federation of Teachers of English Associations (FAAPI) Professional Language Solutions, UK (PLS)
	Bolivia	Bolivian English Teachers Association (BETA) Eurospeak, UK (Eurospeak)
	Brazil	BRAZ-TESOL Public School Special Interest Group (BRAZ-TESOL) Centre of English Studies, UK (CES)
	Cuba	English Language Teaching section of the Cuban Association of Pedagogues (APC-ELI) LILA*, Liverpool, UK (LILA*)
	Ecuador	National University of Education, School of Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages (UNAE-PINE) International House Bristol, UK (IH Bristol)
	Honduras	Honduran English Language Teachers Association (HELTA-TESOL) Speak Up London, UK (Speak Up)
	Peru	Asociación de Egresados de Educación e Idiomas Extranjeros (ASCEI) and PERU ELT NETWORKS/ Community of English Teachers in Peru 'ETIP' York Associates, UK (YA)

1.2 Project timeline

Phase 1: Context research and course development
Activities/milestones: agree activity timeline, determine initial diagnostic tools, as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategies, conduct initial diagnostics, design first draft of teacher resource package
Project launch: January 2023

Phase 2: Resource dissemination, monitoring and evaluation
Pilot teacher resource package, scale-up dissemination of resources, conduct ongoing M&E
Project completion: March 2024

Phase 3: Reporting
Write individual partnership report
April – May 2024

The timescales and milestones for the first two phases of the PRELIM 3 project were context-specific, and therefore varied widely across partnerships.

1.3 Teacher support resources overview

Indicative contents	Supplementary materials aligned with the existing curriculum/syllabus Topic/task-based (with reference to national schemes of work) General English Literacy/phonics Pronunciation 21st century skills Digital literacy Textual mediation Global citizenship and the environment Tourism and hospitality Special educational needs and disability (SEND) support materials
Resource formats	Downloadable lesson plans and teachers' notes (Word/pdf/PowerPoint slides) Digital/e-books Flashcards Printed resource books and accompanying teachers' book Audio (mp3) and video (mp4) files
Resource storage and hosting	Purpose-built websites New pages on existing websites, e.g. Ministry of Education, ETA's/university's own domain Cloud storage platforms, e.g. Google Drive, One Drive, Padlet Video hosting platforms/channels, e.g. YouTube Flash drives/USBs
Target users	English language teachers (and their learners) working in all sectors – from primary to tertiary; state and private; classroom-based and one-to-one tutoring Curriculum leaders/coordinators Existing ETA members and prospective/non-members
Dissemination activities	Face-to-face training sessions and workshops Online launch events, webinars and workshops Conference presentations (in-country) Social media posting Couriering of hard copies of materials and flash drives/USBs Library sign-in/sign-out systems
Monitoring and evaluation strategies	Surveys and questionnaires Shared documents, e.g. Google Docs Website analytics, e.g. Google Analytics Teacher reflection forms Teacher piloting/focus groups Photographic/video evidence of use, e.g. teacher boardwork/ samples of students' work etc. Informal qualitative feedback via messaging apps, email etc.

2

Project areas: findings

2.1 Working in partnership

2.1.1 Establishing objectives

The individual PRELIM 3 reports evidence the importance of establishing a strong, positive working relationship between partners from the initiation of the project: 'a strong foundation of shared goals formed early in the partnership, align[ed] both institutions' visions for student success and ensur[ed] both institutions could contribute effectively' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol). Stronger, more positive relationships were formed when this process was prioritised: 'Time dedicated to fully understanding each other's organisational and personal aims and values was invaluable to ensuring effective open and honest communication' (TSB/Capital). For some partnerships, identifying an area of focus took much longer: 'it took several months and many meetings before we had a shared understanding of the project aims and agreement on the approach we would take' (VietTESOL/Nottingham). However, for others this process was relatively straightforward as ETA partners already had a clear conceptualisation of teachers' needs: 'ELTS-CAMELTA came to the project with a clear vision of what was missing in their national curriculum and how they wanted to fill the vacuum' (ELTS-CAMELTA/OIEG).

2.1.2 Selecting communication channels

As with PRELIM 1 and 2, selecting a suitable means of online communication from the project's outset greatly improved the chances of regular contact and a more productive working relationship. Synchronous video platforms, e.g. Zoom, were a popular choice where connectivity, data costs, and familiarity with these applications allowed. However, in a number of contexts, messaging apps such as WhatsApp were found to be more effective: 'Text messaging was far more appropriate for most of the process' (APC-ELI/LILA*). The reports highlight the potential need for UKI partners to adopt different communication channels to those they are more accustomed to using at work day-to-day: 'Frequency and ease of communication improved once we had selected WhatsApp' (UNELTA/WSE).

2.1.3 Devising timelines and working schedules

Working remotely, potentially across different time-zones and hemispheres, partners needed to communicate regularly to keep the project moving forward: 'Keeping clear, considerate, and specific communication was essential' (LATAZ/Hilderstone); 'With hindsight, more of those meetings would have helped to give our team more focus, ideas and confidence' (ELTAMK/inlingua). For some, the non-alignment of working calendars (particularly during resource dissemination) required meticulous scheduling: 'Establishing the date for dissemination was slightly challenging due to differences in the structure of the academic year of both countries' (HELTA-TESOL/Speak Up). Partners suggest addressing these project realities by mutually sharing academic calendars and information about additional work commitments at an early stage.

