

# Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Concept of the DAAD

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## Preface

The DAAD continually strives to improve its operations and activities. Substantiated findings based on monitoring and evaluation enable us to assess existing concepts and approaches and contribute to advancing programme-specific and institutional learning.

The thematic complex of monitoring and evaluation has seen its national and international importance grow in recent years. The focus not only lies on quality assurance, but also evidence-based project management and strategic development. Against this backdrop, the need for quality and precision of monitoring and evaluation measures has unarguably increased.

The following integrated concept takes the evolving framework conditions into account. We propose new approaches and formats to augment tried-and-tested measures and achieve greater data efficiency. The result is a concept which calls for more intensive institutional learning, increases the quality and efficacy of DAAD programmes and supports the overall strategic orientation of the DAAD.

### **1. Prerequisite for success – Harmonising monitoring and evaluation approaches**

The DAAD promotes the exchange of knowledge – not only globally through out international networks and partnerships, but also internally on the basis of the following concept. The monitoring and evaluation system presented below enables the DAAD to continue learning as an institution and improve its activities in a targeted manner.

This not only entails the transfer of expertise, but also ensuring efficacy, target-group orientation and quality standards. The following concept harmonises and systematises the corresponding approaches and formats, promotes institutional learning and facilitates ongoing quality assurance of its programmes. With the aid of integrated monitoring and evaluation concepts, the DAAD can further develop its activities on an improved empirical basis, provide project guidance and strategically shape its portfolio going forward.

Several new evaluation formats which are especially suited to addressing issues that apply to all programmes were introduced in connection to the integrated monitoring and evaluation concept. These serve to augment the periodic interim evaluations. The basis for these programme-specific analyses consists of data and statistics drawn from monitoring measures.

Over the past years, the number of surveys and evaluations carried out by the DAAD has significantly increased. This revised monitoring and evaluation concept allows us to reduce the number of smaller evaluations and focus more strongly on strategically relevant surveys. To this end, we are focusing more strongly on comprehensive monitoring. We will continue to use previously collected data and the results of evaluations already carried out, as these are often of great value to current projects. This will reduce the need for new data and ensure that existing data is used efficiently.

## 2. Monitoring and evaluation standards of the DAAD

The monitoring and evaluation standards of the DAAD allow us to realistically plan evaluation and monitoring projects and carry them out successfully. They ensure that the results are valid and can be used beyond the scope of the corresponding project or programme.

The DAAD bases its monitoring and evaluation standards on those followed by the German Evaluation Society (DeGEva – Gesellschaft für Evaluation e.V.).<sup>1</sup> Internally and externally conducted evaluations are measured against this benchmark of quality, along with the monitoring activities at the DAAD. These are based on five central principles:

### 1. Useability

Evaluations and monitoring are especially useful when they contribute to institutional learning beyond simply measuring the success of a programme. This means identifying relevant aspects which could generate new ideas and benefit further development. Therefore, it is essential that analyses are planned well in advance and that the results are available in time to inform decisions on funding measures and follow-up applications.

### 2. Efficiency

There must be an appropriate balance between the use of monitoring and evaluations and the effort required to implement them. In order to reduce the burden as much as possible for third parties – e.g. the surveyed individuals – previously collected data is made available for further analyses. New information is only gathered if there is no other way to obtain it. Moreover, we only collect data required for the stated purpose. This ensures that when developing monitoring measures to accompany our programmes or projects, only collected data is relevant and can be used for the evaluations.

### 3. Feasibility & Fairness

Evaluations are planned and conducted in such a way that they elicit the highest degree of acceptance from the various participants and concerned addressees. Consequently, it is crucial to incorporate the various perspectives of the participants into the process. The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.degeval.org/degeval-standards/standards-fuer-evaluation/>

applied approach and reporting thereof should have a neutral character. The participating institutions and persons are then informed of the results.

#### **4. Accuracy**

The concept and implementation of evaluations are described as accurately and comprehensively as possible. What exactly is the subject of the evaluation? Are the questions straightforward? Is the period of time clearly defined? When analysing the responses, it is important not to lose sight of the context. Established criteria are used to assess the efficacy of the evaluation and whether the target was achieved.<sup>2</sup> The methods and data are triangulated during implementation.

#### **5. Transferability**

The DAAD oversees a broad portfolio of funding programmes, each of which corresponds to the requirements of the respective funding providers and target groups. Despite their many differences, the DAAD applies similar funding modules to all programmes and projects. Often there are only small differences in the desired impact of our fundable activities. Interactive effects allow us to compare the results of structurally and thematically related funding programmes. The interactive effects are already developed in the programme's development phase. For older programmes, these effects can be reconstructed through evaluations or the introduction of monitoring measures.

