

Evaluation Report 2024 | Executive Summary

International Media Studies

DW Akademie's Master's Program: IMS

Background

As a joint project of the University of Bonn, the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and DW Akademie (DWA), the IMS program is an interdisciplinary and intercultural four-semester M.A. program combining topics such as media and development, journalism,

communication science and media management. Through a mix of lectures, practical experiences and research, students are prepared for leading positions in media organizations in their home countries. The IMS program admits up to 30 students in the fall semester every year, including

ten scholarship students who are required to spend three semesters in Germany and the last six months in their home countries to write their master's theses and build connections in their local job market.

This evaluation of the IMS program took place between July 2023 and January 2024, including a field trip to Bonn in October 2023. It focuses on the outcomes of the IMS program and is based on the six OECD/DAC criteria. The evaluation should provide a basis for collaborative learning and inform follow-up projects and further development of the program.

Project evaluation results

Relevance

The program was found to comprehensively fulfil the relevance criterion by providing students with a highly relevant qualification. The findings showed the curriculum is highly relevant to the requirements for international specialists and executives in the media sector. Recent graduates confirmed that current topics such as *Media Literacy* and *Media and Gender* were well addressed in the program. Core topics also included *Artificial Intelligence*, *Media Viability* and *Digital Rights*.

International partnerships were also central to enriching the program. Students as well as international instructors expressed positive views on both the IMS program and the capacity building program, with instructors saying that exchange and networking helps them to improve their performance in their own universities. IMS students agreed that the program's international approach enabled them to gain knowledge and learn from others.

The core needs of the media sector in target countries were key in designing the new French master's program, which also contributed to the high score for relevance. The French program differs from the English program in that students are required to do more practical work, especially in digital journalism.

Coherence

The program comprehensively fulfils the coherence criterion. Interviewees agreed that the restructuring of the IMS program, whereby scholarship students spend their fourth semester in their home countries, helps students to enter the job market. Instructors/coordinators from German partner universities generally see this as a positive and useful step. They agree that international partnerships help students build more affiliations to their home countries and to localize the knowledge gained in the first three semesters.

Coherence is also demonstrated through the coordination and cooperation among DW Akademie country teams for the French program.

Effectiveness

The curriculum was found to comprehensively fulfil the effectiveness criterion by meeting the requirements of the target group. Instructors/coordinators from German partner universities agree that the curriculum aligns with current research which is specifically important for professionals in leading positions. Most interviewees found the IMS program applicable to the target countries. According to instructors from partner universities, the IMS curriculum was planned to meet local needs, as they participated in the planning and implementation stages.

The knowledge platform and the digital panel, which boosts academic exchange among lecturers from partner countries, was found to be extremely useful. Instructors use it to find data and as a teaching resource, and to upload data they find useful for others. As for the digital panel/webinar, international instructors believe it is a good opportunity for them to connect and learn about each other's research.

The French program team has also effectively considered ways to promote gender equality in the program. This is evident in planning all aspects of the program, updating the library with books by female authors, including in the curriculum topics such as *Media Literacy for Women and Safety of Female Journalists*, encouraging more applications from women with the aim to represent 70 percent of students and recruiting more female instructors.

Efficiency

In terms of the structure, content and organization of the IMS program to achieve the set goals with the available resources, the program was found to overall fulfil the efficiency criterion. Instructors from German partner universities agreed that the

program's resources were well utilized to help students achieve good results.

Members of the DW Akademie team, however, mentioned a few aspects related to the organization of the IMS program that need to be optimized, regarding the selection process of new students as well as the decision-making processes with the partner universities.

The French program team has proven operative efficiency in defining selection criteria for the French partner university, after contacting 12 universities in France and then conducting intensive discussions with three of them with a view to collaboration. The team selected the University of Tours based on its expertise, having the most economic quality-performance-cost-ratio, and showing significant openness to jointly develop the curriculum, a precondition to achieving DW Akademie's objectives. The University of Tours also has a large network in the program's target countries and experience in training journalists from these countries, which created mutual understanding and aligned with DW Akademie's strategy.

Impact

This criterion was comprehensively fulfilled. Instructors/coordinators from the German partner universities praised the program's international approach and structure, as well as its capacity to enhance exchange and offer important global topics such as fake news and media literacy, encouraging students to discuss and reflect on their national settings. Recent graduates found the program both challenging and engaging, as it is intensely structured, with a lot of work to do in a short time. They added that the scholarship is a great incentive and that the program meets the market demands of most countries.

As for the mentoring program, instructors/coordinators from international partner universities think it is very useful, as it provides them with international academic exposure. They would also like to see some long-term project connections with the DW Akademie, such as research projects, conferences and workshops, both physically and virtually, hosted not only by the German universities but also the local universities. Instructors also benefited from the mentoring program in their home universities.

Sustainability

This criterion has proven to be overall fulfilled, as instructors from partner universities believe that strong connections with local institutions, especially long-term ones, can make the program more sustainable. IMS alumni think connecting with alumni more often is key to sustainability, such as sending them a monthly newsletter, engaging them with activities, allowing them to attend classes online and share their experiences with colleagues, and/or inviting them to participate in online panels/discussions at least once a year.

As for strengthening and sustaining the partnerships with visiting lecturers and their institutions, instructors/coordinators from partner universities believe that more regular activities are needed to enhance sustainability, such as monthly meetings online.

In terms of strengthening the partner universities beyond the master program, visiting lecturers suggest establishing an alumni network to stay in contact with alumni, organize online activities and an annual reunion, perhaps during the annual Global Media Forum in Bonn, to sustain alumni relationships and for current students and instructors to benefit from their expertise.

Instructors/coordinators from partner universities believe the academic exchange visit was useful for sustainability, as it allowed them to transfer knowledge and skills acquired during the exchange to their students and colleagues.

The French program also plays a role in sustaining and enriching the IMS program overall. According to the French program team, there is huge potential for this project to contribute positively to the media system of partner countries, supporting partner

universities and realizing structural changes in those countries.

Selected recommendations

1. The IMS program should dedicate more time and/or extra time to media practice.
2. The English and French master's programs should create opportunities for dialogue and collaborations among students, lecturers and partner universities.
3. International instructors and students should be encouraged to use and benefit from the digital platform. It should be frequently updated and users should be notified about these updates and offered training or online videos about how to use it.
4. The capacity building program in Germany for English and French speaking partner universities should be continued with a second cycle.
5. The digital panel/webinar should be held more frequently, giving students and alumni the opportunity to participate and present their research. These webinars should be recorded and either placed on the online portal or published in a special journal issue or book.
6. Alumni who participate in these panels by presenting their research and engaging in academic discussions should get a participation certificate.
7. To enhance sustainability and engage local/regional researchers and alumni, on-site conferences should take place in different partner universities/countries in Africa and Asia. Here the concept and organization could to some extent be guided by an alumnus in the respective partner country.
8. DW Akademie should establish a clear plan to integrate alumni into the job market in their countries to realize the program's major goal.

DW Akademie

is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in around 70 developing countries and emerging economies.

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The objective of the external evaluation is to provide a constructive assessment of the project results. It does not necessarily align with the perspective and planning of DW Akademie. Nevertheless, all findings were discussed in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies.