

**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE  
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE****Information Note on the DAC Peer Review Process**

This document is issued to provide guidance on the process for preparing Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer reviews. It is for the use of all parties involved in the review, in particular, the reviewed member, the examiners, observers and the DAC Secretariat. It reflects adjustments to the DAC peer review reference guide and process adopted at the 21 February 2019 DAC Senior Level Meeting.

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## *Information Note on the DAC Peer Review Process*

1. This note is intended to outline and provide guidance on the process for preparing Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer reviews. It is for the use of all parties involved in the review – the reviewed member, the examiners, the DAC Secretariat, observers and, as appropriate, civil society and partner countries.
2. The DAC functions as a forum where bilateral donors come together to exchange experience and to address issues of common interest or concern. The overarching objective of the DAC is to promote development co-operation and other relevant policies so as to contribute to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, improvement of living standards in developing countries, and a future in which no country will depend on aid [DCD/DAC(2017)26/REV2]. Each member’s development co-operation system is reviewed and assessed by the DAC roughly every five years. The review makes recommendations and suggestions for improvement, and a follow up process ensures that lessons are translated into policies, programmes, and practices of the member.
3. The objectives of DAC peer reviews are to improve the quality and effectiveness of development co-operation policies and systems, and to promote good development partnerships for improved impact on poverty reduction and sustainable development in developing countries. DAC peer reviews therefore promote individual and collective behaviour change of DAC members to ensure their development co-operation policy framework and systems are fit for purpose. This is achieved through:
  - holding DAC members to account for the commitments they have made, and reviewing their performance against key dimensions of development co-operation and other domestic policies with an impact on developing countries; and
  - the learning and sharing of good practice.
4. Membership of the DAC obliges members to undergo peer reviews, and to serve as “examiners” in the review of other members. The peer review process relies upon two DAC members as examiners for each review.
5. The Secretariat designates, well in advance, the members to be reviewed and to serve as examiners in a given year. The Secretariat takes care to select for each review examining members with a programme of similar size and complexity to the programme being examined, and which can offer lessons as well as benefit from the learning opportunity that a peer review provides. Language and geography are other factors taken into account in matching examiners to each review.
6. The peer review involves five main stages: i) preparation and planning; ii) fact-finding, analysis and report writing; iii) the peer review meeting; iv) approval, publication and launch of the report; and v) follow-up. The fact-finding process includes a week-long visit to headquarters and may include up to two country visits – this is elaborated in more detail below. Throughout the process, the examiners, the reviewed member, and the Secretariat interact in a spirit of team collaboration, sharing information at all levels in order to facilitate both the organisation and the successful outcome of the Peer Review.
7. The Reviews, Results, Evaluation and Development Innovation (RREDI) Division of the Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) is responsible for conducting the

review process. The Head of the RREDI Division provides overall guidance and quality assurance for the process. A lead analyst is assigned to each peer review with responsibility for the day-to-day facilitation of the process and for drafting the report. A lead co-ordinator is also assigned by the reviewed member to facilitate these arrangements.

## The review team

8. The review team consists of two representatives from each examining country; and three to four Secretariat staff members, including a crisis and fragility expert. It is important, for substantive as well as logistical reasons, that the team is kept as small as possible.

9. The examiners are considered representatives of the DAC as a whole, and therefore both contribute to and learn from the peer review process. As outlined in the Terms of Reference [DCD/DAC(2019)20], they should be senior managers from headquarters, field offices or OECD delegations with significant previous experience - at least 10 years - in a range of management, operational and/or policy positions. Examiners should have a record in influencing and shaping development co-operation policies and practices at national and/or global levels and be able to share concrete examples from their own experience with the reviewed member. Examiners must be proficient in the nominated language of the review (English or French).<sup>1</sup> In member countries with a significant development agency, at least one examiner should come from this agency. It is important to have gender balance amongst the examiners. Examiners must participate actively in all aspects of the peer review process. Examiners are expected to cover the cost of their own participation in the peer review process including air travel, transfers, accommodation, meals and living costs.

10. A donor not a member of the DAC may participate as an observer in the Review process on condition that prior agreement is given by the reviewed country, and the examiners and the DAC are informed. An observership is an opportunity for the observer to learn first-hand about another development co-operation system and to share and use this experience in their home institutions. Observerships may also help the DAC to better understand and learn about non-DAC providers. The DAC has agreed on separate guidance for observers [DCD/DAC(2019)19]. The Secretariat facilitates the observerships, and any requests to serve as an observer or offers to host, should be sent to the Secretariat.

11. In addition, to make peer reviews more inclusive, civil society organisations and partner countries may also participate in peer reviews in an observer role, on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the reviewed member.

## Preparation and planning of the review

12. In starting the preparation and planning process, the Secretariat agrees with the reviewed member and the examiners a schedule including the provision of documentation by the reviewed member and timing of all missions.

13. Where the peer review involves one or more field visits, three months before the team undertakes the mission to the member's capital, the reviewed member proposes

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<sup>1</sup> The following peer reviews may be conducted in French, and will be published in both English and French: Belgium, Canada, European Union, France, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. Members are encouraged to keep this in mind when nominating staff as examiners.

options for partner countries to be visited. Guidance for selecting partner countries to visit as part of the peer review are outlined in [DCD/DAC(2010)19/FINAL].