As with all aspects of PRELIM 3, a willingness to adapt to changing situations was paramount: 'Issues such as timing constraints for contacting teachers, the feasibility of incorporating their feedback within tight deadlines during the piloting phase, and last-minute requests from partners required both partners to adapt their approach at times' (BETA/Eurospeak). Unpredictable global events, such as war, natural disasters and health emergencies, impacted a number of partnerships, during which communication may have been less frequent or ceased altogether. At such times, flexibility and sensitivity to the local situation on the ground was key: 'During the cholera pandemic lockdown, Hilderstone College made sure to reach out and maintain supportive communication' (LATAZ/Hilderstone).

2.1.4 Involving diverse partners and stakeholders

Partners were supported in their work by a range of different stakeholders, including (but not limited to) ETA teachers, coordinators, curriculum leaders, local government supervisors/inspectors, and university students: 'The PATEFL core team comes from a range of ELT backgrounds. The team's wide-ranging interests and expertise informed the ETA's initially wide interpretation of the possibilities of PRELIM 3' (PATEFL/CELT). The identification and involvement

of 'expert' stakeholders from an early stage, e.g. specialists in materials development, IT, marketing or finance etc. had a very positive impact on the outcomes of several partnerships: 'The BRAZ-TESOL IT specialist was invaluable for creating the webpage and hosting the materials' (BRAZ-TESOL/CES); 'Looking beyond the teaching team to draw on the skills of other staff members can enable the project leader to broaden the scope of the project by incorporating other elements such as video instructions. This can also have a unifying effect on the whole school staff with academic and administrative team members working together towards a shared objective' (GETC/NSC).

Two of the twenty-five projects worked with more than one ETA partner (ETAs based in Argentina and Peru). The logistics of working with multiple partners proved both beneficial and challenging: 'This brought an incredible breadth of perspective of the different resource contexts and challenges from provinces across Argentina. In particular, ASPI's and APISE's work in rural and lower-income provinces helped focus the requirements for the basic resources. It also created challenges such as finding suitable times for and trying to accommodate many different requirements and preferences into the final resource package' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/PLS).

2.1.5 Changing personnel

Due to the much longer timeframe of PRELIM 3 (15 months) compared to PRELIM 1 and 2 (five months), there was an inevitable increase in personnel changes on the project, affecting both ETAs and UKIs. These required careful management to ensure handovers were conducted thoroughly and efficiently. On at least one project, this was addressed by: 'Having two ETA and UKI coordinators [which] ensured the project could move forward even if one person was unavailable' (ANELTA/St Giles).

2.2 Working within the CoP

2.2.1 Slack

A notable way in which PRELIM 3 differed from PRELIMs 1 and 2, was the limited development of a Community of Practice (CoP) between the 25 UKIs. From the beginning of the project, a dedicated Slack workspace was made available as a platform for collaboration, ideas-sharing and problem-solving, however after an initial peak in the number of posts in the first few weeks, activity on the platform quickly declined. There are a number of possible reasons for this suggested in

the reports, including a lack of overlap in content and/or timeline synchronicity across partnerships, a sense of overwhelm at the (initial) amount and frequency of information being shared, a hesitancy to share project challenges in writing, and institutional use of different project management tools:

> *Most of these projects were quite individual and localised – as they should be – but it meant there was less to share and compare through the platform.* (GU/Sheffield)

> *The length of the project meant that members were rarely in the same project phases at the same time, and that the range of individual projects was very broad, making comparisons and collaboration more challenging.* (LATAZ/Hilderstone)

2.2.2 Zoom

Over the 15 months of PRELIM 3, a number of synchronous meetings were also held at key milestones, bringing together the 25 UKI project leads. These meetings were a markedly more popular form of collaboration, with several UKI partners noting in their reports that they would have appreciated more frequent meetings, at more regular intervals:

> *The Zoom meetings were more valuable and more personal, which made them more motivating, but also, the fact that they had a specific topic focus (dissemination, gathering data, etc) helped generate discussion. I suggest having these on a more regular basis.* (GU/Sheffield)

> *One proposal is to have a predictable, scheduled set of monthly meetings … to really capitalise on the learning of our peers and create a genuinely workable CoP that would have been much stronger and of much greater benefit.* (TEFK/IH London)

The coming together of the UKI partners was valued for a number of different reasons, however chief amongst them appears to be keeping up motivation over the 15-month long period:

> *Having the chance to discuss project challenges and share tips on best practice was insightful and inspiring, and effectively boosted our morale in the final stages of the project.* (APC-ELI/LILA*)

> *The PRELIM CoP gave us an insight into the working practices of other PRELIM partners. This included workarounds to mitigate problems in the execution of their projects. This was valuable and we felt ourselves not alone but members of a community.* (BETA/ Eurospeak)

2.3 Designing and delivering the resources

2.3.1 Context research and diagnostics

At the initiation of the project, UKI partners undertook research and ETA partners shared information about their context to ensure the resource package was appropriately aligned with national curriculum requirements, teacher skills, knowledge and experience, class size, available resources and technologies.

Across the 25 partnerships, data was gathered via a variety of methods. These included:

- Synchronous meetings with ETA representatives
- Teacher surveys/questionnaires/polls
- ETA member/teacher focus groups
- Synchronous/asynchronous chats on messenger apps
- Asynchronous discussions via email
- Sharing photographs/videos of the target context (students' work, classrooms etc)
- Sharing of existing curricula/syllabi and/ or classroom materials
- Independent research into the target context (e.g. reading/discussions with staff members who had experience living and working there)

The reports stress the usefulness of testing a variety of approaches to data collection: 'Strategies to elicit all kinds of feedback should be considered to ensure that the resources created are suitable and sustainable' (MELTA/CEA). Involving a broad range of stakeholders in context research also resulted in UKI partners achieving a better understanding of the needs of their end-users: 'Needs analysis, monitoring and evaluation processes were designed to give diverse stakeholders opportunities to input on resource design, adaptation, dissemination' (ELTAN/Edinburgh); 'The established network of connections to the teaching community at PINE played a crucial role in accessing diverse sources of feedback' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol).

Where possible, analysis of existing classroom materials was particularly useful as this was the focus of PRELIM 3: 'Viewing existing material with an eye for both formatting and content was vital to undertake a project of this size' (APC-ELI/LILA*). However, in several cases curriculum-aligned teaching resources either did not yet exist, were out-of-date, not aligned to the national curriculum, or the materials accessed and used by teachers varied widely across the target context, limiting the extent to which materials analysis was possible. In other contexts, a 'one curriculum, many textbooks' policy: 'made it quite difficult for us to find a distinct niche for the PRELIM3 collaboration' (VietTESOL/ Nottingham).

Across the partnerships, the two most popular forms of diagnostic tool were teacher surveys and focus groups because they provided an insight into how existing materials were being used in the classroom. However, these more qualitative tools also had limitations: 'We found it challenging to write materials for a learning context that we could not see because descriptions often do not reflect reality. For example, although respondents to our needs analysis said computers were in the classroom, they were not connected to a TV or projector or were older slower models' (BETA/ Eurospeak). A more detailed exploration of approaches to monitoring and evaluation on PRELIM 3 is included in section 2.5 of this summary report.

2.3.2 Design process

The reports emphasise several factors in the process of materials design, that made PRELIM 3 markedly different from course design of PRELIMs 1 and 2:

(a) Non-linear development

For the majority of PRELIM 3 partnerships, design of the materials was an iterative process, involving the continual incorporation of feedback from ETA representatives, teachers and other stakeholders, as and when it was received. This meant that: 'Designing the resources was a process of several cycles' (UNELTA/WSE). Creating materials in this way was found to have many benefits: 'This iterative approach ensured that the materials were continuously improved based on the feedback received, leading to a more tailored final package of resources' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol); 'The resources were developed iteratively with macro-level support and input from TEFLIN (who helped develop thinking on scope, parameters, and main linguistic and content focuses) and micro-level input from Curriculum Leaders (who helped develop thinking on language level, unit structure, grading of learner/teacher instruction language, and relevance of content to target learning/teaching contexts)' (TEFLIN/Peartree).

(b) Output timeframes

Creating high-quality teaching and learning materials is a time-consuming, multi-staged process, especially when working with multiple project stakeholders. Expectations of how much material could be produced within the constraints of the project at times exceeded project realities: 'producing materials for others … takes much longer than you'd expect. Producing the first draft could take two full days, and then there is the piloting, reviewing, and editing, and writing clear and explicit procedures for others to follow' (LAKMA/Bell); 'Creation of the finished resources took longer than anticipated to refine the presentation of the package' (UNELTA/WSE).

Assigning timeframes for materials creation is further complicated by the fact that not all materials writers work at the same pace, or produce the same quantity or quality of output over the same amount of time: 'We quickly discovered that all teachers create resources at different speeds, some taking longer than anticipated to produce learning resources' (ELTAMK/inlingua).

Partnerships dealt with this issue in a number of ways, for example, by: 'Allow[ing] for flexibility in individual contributions to enable each person to work to their strengths and preferred working styles' and 'Adopt[ing] a 'quality over quantity' approach, where contributors are paid for their time and not the number of materials they produce' (ThaiTESOL/Lewis).

(c) Standardisation of output

Although some partners preferred to work with a single materials writer, for others the role of producing and editing materials was split across multiple UKI team members. Standardisation of the materials created, in terms of content, language, methodology, organisation and design was therefore essential from the outset: 'Regular meetings with the project lead took place as did meetings between the two main writers to ensure complementarity of the resources in each unit and variety in the activity types written' (PATEFL/CELT). In their reports, several partners recommend producing a set of guidelines to promote alignment across the resources, standardisation meetings, as well as a final review by a single member of staff to take on the role of proof-reader and editor: 'A training session was given to each teacher involved, and 20 initial sets of materials were created as a benchmark for style, grading and presentation. Contributors could use these as a template for further sets of materials, and this was essential in creating a cohesive feel' (ThaiTESOL/Lewis).

