

**Evaluation of DAAD-Programme  
„Integrated International Degree Programme  
with Double Degree“**

**Final Report  
- Executive Summary -**

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# Executive Summary

Since 1999, the Integrated International Degree Programme with Double Degree (“Integrierte internationale Studiengänge mit Doppelabschluss”), financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), has promoted study programmes leading to a double degree or joint degree after the successful completion of studies at a German higher education institution alternating with studies at a foreign partner institution.

The programme is aimed at encouraging the academic mobility of German students, enhancing the exchange of teachers and students, and boosting the internationalisation of the German higher education institutions. Since 2000, a total of 1,049 project applications have been approved thus funding hundreds of degree courses (270 degree courses since 2009).

In the autumn of 2015, a consortium consisting of **evalag** and ASIIN was authorised to carry out an impact-oriented evaluation of the funding programme for the first time. The evaluation was to be completed by July 2016. The evaluation is based on a systemic model that mainly focuses on the target group of the funding programme, i.e. the German higher education institutions and those involved (students, teachers, and other staff).

In this light, the funding programme is considered to be an incentive for the internationalisation of higher education institutions. Its potential impact is investigated and the plausibility is ascertained. Being impact-oriented, the evaluation is not supposed to identify the cause and effect interdependencies clearly and beyond doubt. The basic assumption is rather as follows: achieving the goal and making an incentive such as the funding programme a success depends to a great extent on whether its embodiment and implementation encounter special conditions. These conditions are meant to allow the funding programme to initiate or promote the objectives of higher education institutions and the ambitions of their members – in a manner that is compatible with the circumstances.

Another foundation for the impact-oriented evaluation is the cause-effect interdependency system developed by the DAAD for the funding programme as well as the DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability.

The evaluation design is based on a triangulation of method and data, composed as follows: documents and (programme) statistics were analysed in terms of quantity and quality. Special attention was paid to the projects of the year 2012/2013 and their associated project documentation was evaluated. Two online surveys were carried out and involved 1,208 students/graduates (since 2011) and 516 project managers/project coordinators (since 2008). Furthermore, focus group discussions and guided interviews were conducted. The preliminary findings were discussed in an expert workshop.

Using this variety of methods the diverse aspects of the evaluation object are exploited from different perspectives. The findings obtained by different methods were subjected to a multi-stage verification procedure to find out whether there is plausible evidence for possible effects. It was also checked whether there was any evidence that challenges or disproves these findings. The ultimate objective of this procedure is to mitigate the uncertainty about the impact of this programme as it is not expected to furnish proof that some effects can clearly be attributed to the programme.

The findings were edited and prepared in line with the systemic model that sorts out the various elements from the cause-effect interdependency system along with the evaluation questions. It is subdivided into a macro level, a meso level, and a micro level: on the micro level, the analysis of the findings focuses on how the target groups made up

of students/graduates and project managers/teachers accepted and rated the programme. On the meso level, the main subjects of investigation are the central organisations responsible for introducing and conducting the programme: on the one hand the DAAD and on the other hand the higher education institutions. On the macro level, the programme's impact on society is addressed, i.e. its contribution to the internationalisation of the German higher education system.

### **Programme Goals and Connections to Other Programmes**

Looking first at the programme and its goals, its conformity with higher-level strategic objectives (of the DAAD and the BMBF) as well as possible complementary effects in connection with other programmes (Erasmus, etc.), the following can be established: the programme objectives are in line with the objectives of the DAAD and the BMBF. However, the programme objectives follow a narrower internationalisation approach and focus more on the students and higher education institutions in Germany. The programme positions itself in the context of a number of similar funding programmes from various institutions at the national, European, and international levels, but with a stronger focus on promoting internationalisation efforts at a structural level. When the funding programmes were compared to others it was found that they do not compete or give rise to any mutual interference; they in fact represent complementary funding possibilities (where required).

### **Programme and Contextual Requirements**

The focus of the funded double/joint degree programmes is on law, economic, social, and engineering sciences, organised in cooperation with higher education institutions. Most of them are located at universities in Europe. Double degree programmes are significantly more common than joint degree programmes and there is more cooperation in Master degree programmes than in Bachelor degree programmes.

With respect to the contextual requirements, external influences and their (in)direct effects on the programme design are considered first and foremost. The Bologna Process, its objectives, and the developments it initiated in the higher education system play a particular role here. Since this process is geared towards the internationalisation of the European higher education institutions, it strengthens the setup of double degree programmes and the establishment of a corresponding funding programme.