### **3. How the DAAD defines efficacy and impact**

Programme management is only successful if its results and effects are relevant, visible and verifiable. To ensure this is the case, it is necessary to determine at an early stage which results and impacts are desired for each respective programme and what measures are required to achieve these. Based on past experience or theoretical assumptions, periods of time are defined, in which the desired short-, medium- and long-term effects can be realistically achieved.

#### **a. Terminology**

Standardised terms enable us to implement clear approaches and provide a common understanding of what exactly constitutes the "impact". The terminology presented here is based on the terms provided by the OECD/DAC. They have been used consistently at the DAAD since 2013. They are used to differentiate between various levels which build on one another:

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<sup>2</sup> Specific indicators are derived for this purpose. These should be "SMART", i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

**Inputs:** All material and non-material resources which are integrated into a project are considered inputs. These can include financial and personnel resources, as well as infrastructural resources. They are provided by the DAAD and its partners, e.g. member universities.

**Activities:** All measures that are eligible for funding are regarded as activities. These can include, e.g. events, professional training seminars, project-related stays, or the development and revision of teaching materials.

**Outputs:** All the results of the activities are summarised at the output level. Outputs could be, for example, improved language abilities or acquired personal skills. At the project level, outputs can be curricula or teaching modules which were jointly developed as part of the project. Initiating research projects and establishing networks are also outputs.

**Outcomes:** Outcomes describe short- and medium-term programme effects which result from the application and usage of outputs. Depending on the programme, outcomes can have different effects at varying levels. For instance, an outcome at the individual level can occur when the funding recipient applies his/her newly acquired abilities or language skills while carrying out a professional activity. At the university level, an outcome can describe the introduction of newly developed curricula or newly initiated research projects on specific research topics.

**Impacts:** These are considered to be long-term effects which the DAAD strives to achieve with its programmes. At the individual level, the impact can refer to improved career opportunities resulting from one's expanded language abilities. An example at the university level would be the structural reinforcement of teaching activities through the further development and application of curricula. The programme goals at the impact level often cannot be observed in a single programme cycle. Because of their long-term perspective, not all impacts can be attributed to individual programmes.

## b. Schematic representation of the results framework

It is possible to schematically represent the results framework for funding programmes, comprising central theoretical assumptions, the intended effects and the expected interdependencies between them. The key questions in this regard are: What changes and results (outputs) do we hope to achieve with which activities? What direct effects (outcomes or impacts) are intended?<sup>3</sup> Diagram 1 illustrates such a chain of effects.

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<sup>3</sup> Inputs are usually specified in standardised form (programme funding, expertise, consultation, personnel-based infrastructure) and were not represented in this sample diagram.

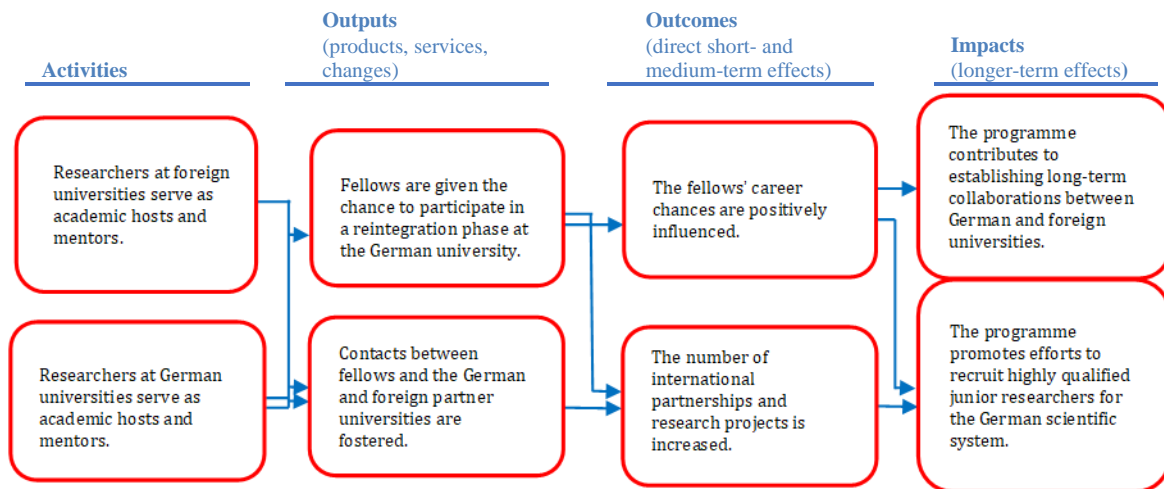


Diagram 1: Chain of effects from the results framework for the programme Postdoctoral Researchers International Mobility Experience (P.R.I.M.E.) (2016)

With the aid of results frameworks, we can illustrate the complex interconnections between effects. By linking the effective elements, the theoretically assumed relationships between individual levels and elements become apparent.

With accompanying monitoring activities and especially evaluations, we can continually monitor whether the programmatic intention as put forth in the chain of effects truly corresponds to the real-world implementation of the programme. If not, the findings should serve as the basis for adjustments. This is mainly achieved by reformulating the intended goals. One can also make changes to the programme and its funding benefits. This usually applies to the offered measures.

One of the main reasons for outlining chains of effects and results frameworks is to simplify what is normally a complex reality. The value of these models is that they are sufficiently complex to convey the central programme idea, while simple enough to facilitate a corresponding analysis.

### Impact begins at the planning stage

To achieve the greatest programme success, results frameworks are created in the planning stages of the funding programmes and harmonised with the programme goals. One of the main tasks is to define binding and measurable goals. The function of these goals varies depending on the type of funding. In the area of project funding, for example, applicants can use the guidelines for an impact-oriented project planning. In addition, the goals are key factors for the annual reports by the project organisers during the implementation phase. The goals are regularly reviewed by monitoring and evaluation measures and adjusted if necessary. In the area of individual funding, the goals are formulated in such a way that they can be assessed in hindsight through participant questionnaires.

## 4. Monitoring and evaluation: Differentiation and synergies

### a. Differentiation between monitoring and evaluation

The DAAD measures the effects of its programmes, first through monitoring and secondly, through evaluations. Both instruments differ with respect to their intended purpose. Basically, monitoring is a tool that gathers data used for project management, while evaluations focus on and assess the project's overall results.

**Monitoring** is a continual process of data collection of previously defined indicators at the activity, output and outcome levels. It provides the supervisors and primary stakeholders of an ongoing project or programme with information on the progress achieved and allows them to actively manage the project.<sup>4</sup>

Monitoring provides a basis of data for estimating whether the desired goals and their intended effects are being achieved. Only in this way can we document the progress of programmes and projects. This allows us to acknowledge outstanding results where success is evident, and to alter course where it is not. An exhaustive assessment of whether a programme has progressed successfully is generally possible after several data collection cycles which consist of comparative values from previous years. The concept paper on impact-oriented monitoring provides a detailed description of the monitoring process used at the DAAD.<sup>5</sup>

**Evaluation** is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to monitoring, the focus of evaluations often lies on the empirical resilience of causal relationships in the programme theory (visualised by the various levels of the results framework). An analysis of the monitoring data would only be useful to a limited degree because monitoring collects and assesses information on individual elements in the chain of effects independently from one another in terms of their corresponding indicators. With evaluations, the focus lies on multiple data and method triangulation; data drawn from various sources are collected using different quantitative and qualitative methods in order to arrive at a comprehensive and differentiated estimate.

In contrast to monitoring, evaluations also examine further quality criteria which enable us to comprehensively assess the funding measure. The following criteria are derived from the

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<sup>4</sup> See OECD (2009). DAC glossary of key terms from the area of evaluation and results-oriented management.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www2.daad.de/medien/der-daad/unsere-aufgaben/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/pdfs/monitoringkonzept.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2009). DAC glossary of key terms from the area of evaluation and results-oriented management.



provisions of the German Federal Budget Regulations and are based on the above-mentioned OECD/DAC terminology:

- **Effectiveness, target achievement and impact**

Are appropriate instruments being applied? Are the intended goals and effects being achieved?

- **Efficiency**

Is there an appropriate balance between effort and use? Are the projects or programmes being conducted efficiently?

- **Relevance**

Are the funding programmes still attractive and useful for the target groups?

An additional criterion is **sustainability**. For projects or programmes with longer funding periods, we examine whether the effects of funding are long-lasting and whether they can be a springboard for further measures. The criterion of **coherence** is another important factor which the OECD reintroduced in 2019 and the DAAD also considers. Its purpose is to ascertain to what extent individual funding programmes are coordinated and interlinked.<sup>7</sup>

The depth of the analysis of individual criteria can vary from evaluation to evaluation. The important thing is that evaluations are **designed for specific occasions and are guided by specific interests**, and consequently address corresponding focal areas.

## b. Synergies between monitoring and evaluation

As described above, monitoring and evaluation are characterised by different aspects. Nonetheless, both measures contribute to the systematic study of a project's progress, target achievement and impact. Consequently, with respect to data efficiency, it makes sense to take advantage of how their investigation of effectivity overlaps. On one hand, the existing data generated by monitoring is made available for evaluations. On the other, evaluations serve to regularly review the programme theory which underlies the monitoring and thus enhance the precision or reveal the need for adjustments to the results framework.

In evaluations of project funding, data is made available which was gathered through impact-oriented monitoring, and which correspond to the effect mechanisms mentioned above. This leads to more efficient evaluations since they draw on essential information on target achievement – normally at the output and outcome level. By analysing this data, we can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project even before evaluating the subsequent surveys. Questions can be more specifically formulated, which in turn allows us to design more specifically targeted evaluations.

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>  
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Individual funding takes place through scholarship awards. In this case, impact-oriented monitoring requires a three-stage survey of scholarship holders which essentially provides the basis of data for the evaluators. Scholarship holders who are supported for longer funding durations are sent a questionnaire at the beginning and end of their funding period. The third and final questionnaire is sent three years after the conclusion of their scholarship.

## 5. Types of evaluation and approaches

The DAAD differentiates between periodic and superordinate evaluation formats. In both cases, the purpose determines the choice of evaluation. New approaches are also tested on a regular basis and applied more frequently if needed. The following is an overview of the commonly used formats:

### a. Superordinate evaluation formats

Superordinate strategic evaluation formats are an important innovation in our current concept. They allow us to conduct systematic analyses of entire programme types or areas. These are based on existing and available data from a multitude of projects and programmes. They serve to highlight overarching strengths, weaknesses and potentials. Superordinate evaluations promote institutional learning and aid the strategic orientation of the DAAD. The following evaluation formats are used in the DAAD context:

**Thematic and strategic evaluations:** Thematic and strategic evaluations allow us to produce analyses of overarching programme themes. This type of evaluation is used whenever the intent is to examine and analyse content outside the context of departmental units. Information can be then presented in preparation of strategic decisions.

**Composite evaluations:** Composite evaluations consist of an aggregation of various types of review processes. They are based on comparative systematic analyses of previously conducted evaluations on similar subjects. By systematically comparing prior evaluations, we can generate generally-applicable findings. Projects and programme groups can thus be improved on the basis of composite evaluations.

**Portfolio analyses:** Using portfolio analyses, we can comparatively assess current projects and programmes if no evaluation reports are yet available. In contrast to composite evaluations, the focus here is on the interplay between individual projects and programmes. With the aid of portfolio analyses, we can answer such questions as: Does the current arrangement of a portfolio still make sense? Or: What regional or thematic adjustments could benefit the respective programme or project? Portfolio analyses also allow us to combine

project and programme evaluations. This reduces the need for individual evaluations and enables us to put existing resources to better use.

## b. Periodic evaluation formats

Periodic formats should aim to evaluate the majority of the programmes every five to ten years. The following formats belong to this type of evaluation and are regularly carried out at the DAAD:

**Final evaluations:** As the name implies, final evaluations serve to provide an overall assessment of the corresponding programme at the conclusion of its funding period. On one hand, final evaluations enable us to reflect on insights we have gained and on whether the desired goals were achieved, and on the other, help us prepare for new programmes (formative character).

**Interim evaluations:** A large number of DAAD programmes are designed to run for years without any defined endpoint. This applies in particular to individual funding. Consequently, the DAAD conducts interim evaluations of numerous programmes. These help us assess to what extent the desired goals of the programme have been achieved. The aim of interim evaluations is to obtain decision-making guidance on further programme development and confirm the continued relevance of funding. Multiple programmes of individual programme groups are jointly evaluated on a regular basis to reduce the number of evaluations.

**Retention studies:** The long-term effects of individual funding are often more difficult to measure. Retention studies can provide some insight in this regard. The DAAD is focussing more and more on this form of data generation. The results help the DAAD assess the benefits for individuals, universities and society over longer periods of time.

## 6. Outlook

This report has provided interested readers with an overview of the standards, principles and innovations in the area of monitoring and evaluation. As with all activities at the DAAD, the monitoring and evaluation systems undergo continuous review and adjustment. Innovative approaches and methods are regularly assessed and augmented if necessary. But what new approaches and developments are on the horizon?

While we are currently working on expanding our impact-oriented monitoring measures and adopting further strategic overarching programme evaluations, our focus in the medium term will be to further improve how we use the data we have.

Based on the standards described above, we will continue to use and present the collected data. The aim is to improve and more vividly convey the fundamental findings using innovative approaches in data visualisation. In addition, we shall intensify our efforts to tap the possibilities of data aggregation for analysing trends and issues of overarching



significance. The results will be integrated into internal strategy-building processes and made available to the public.

Monitoring and evaluation measures are never isolated from social trends and technical progress. While the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union provided the impetus for adjustments in recent years, current topics such as **sustainability and digitalisation** promise to play a more significant role in the future.



## Imprint

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