2.3.3 Design principles

The following section provides a brief summary of the various design principles underpinning materials created for PRELIM 3:

(a) Contextualisation

The first objective of PRELIM 3 is to produce a teacher support resource package which meets the specific needs and preferences of ETA teachers, and by implication, their classroom environments. In certain contexts this meant that practical realities such as 'limited equipment, large classes, and … mobile phone viewing' (ANELTA/St Giles) needed to be factored into the design, e.g. by reducing file size and adapting the layout of the resources for mobile teaching and learning. On some projects appropriately contextualising the materials was complicated by 'disparities within the country such as differing teaching times, facilities, languages, and class sizes' (MELTA/CEA), resulting in the need for in-built differentiation: 'The 'basic – normal – plus' approach gave us a framework to provide a range of content to cover very basic to more tech-enabled contexts' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/PLS).

Where feasible, most partners aligned their materials to the local national curriculum, or in some cases, a national coursebook: 'The decision to base material design on the seven core principles of the educational system of Peru provided a clear project logic and rationale' (PERUELTNET/ASCEI/York). When educational systems were undergoing periods of transition, e.g. adopting a new national curriculum, forward-thinking was required: 'Understanding the prevailing pedagogical norms and the National Education systems future pedagogical desires for the ETA teachers and teaching context was key' (TSB/Capital).

To varying degrees PRELIM 3 materials also included reference to the local culture(s) that exist within the target context. This involved taking into consideration prevailing cultural norms and customs (e.g. dress, food and drink, relationships etc.) when selecting written or visual texts, as well as localising character and place names: 'We used local addresses and language examples specific to Mali, their culture, history, and heritage throughout the materials and traditional Malian names (inspired by the teachers and inspectors assisting with the project)' (MATE/WLES); 'Whilst having a global outlook for teenagers, each unit also focuses on content which is Argentine-specific especially were relevant to contextualise the cross curricula themes' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/PLS). Certain partnerships received specific requests for cultural recognition built-in to the materials: 'A few teachers expressed their desire for Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani to be acknowledged … as a vehicle for their appreciation by Bolivian children' (BETA/Eurospeak); '[New] topics should cut across historical and contemporary issues in both Africa, especially in Nigeria and outside the African continent' (ELTAN/Edinburgh).

(b) Communicative methodology

As many of the resource packages were designed to be used by teachers independently, without any ongoing ETA or UKI support, methodological and linguistic guidance was often embedded within the materials themselves. Reflecting the predominant practice(s) of teachers in UK-based institutions, the majority of the materials adopted a communicative approach to teaching and learning:

The resources were designed not only to provide teachers with ready-to-go materials, but also to share knowledge on English language teaching methodology with those delivering the courses. (HELTA-TESOL/Speak Up)

The teacher's notes embedded a methodological approach encouraging teachers to review, select, adapt and recycle materials' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/PLS)

(c) Flexibility

PRELIM 3 materials are intended to be versatile, for use by teachers working in a variety of different teaching sub-contexts, and in a variety of different ways. This includes the potential to adapt:

- **Timings:** 'Although the number of hours available to teachers was out of our control, we were able to produce flexible resources to fit within differing time-frames' (BRAZ-TESOL/CES).

- **Sequencing:** 'There is no prescribed order to the books, nor is there a set lesson sequence. We hope this will give the teachers the flexibility to choose the book that best supplements what they are covering in the main curriculum' (ELTS-CAMELTA/OIEG).

- **Format:** 'Where handouts are an option, these can be easily downloaded and are fully editable, should teachers wish to make amendments' (ELTAN/Edinburgh).

- **Content:** 'Our resources relate to topics in the current modules, so that teachers can choose to use them alongside existing content, either replacing or supplementing as desired' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol).

- **Level:** 'There is a video which includes examples of how to differentiate and exploit materials in different ways for 'fast finishers' or learners who require more scaffolding' (VietTESOL/Nottingham).

- **Classroom facilities/resources:** 'The resource caters to various learning environments by offering both digital and physical formats. The digital format is a PDF file suitable for displaying on screens or projectors' (APC-ELI/LILA*).

(d) Low-preparation time

Materials developers demonstrated an awareness of the heavy workloads faced by many teachers, and took this into account in their materials design: 'There should be a minimal amount of planning time required for each pack as a running order is provided. This provides planning assistance and allowing more time for the teacher to plan other aspects of the curriculum' (BRAZ-TESOL/CEA).

(e) Sustainability

Embedding sustainability into PRELIM 3 materials was fundamental, as the resources were to be disseminated to, used and 'owned' by association members. Various features of the materials maximised their accessibility to teachers and ETA members beyond the timescale of the project. These include (but are not limited to):

- **Scope and sequence documents:** '[This] provides an overview of content and links to the lessons and curriculum aims of existing resources' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol).
- **Activity templates:** 'We provided templates for a number of activities that could be adapted with the help of support videos, and incorporated a page where these could be uploaded and shared to promote the ongoing development and sustainability of the site, as well as a sense of community amongst its users' (ThaiTESOL/Lewis).
- **Training activities:** '[ETA] input on how to extend the impact of these resources and create additional resources that can be added to the resource package and shared with teaching colleagues across Nigeria' (ELTAN/Edinburgh).
- **Library sign-in/sign-out systems:** '[The books] are preserved in the various school libraries under the direct control of the English Departments whose teachers sign them out to use with their learners' (ELTS-CAMELTA/OIEG).

2.4 Disseminating the resources

The second phase of PRELIM 3 involved partnerships working together to disseminate their resource packages to teachers working in the ETA context. To assist with this process, a Dissemination Grant of up to £5000 was made available to all of the ETA partners. The grant was designed to cover distribution costs incurred in the ETA country, and to support the resources reaching as many teachers as possible. Nineteen of the 25 partnerships applied for the Dissemination Grant, and the project was able to fund all proposals received.

2.4.1 Resource dissemination – challenges

Though many partners had some familiarity with the process of materials design, the dissemination phase of PRELIM 3 presented new and complex challenges: 'Disseminating a resource package was not as simple as sending materials to the relevant teachers but ensuring that they understood how to access the material and how to exploit it' (APC-ELI/LILA*).

Resource dissemination on the project was affected by a number of factors:

(a) Delayed transfer of dissemination funds

'The UKI may encounter difficulties when transferring funds to the ETA bank account. It saves time if both organisations research and share information about the best secure method of transfer well beforehand' (GETC/NSC).

(b) Non-alignment of academic calendars

'Soon after launch, the teachers (and their students) entered the exam period, then the end of the academic year and the long summer holidays' (TEFK/IH London).

(c) Technical issues

e.g. 'Ownership issues surrounding the BETA site (the BETA website is currently defunct)' (BETA/Eurospeak).

(d) Teachers' perceptions of material use

'The perception is that there is not enough time (a) to research, understand integrate new, probably alien, activities during the lesson preparation process, and/or (b) to devote crucial lesson space to exploiting coursebook material, introduce games or recycling or extension, when the focus has to be on moving on, turning the page, getting to the next unit' (TEFLK/IH London).

(e) Teacher workload

'All ETA work was voluntary and balanced against personal and professional commitments. Considerable input was required from the ETAs … in hindsight this was really an unfair expectation of hardworking teachers' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/PLS); 'The teachers in the Ivory Coast are very busy and work under difficult conditions, especially in rural areas. Trialling the material and obtaining feedback was therefore limited, and any future projects would need to take this time issue into consideration when creating activity milestones' (CINELTA/Stafford House).

(f) Official approval processes

'The resources are currently awaiting approval from the Zambian Ministry of Education' (LATAZ/Hilderstone).

(g) Political events, e.g. national elections

'The beginning of a new administration resulted in a period of change in key roles throughout the Ministry of Education during which little progress could be made' (BRAZ-TESOL/CEA).

(h) Unforeseen events, e.g. conflict, natural disasters, health emergencies

'Batch 2 was hindered by a cholera outbreak … during which time schools were ordered to remain closed' (LATAZ/Hilderstone); 'Flexibility in the timeline proved to be crucial due to a 60-day state of emergency in Ecuador, which imposed travel restrictions and hindered dissemination efforts' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol); 'Transportation of the resource package to each of the eight regions was delayed by road closures caused by the onset of the rainy season' (GETC/NSC); 'The outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas on October 7th 2023, [led] to an immediate and profound impact on the availability (and safety) of PATEFL's PRELIM team to continue work on the project' (PATEFL/CELT).

2.4.2 Resource dissemination: successful approaches

In light of the challenges mentioned above, the reports highlight several bright spots, which provide useful learning opportunities for materials dissemination on future projects.

(a) Prompt allocation of dissemination grants

'Dissemination funding … played a pivotal role in facilitating access to the materials during the trialling stages' (UNAE-PINE/IH Bristol);

'After assigning the budgeted dissemination grant funds for data allowance, participation in further groups increased' (UNELTA/WSE).

(b) Compensation for ETA teachers

'We would recommend that funding be made available to compensate the ETAs for their time and effort on future projects. Dissemination of materials within Argentina was … a very time consuming and challenging activity for the ETAs' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI and FAAPI/PLS).

(c) Incentivisation of teacher participation, via:

- **Creation of project roles:** 'Three of these participants expressed an interest in becoming English Cuppa Ambassadors, who were then sponsored and mentored to lead a workshop at the Thailand TESOL Annual Conference' (ThaiTESOL/Lewis).
- **Provision of certificates:** 'Certificate templates prepared by the UKI and disseminated by the ETA provided effective means to encourage participation and engagement with training events and wider dissemination activities and facilitate good response rates for monitoring and evaluation purposes' (ELTAN/Edinburgh).
- **Training in materials design:** 'Members of our focus group were invited to attend a free online teacher training course on materials design, adapted to feature the English Cuppa website' (ThaiTESOL/Lewis).

(d) Exploiting existing ETA networks

'ANELTA's network of provincial representatives and relationship with the Ministry of Education enabled them to deliver workshops nationwide' (ANELTA/St Giles).

(e) Live events, e.g. workshops, training sessions, conference presentations

'We learned that live interaction is so important for any project engagement' (ELTAMK/inlingua); 'Coordinators noticed that teachers seemed most likely to report using activities that were demonstrated during workshops' (ANELTA/St Giles); 'To aid dissemination further, training should be considered a vital part of the resource creation process' (APC-ELI/LILA*).

(f) Pilot group size

'Having a small core group of teachers involved throughout the project provides valuable qualitative data to inform resource design. Motivation is increased as they see how contributions impact the materials' (UNELTA/WSE).

(g) Collaboration with multiple stakeholders

'This bi-directional approach ensures resources can be promoted at a national level by leaders across TEFLIN's 16 official chapters, while also being introduced and recommended directly to vocational school teachers via word-of-mouth interactions with colleagues and local teaching groups/CoPs, stemming from the Curriculum Leaders as initial cascaders' (TEFLIN/Peartree); 'With the help of British Council Vietnam these events will take place in Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City with around 50 teachers attending' (VietTESOL/Nottingham).

2.5 Monitoring and evaluating the resources

Once disseminated, partners engaged in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of resource use, to gather useful feedback to improve their materials. These M&E activities included implementation of a range of qualitative and quantitative tools, e.g. surveys, focus groups. On most projects, multiple tools were used in combination.

2.5.1 Monitoring and evaluation: challenges

The reports acknowledge the importance of robust M&E processes due to the remoteness of the material writers from the target context: 'Feedback was embedded explicitly as a core principle across the project as the UK organisation was very mindful not to embed false assumptions and expectations into materials design and content' (PERUELTNET/ASCEI/York). Nevertheless, a number of challenges relating to M&E are cited across the reports. These include:

(a) Low response rates due to:

- **Levels of digital literacy:** 'There was relatively low input from the focus group due to technology restrictions/digital literacy' (LATAZ/Hilderstone).
- **Non-alignment of academic calendars:** 'Attendance was low and reports suggest that this was due to it taking place at the beginning of the school year when other priorities were evident for the teachers' (BRAZ-TESOL/CES).

- **Language proficiency:** 'Many answered the needs analysis/initial consultation in Spanish which may suggest that they are either not confident in their own level of English to participate… or simply do not have time' (HELTA-TESOL/Speak Up).
- **Poor connectivity:** 'The use of Zoom was simply not possible for the focus group given the location and connection problems' (LATAZ/Hilderstone).
- **Working across time zones:** 'Due to time differences, email was the preferred communication channel but on reflection, this may have led to disengagement due to the lack of interpersonal relationship development' (HELTA-TESOL/Speak Up).

(b) Scheduling of M&E activities

'Feedback was not always constant … We could not predict when the teachers would be able to use the materials because of their workload and curriculum commitments, so when they used the materials, they sent feedback' (BETA/Eurospeak); 'Because the conference came at the end of the project cycle, we had little opportunity to make significant changes based on the feedback' (GU/Sheffield).

(c) Disparities across the target context

'It was difficult to collect data that would be true representation of the whole country, there are extreme variations between the capital and townships' (TSB/Capital).

(d) Lack of critical feedback

'Feedback was always returned with gratitude and thanks for our work, however, there was little communication outside this structure, which made it difficult for our teachers to improve or edit materials moving between modules' (ELTAMK/inlingua); 'When responding to open questions in questionnaires, respondents often express gratitude for the project at the expense of critical feedback' (GETC/NSC).

(e) Limitations of quantitative tools

'This comprised solely quantitative data, which made assumptions about the teachers' time, comfort with the activity, analytical competence, and didn't expand on the details of what we could do to improve the resource' (APC-ELI/LILA*).

2.5.2 Monitoring and evaluation: successes

By testing and experimenting with a number of different approaches to M&E over the course of the project, partners were able to identify a number of useful points of learning in their reports.

In particular, they emphasise the importance of:

(a) Building meaningful connections with end-users

'Fostering rapport with focus group teachers is vital in gaining meaningful feedback' (MELTA/CEA); 'Valuing feedback required a deep understanding and respect for cultural differences and creating a safe, comfortable, and trusted environment for everyone to share their opinions and perspectives openly' (TSB/Capital).

(b) Being willing to change approach

'The data collection was successful as we constantly adapted and responded to the varying ways and forms of getting feedback or obtaining information' (TSB/Capital).

(c) Giving end-users ownership over the M&E process

'The group rejected the use of questionnaires and written feedback in favour of Zoom calls where they could discuss the lessons in detail, and as a result had significant impact on the materials design' (LAKMA/Bell).

(d) Working with small groups

'This enables the UKI to develop a close relationship with those teachers, responding to their feedback and encouraging further updates. Larger groups are difficult to monitor and participants are less likely to see the value of their contribution' (GETC/NSC).

(e) Making M&E processes time and resource efficient

'Feedback forms should be short and simple to consider time and data limitations of teachers' (MELTA/CEA).

(f) Providing models of useful feedback

'It is important to provide clear instructions including examples of the kind of feedback, both positive and negative, that is expected' (GETC/NSC).

(g) Demonstrating an openness to critical feedback

'Feedback needs to be analysed from different perspectives. While at first glance it seems negative, a different perspective on the context the feedback has been provided from might be the key to what is missing rather than it not being successful in achieving your aim' (BRAZ-TESOL/CES).