### **Implementation of the Programme at Higher Education Institutions**

With regard to the implementation of the programme at the higher education institutions, it is mainly the structural requirements and the measures taken to introduce international study programmes that are considered. This includes the internationalisation strategies as well as the demand for and interest in double degree and joint degree programmes which exist at the higher education institutions.

As the evaluation shows, initiatives for setting up partnerships are usually launched by individual university teachers and later are incorporated into an internationalisation strategy of the higher education institution. Indeed the findings suggest that there are differences between universities and universities of applied sciences. A striking aspect is the symbolic value attached to double degree programmes which does not match their public visibility (e.g. on the website).

Experience from existing co-operations can stimulate the interest in setting up double degree programmes; quite often, the higher education institution with which they al-

ready cooperate becomes the partner of choice. The interest of a higher education institution in a double degree programme sometimes sparks a complete redesign of the corresponding study programme. For German higher education institutions, the reputation of a higher education institution is an especially important criterion in the choice of partner.

Foreign partner institutions of higher education primarily expect better employment prospects for their own graduates with an additional degree from a German higher education institution.

Attracting highly qualified international students both as junior scientists for their own sake and as specialists for the job market appears to be another important motivation for German higher education institutions when setting up double degree programmes.

The findings from the evaluation of the documents and the surveys suggest that double degree programmes are usually chosen by a relatively small number of students for whom an accordingly smaller quota of university places is available. It is not possible to determine whether this is directly related to the character of the double degree programmes. The document analysis also shows that not all scholarships which were applied for under the programme were taken up.

Internet research reveals that, out of 270 study programmes funded between 2009 and 2016, 197 programmes were still running. The average duration of funding is approx. 2.7 years with a remarkable spread between shorter and longer durations. However, a direct correlation with the sustainability of the degree programmes cannot be proved, even though the online surveys and the focus group discussions clearly show a promotional effect on the scholarships and the material and staff resources. Here as well, it can be assumed, regarding internationalisation strategies, the size and type of the higher education institution, that double degree programmes will be run even without funding. This also corresponds to the results of the surveys. Within the scope of this investigation, however, it is not possible to perform an in-depth analysis of the decisive reasons or contextual requirements responsible for this phenomenon.

### **Experiences of Students and Graduates**

Even though the study programmes are limited and thus do not have a significant impact on overall student mobility (number of exchange students), they give great satisfaction to the “users”, i.e. the students: More than half of the students rate the study programmes as good or excellent. They particularly appreciate the breadth of the subject-related contents and their topicality. The feedback from the graduates is even more positive: about two thirds of the respondents judged the study programmes to be good or excellent.

The motivations for choosing this type of study programme clearly show how much value the students attach to its international character. In this context, the stays abroad, intercultural competencies, and foreign languages are frequently mentioned. The time spent abroad is also rated as good or excellent by most students. In this regard, however, minor differences between universities of applied sciences and universities can be observed.

The measures taken by the project coordinators to provide support and information play a major role for the students. Half of the interviewed students attached great importance to the information and support services offered.

With respect to the skills the students acquire in double degree programmes, the survey reveals the following: in their self-evaluation the students point out the increased international/intercultural competencies resulting from the double degree programme.

The project managers, in turn, particularly value the motivation, mobility, and international mindset the students gain from the double degree programmes. As expected, the stay abroad considerably boosts the acquisition of intercultural competencies.

### **Experiences of Teachers, Project Managers, and Project Coordinators**

The experience gained by the teachers, project managers, and/or project coordinators were analysed with regard to their level of satisfaction with the application and funding procedures, their rating of the support and information services within the scope of double degree programmes, and their assessment of the knowledge and skills they themselves acquired during the exchange. The project managers and project coordinators generally rate the knowledge and skills they acquired in the course of an exchange with a partner higher education institution as positive. This relates particularly to the relationship with colleagues at the higher education institution(s) and the acquisition of an intercultural understanding (for the host country). An important finding from the evaluation is that the cooperation often goes beyond the double degree programme and may comprise common research projects and publications. Apart from the teachers, the exchange also affects the scientific assistants and thus spreads the internationalisation to other areas of the higher education institutions. This is also facilitated by the support and information structures created thanks to funding, thereby supporting the establishment of long term networks at the partner education institutions.

### **Assessment of the Programme**

Following the analysis of the programme, its contextual requirements, and its implementation (at the higher education institutions and at the DAAD) as well as the evaluation of the experiences made by students, teachers, and project managers, an assessment of the programme is carried out. This assessment is based on the following criteria:

- impact, i.e. what effects do the double degree programmes at the individual, higher education institution, and systemic levels have
- effectiveness of the implemented funding measures with respect to the impact
- efficiency and
- sustainability.

### **Impact of the Programme**

Concerning the impact, it can be ascertained that the programme definitely encourages the mobility of students and staff at the individual level. While there are also clear indications of a positive development of the graduates' career opportunities, these are more likely to derive from the stay abroad than from the double degree itself. The findings also suggest that students in a double degree programme have a high affinity to foreign countries and are perceived as highly capable. At the higher education institution level, the goal could be achieved by establishing a considerable number (by international standards) of double degree programmes. However, a striking aspect is the rather small number of students in the individual study programmes and the fact that there is often a disparity in student mobility, i.e. the ratio of students exchanged between the partner education institutions. This has a negative impact on the reciprocity which is important for a long-term cooperation and networking. Nonetheless, the findings clearly demonstrate that the double degree programmes have spawned an increased cooperation between the higher education institutions, which goes beyond normal campus activities. In some cases, this cooperation even resulted in common research projects and publications. Especially remarkable is the development of cooperation structures within the same higher education institution, since this was not explicitly

formulated as a goal. This also contributes to the internationalisation in German higher education institutions. When considering the programme objectives at a systemic level, the symbolic value of double degree programmes within the discourse of internationalisation is perceivable. However, this does not correspond to the visibility of the study programmes. This programme has, nonetheless, distinct structural effects on the internationalisation of higher education institutions and promotes the mobility of the people involved. In contrast to other programmes, the effects on staff mobility are greater than on student mobility.

### **Effectiveness of the Programme**

The effectiveness of the programme was also examined at the individual, higher education institution, and systemic levels, i.e. to what extent the achievement of the goals stipulated for the cause-effect interdependency system can be traced back to the actual programme design and the individual funding instruments. It becomes clear that the funding of scholarships has a distinctly positive effect on student mobility, even though not all scholarships are taken up and students also benefit from other financing sources. It must be stated that subsidies granted to foreign students from developing and threshold countries have a limited positive effect in supporting these students because these subsidies are not sufficient to cover living costs in Germany.

The impact of the programme at the higher education institution level can be seen by the fact that there is still a demand for DAAD funding opportunities. This is backed up by the overall positive feedback regarding the planning and controlling of the programme. Even though this feedback on different aspects (DAAD portal, conditions for application, advice, etc.) is indeed heterogeneous, the advice and support services provided by the corresponding DAAD department receive very positive comments. The financial procedures and the reporting requirements, on the other hand, are perceived as bureaucratic and therefore assessed negatively. A particular point of criticism is the lack of flexibility in the disposition of funds, as it impairs the implementation of the programme by the higher education institutions. This is documented by the frequent notifications of changes in project implementation issued by the higher education institutions.

Considerations to extend the programme to PhD degrees are viewed rather sceptically.

### **Efficiency and Sustainability of the Programme**

The programme's complex call for proposals procedure and implementation are handled very efficiently. This can be seen in a review of the administrative programme handling procedures and of the available data on the expenses attributable to administration and programme funds.

The programme is generally judged to be sustainable at the individual, higher education institution, and systemic levels, but such predictions always bear some uncertainty and are influenced by various factors. Encouraging the mobility of students and staff not only has effects at the professional level, but also (long-term) consequences at the personal level. While these prove to be beneficial for graduates in developing their career, the long-term effect of staff mobility is more likely to materialise in the form of intra-institutional change. The enhancement of cooperation and networking that could also be observed in the higher education institutions is seen as a long-term process. Of course, it can be influenced by a change of framework conditions and/or by staff turnover at higher education institutions. All in all, the double degree programmes, and thus the funding programme, do indeed have a profound and long-term impact on the internationalisation of the higher education institutions.

## Conclusion

In summary, the key findings are: The programme was initiated at a time when internationalisation had already gained considerable importance in the German higher education institutions and many of them already maintained contacts with foreign higher education institutions. This evolution was accelerated by the Bologna Process, especially targeting the European partner countries. The demand for and development of the double degree programme reflects this evolution.

These more general framework conditions have a direct and indirect effect upon the impact of a programme. The establishment of joint/double degree programmes, occupies a – no doubt important – niche in the context of the internationalisation efforts in the German higher education landscape.

## Recommendations

Since the programme is generally judged to be successful, the recommendations suggest minor improvements rather than a new design:

### Recommendations to DAAD and BMBF

- **Make the programme objectives more concrete:** It is recommended to make the programme objectives described in the annual calls for proposals more concrete in order to obtain greater visibility of the expected contributions to internationalisation. This particularly refers to the programme objective "internationalisation of higher education institutions" which has to be made more concrete: the promoted mobility of students and teachers improves the institutional framework for internationalisation
  - by offering more support and information for international students
  - by promoting the mobility of scientific support staff.

In a first step this could be realized by listing the programme in the category "university cooperation and networking" and no longer under the heading "mobility" in the annual reports of the DAAD.

- **A wider concept of reciprocity instead of balanced student exchange:** A balanced ratio of exchange students and teachers cannot always be achieved. Nevertheless, the cooperation between the partner universities often also encompasses other activities such as joint research or publications and thereby both sides benefit from the mutual exchange. Reciprocity can be achieved in this way even in the case of non-balanced student exchanges. The expectation of a balanced exchange ratio of students from the partner universities involved should therefore be replaced by a concept of reciprocity.
- **Making fund allocation more flexible:** It is recommended to make the conditions for granting funds more flexible so that the higher education institutions can be permitted more leeway for using the funds in a way that suits their needs. This increased flexibility should allow both for transferring funds between fiscal years and for converting full scholarships to partial scholarships or vice versa during the funding period as necessary. While it is foreseeable that this measure will eliminate the flexibility of the responsible department regarding the utilisation of returned funds, the higher education institutions and DAAD have gained sufficient experience in the meantime in identifying bottlenecks with respect to available funds and in making corresponding adjustment agreed by both partners. This will probably entail an adaptation of the call for proposals and selection cycles.

- **Reassessment of selection and funding criteria:** It is recommended to discuss whether the selection of study programmes with higher student numbers could promote internationalisation or reinforce the efficiency of the programme. The limit of five scholarships should be reconsidered.

### Recommendations to DAAD

- **Programme monitoring:** In conjunction with a potential revision of the programme objectives, accompanying programme monitoring should be set up based on a revised cause-effect interdependency system. In view of these existing technological prerequisites, it is advisable to develop a true system for monitoring effectiveness that is in line with the (revised) cause-effect interdependency system. The purpose is to acquire and evaluate information on programme implementation in a systematic and continuous manner, which would create a prerequisite for self-evaluation to be carried out regularly.
- **Funding of universities of applied sciences and general universities:** The investigation yielded no satisfactory explanation for the discrepancies in the grant rates between requests from general universities and universities of applied sciences. It is recommended to perform an in-depth analysis of this issue in a follow-up investigation.

### Recommendations to DAAD and to the Higher Education Institutions

- **Tracing the careers of graduates:** Although the available findings suggest that a stay abroad leads to a more successful career, only assumptions can be made about the actual contribution of the double degree programmes. In this context, it would be advisable to set up an alumni network for seeking and maintaining contact with former graduates and carrying out regular surveys on their careers. Existing alumni networks of the universities should be involved in setting up such a "DAAD double degree alumni network". This might also increase the visibility of the programmes.
- **Sustainability:** It is recommended to advise the higher education institution to integrate the double degree programmes into a separate and clearly formulated internationalisation policy. Such an internal arrangement would have a positive impact on the sustainability of the funded double degree programmes. As a requirement for the application this would contribute to a more systematic integration of individual initiatives and involvement in the university policy. In the long term this may also improve structural requirements for sustainable study programmes and partnerships.

**Public relations activities at the higher education institutions:** The presentation of double degree study programmes on university websites often does not correspond to their high symbolic value. Higher education institutions that offer double degree programmes should be advised to make this more visible in their public presentation.

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## Further information sources

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DAAD-Programmausschreibung 2012/13

## Abbreviations

BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung
CHE	Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFH	Deutsch-Französische Hochschule
EACEA	Exekutivagentur für Bildung, Audiovisuelles und Kultur
EP	Erprobungsphase
ET	Etablierungsphase
EU	Europäische Union
EUA	European University Association
EUR	Euro
FH/HAW	Fachhochschule/Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften
HRK	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz
IIE	Institute of International Education
ISAP	Internationale Studien- und Ausbildungspartnerschaften
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz
UNIBRAL	Bilaterales Förderungsprogramm des DAAD mit Brasilien zur Hochschulzusammenarbeit
VP	Vorbereitungsphase