2.6 Outcomes

2.6.1 Outcomes for end-user teachers

The project had positive outcomes for the end-users of the materials, which is best described in the words of the teachers themselves:

> *So far, the materials are very useful for me, the lesson plans are also simple so that any teacher can work with them without problems.* – Teacher, Mozambique

> *I think English Cuppa is a playground for me. I can create materials by using your template. I think your template makes me create more and more materials with the right directions … (because, sometimes, I don't know how to start creating sheets). It makes me really enjoy in this website.* – Teacher, Thailand

> *I love the designed material of the flashcards. Colorful flashcards attract students' attention and make learning visually appealing. The organization of the provided worksheets are great not only because of their layout but also because they go from simple to complex taking into account the lack of the resources in schools.* – Teacher, Argentina

> *I loved the way they (lesson plans) were so much organised. The step-by-step instructions were so clear. It was a little bit unique because students are used to different styles of teaching. So, when we bring this method, they are so excited and you grab their attention quickly.* – Teacher, Uganda

2.6.2 Outcomes for ETAs

Positive outcomes of the PRELIM 3 Project for English Teacher Association partners include:

(a) Increased membership activity/engagement

'By hosting the materials on the BRAZTESOL website and making them available to non-members of the organisation, it is hoped that it might encourage more teachers to join the organisation and participate in the numerous CPD events the organisation holds for teachers' (BRAZ-TESOL/CES); 'It has opened avenues for future workshops, and the creation of a new chapter in the township of the ETA' (TSB/Capital).

(b) Outreach into new sectors

'Prior to this project, LATAZ had very little involvement with the primary sector, but they have now forged a strong relationship which they hope will continue' (LATAZ/Hilderstone).

(c) Project management and leadership skills

'The PRELIM 3 project gave us an opportunity to examine our project management skills … It helped us discover our strengths and also our weaknesses and now we can work to improve them' (ELTAMK/inlingua); 'We also learned that sharing duties and responsibilities is very important. CEA brought to our MELTA extra knowledge, experience and skills that will help us in case we are engaged in a similar project in future' (MELTA/CEA); 'The project has also enhanced our capacity to handle grant-funded projects under uncertain circumstances. There is equally a significant improvement in the project team's capacity to collaborate with people of different professional orientations to achieve project goals' (LATAZ/Hilderstone).

(d) Capacity-building and CPD opportunities for members

'For many of them it was also their first chance to present at a conference, so it was not only informative for the teachers attending but also part of the presenters' own professional development' (GU/Sheffield); 'Training workshop leaders from seven provinces was capacity building for ANELTA in their bid to provide more decentralised training' (ANELTA/St Giles).

2.6.3 Outcomes for UKIs

Positive outcomes of the PRELIM 3 Project for UK-based partners include:

(a) Improved course offer for new/existing markets

'Considering inlingua Cheltenham's current expansion into the teenage market, this gave us an opportunity to focus our attentions on developing materials for this important learner demographic' (ELTAMK/inlingua); 'LILA was also provided with the opportunity to review and adapt existing materials. This includes potentially revising our summer junior syllabus to better cater to students of different nationalities and learning preferences' (APC-ELI/LILA*).

(b) Materials writing skills

'Developing materials which acted as a springboard for teachers to address a range of cross curricula topics with their students pushed our team to its creative limits and outside our comfort zones as material writers' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/PLS); 'We have learned how to design resources that are suitable for various media and have selected tools (such as Canva) that can be used to create both online and offline resources' (APC-ELI/LILA*).

(c) In-house capacity building

'The value of involving both experienced and early career teachers in lesson design, piloting and giving feedback. Perhaps this is obvious in hindsight, but we started out enlisting only experienced teachers and trainers' (LAKMA/Bell); 'Involving more teachers in the design phase of the project can add to the quality and variety of materials included in the resource pack. It can also add value in raising teachers' awareness of their own experience and skills' (GETC/NSC).

(d) Enhanced intercultural understanding and global perspectives

- 'We have both, UKI and ETA, gained a deeper understanding of each other's culture, teaching environments and teaching methodologies' (TSB/Capital).
- 'This project has allowed the CEA team to better understand the challenges faced by many English language teachers worldwide who lack facilities such as reliable internet, access to online resources, access to physical resources in and outside the classroom. The creativity and passion of the Mozambican teachers and the MELTA team has been a reminder that the heart

of teaching is making connections with students and sharing values and dreams for the future' (MELTA/CEA).

- 'Feeling connected to other teachers around the world who are dedicated to developing best practice and seeing videos of how they try to achieve this, creates a professional kinship and a global citizenship as a teacher' (ANELTA/ St Giles).
- 'Whilst the UK has had challenging times the issues raised by our ETA colleagues over the last 15 months helps put our UK challenges into perspective – these included a dengue epidemic, hurricanes, floods – yet despite these challenges the ETAs gave a tremendous commitment to the overall success of our PRELIM III project' (APIBA, APISE, ASPI & FAAPI/ PLS).
- 'ELT can contribute meaningfully to societal change by creating values-driven materials' (PERUELTNET/ASCEI/York).

2.6.4 Outcomes for NILE project management

(a) The nature of the support

The project management role was largely carried out at the individual partnership level rather than with the UKI group as a whole. This is an outcome of the following features:

- The range of activity trajectories in the partnerships.
- The range of the challenges faced at different times and their prioritisation.
- The varying prioritisation of the project itself for the partners as they negotiated their other duties and tasks.

Although this led to an increased workload for the project managers, a benefit was that we probably came to a better understanding of how the individual partnerships were working through the numerous zoom meetings and email communications.

(b) Managing the variety

Given the range of partnership activities, it was important to maintain a sense of progress across the programme as a whole. The following strategies were used here:

1. Regular bi-weekly meetings between the two project managers where we identified areas of overlap and possible links between partnerships for sharing in the individual meetings.
2. A Project Output Summary database where all the partnerships shared the details of their project outputs, such as content, formatting, dissemination plans, M&E approaches, etc. as well as links to a Google Drive with samples of the resource packs created. This was updated by both the UKIs and the project managers on-going and available to all.
3. Periodic UKI Zoom meetings focussing on different aspects of the programme, where strategies shared in the working groups were collated and disseminated throughout the group on Google Docs.

Maintaining a sense of progress and cohesion across the partnerships is important, especially in PRELIM 3 which was characterised by relatively low-intensity activities over a long time period. Any similar programme would benefit from greater project management resourcing to enhance this role.

(c) External monitoring and evaluation

In addition to this project managers' report, the British Council commissioned an independent consultant to conduct an external evaluation of PRELIM 3 (see section 3 of this report for the executive summary). The involvement of an external M&E function was a positive feature of PRELIM 3. Although the reports created as a result were for a more general audience and at a less-detailed level than our own records, the activity provided a sense of cohesion and momentum at key milestones of the project, and supported the partnerships in maintaining a perspective that they were part of a larger project. In addition, the approach taken was helpfully collegial in that our input was sought in the creation of the tools and the editing of reports then created.

In any future programme, however, it might be valuable to include a review of project management activities. By including this feature of the programme in the M&E, recommendations for action by the project management team might be more usefully made.

(d) Approaches to partnership working

PRELIM 3 provided more evidence that a practitioner's overall approach and attitude towards their colleagues will most effect the success of a project. Where partners have shown a desire to understand, to trust and respect, and to be open to exploring possibilities together, then the development of not only the resource output, but also the partners themselves, is evident.

For ourselves, once again, the NILE project management team has learned a great deal. We needed to re-adjust how we supported the partnerships considerably over the course of PRELIM 3, and this was a highly developmental experience. We ourselves benefitted greatly from the support and trust of the British Council project team who were always available for advice and discussion throughout the programme. Simply put, we have learned a great deal from a number of highly effective professional ELT organisations and individuals and the valuable insights into effective working practices that they have shared.

3 External evaluation: executive summary

The Executive Summary below is taken from the PRELIM3 external evaluation report written by Simon Borg. For a copy of the full report, contact TeachingEnglish@britishcouncil.org

The third Partnered Remote Language Improvement project – PRELIM3 – consisted of 25 partnerships between accredited UK English language teaching institutions (UKIs) and English Teacher Associations (ETAs) outside the UK. From December 2022 until March 2024, the partners developed and disseminated packages of supplementary resources for teachers of English in each ETA context. The project was funded by the British Council and delivered in partnership with English UK and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). It was project-managed by the Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE).

An external evaluator was engaged at the start of the project, and a monitoring and evaluation framework was developed which included project indicators of success with associated targets. These were assessed through a series of evaluation reports produced over the course of the project and this final evaluation synthesizes insights from these reports to assess the extent to which PRELIM3 met its targets. The results presented here are very positive – against 36 indicators of success defined in the evaluation framework for PRELIM3, 28 were met, four were partially met and four were not or could not be assessed.

All 25 partnerships delivered the primary output for the project and, as a result, new resource packages for English language teachers are available in 25 countries. Each package was informed by a needs analysis of the context and designed with local relevance, feasibility and ease of use in mind. Although dissemination was ongoing at the end of the project, feedback from ETAs and their teachers on the value of the resources was very positive.

UKIs and ETAs identified a wide range of benefits to them of participating in the project. Improvements were reported by both parties in knowledge and skills in relation to several areas of ELT materials design and evaluation, project management, international collaboration, working with remote partners, and (especially for the UKI) collecting and analysing feedback data. ETAs also noted how being part of the project had enhanced their local profile. They also felt that the project had confirmed or enhanced their views about the UK as a source of expertise in ELT.

While acknowledging the success of the project, this final evaluation also reflects on challenges that arose for the partners. These included establishing productive working relationships, defining roles and responsibilities and agreeing and adhering to a realistic project timetable. Especially earlier in the project, UKIs generally found it difficult to obtain timely, insightful and actionable feedback from ETAs and teachers on the resources being developed. The extended timeframes available for PRELIM3 meant that partners were able to address such matters, though, at the same time, the length of project added to its complexity, particularly where partners' academic calendars were not well-aligned. Once the dissemination grants were released to ETAs in the final phase of PRELIM3, a significant difference in their engagement in the project was noted.

This report concludes with 13 recommendations for enhancing future projects of this kind. These include:

1. defining appropriate project time-scales
2. enhancing support for partners outside the UK
3. the need for a clear and realistic division of roles and responsibilities among partners
4. closer analysis of the implications for partners' work of significantly different academic calendars
5. earlier provision of funding to support the engagement of non-UK participants
6. provision of structured collective input for project partners on key common project activities
7. summarising key lessons learned (including through UKI and project manager final reports)
8. establishing formal mechanisms for assessing the quality of project outputs
9. conducting a medium-term analysis of project impact
10. sustaining the model of external evaluation established on PRELIM3, including the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework and indicators of success.