14. At latest six weeks before the mission to the member's capital, the reviewed member submits to the Secretariat a complete country memorandum (maximum 40 pages, plus annexes), based on the outline of the DAC Peer Review Reference Guide [DCD/DAC(2019)3/FINAL]. This is an opportunity for the reviewed member to provide the peer review team with information on the national development co-operation system, including any reforms or critical changes since the previous review, and the challenges still outstanding. The memorandum serves as the basis for the consultations between the reviewed member and the reviewers and is published on the OECD Networking Environment (O.N.E.) early in the review process. This, and other background documentation, must be submitted to the Secretariat in either English or French.

15. It is important that the member under review submit its annual statistical report to the DCD Financing for Sustainable Development (FSD) Division no later than three months before the mission to the member's capital in order to ensure that the review is based on up-to-date information.

16. The Secretariat consults a wide variety of sources: key written documents, evaluations, audits, think tanks and media. In addition to a wide variety of consultations during headquarter and country visits (see below), it conducts interviews with key multilateral organisations on the member's performance as a multilateral donor, and, in discussion with the member, may seek input from a range of partner countries beyond that or those selected, if any, for the field visits.

17. In addition, as a part of the effort to be more inclusive, the Secretariat offers civil society platforms the opportunity to submit a contribution in the form of a note or a shadow memorandum. The aim is to collect their key messages on the reviewed member's development co-operation policy and on the quality of dialogue and partnership. Civil society platforms have the option of sharing the note or shadow memorandum either with the reviewed member, who will then share it with the Secretariat, or directly with the Secretariat.

18. The reviewed member makes funds available to DCD in the form of a voluntary contribution to support the overall cost of the peer review. Pledges and funds should be received at the beginning of the biennium, or latest at the beginning of the year in which the review will be initiated.

19. In addition to this voluntary contribution, the reviewed member is expected to cover extra costs associated with undertaking the headquarters and country visits, such as venue hire, transport out of the capital, official meals and interpretation (other than the nominated language of the review – English or French). Preferential rates are provided to the member for the cost of printing the report. The member also covers the cost of the official launch of the peer review – in the capital and, as appropriate, in a partner country – and translation and printing of the report in the national language.

### Fact-finding, analysis and report writing

20. **Methodology:** Fact-finding, analysis and report writing are guided by the DAC Peer Review Reference Guide, which sets out the key dimensions of analysis in reviews. The reference guide is approved by the DAC for a biennium and contains seven dimensions: (1) Global efforts for sustainable development; (2) Policy vision and

framework; (3) Financing for development; (4) Structure and systems; (5) Delivery modalities and partnerships; (6) Results management, evaluation and learning; and (7) Fragility, crises and humanitarian assistance. The report also contains a number of Annexes in standard format.

21. **Consultations:** While the Secretariat collects and analyses material from a variety of sources, consultations between the member and the review team are invaluable to the process. Such consultations are held both at headquarters and at the field level with the key institutions and partners. These consultations form the backbone of the fact-finding stage of the peer review process.

- **Mission to the Capital/Headquarters:** The mission to the capital seeks to cover all relevant areas of the reviewed member's development co-operation system. The Secretariat works directly with the reviewed member co-ordinator to organise a mission, normally lasting four to five days with the participation of all team members. The reviewed member is responsible for making all the arrangements for the visit including meeting schedules and local transport. Opening and closing sessions are commonly held with the head of ministry/agency. A range of other meetings within the aid ministry/agency and with other government departments, the national audit authority, Parliamentarians, civil society, NGO umbrella groups, academics and the research community are also held. The review team presents preliminary findings or "key impressions" to the reviewed member's representatives at a closing session, providing an opportunity for discussion and response. This document is submitted to the reviewed member only; it is not an official OECD document and should not be distributed further or published.
- **Field Mission:** Following the headquarters' visit, the review team normally undertakes one or two<sup>2</sup> – depending on the size and characteristics of the member's programme – country visits in order to gain an understanding of how policies are implemented. Country visits are typically one week in length. The need for a country visit is considered on a case-by-case basis. Alternative means may be utilised for a member with limited country programmes. Missions to partner countries are not intended to assess, in a comprehensive way, the relevance and effectiveness of the country programme of the reviewed DAC member, nor to evaluate individual projects. Rather, the review team focuses on generic or system issues and lessons that are representative of the reviewed member's development co-operation and which may be applicable elsewhere. The team meets with representatives of the reviewed member, as well as with a wide range of local stakeholders, including partner government officials, parliamentarians, civil society representatives and other donors. At the end of the mission, the team presents its "key impressions." A separate report of the country visit is included as an annex to the peer review report. Country visits are organised by the Secretariat directly with the reviewed member's representative in-country, who is responsible for all logistical arrangements, including notification of the partner country authorities.

22. **Drafting:** The Secretariat consolidates information gathered during the missions as well as from other sources. In consultation with the examiners, it drafts the two parts of the peer review report including the annexes. A draft of the Secretariat Report (Part II) is first

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<sup>2</sup> Two country visits are conducted for the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

shared with the examiners for comment and is subsequently sent to the reviewed member, allowing the member two weeks to undertake a factual check of the text. A thorough factual check is very important as this report forms the evidence base for the peer review's main findings and recommendations. The draft Secretariat report is posted on O.N.E three to four weeks ahead of the peer review meeting. The Secretariat encourages the examiners to collaborate particularly closely on the text of the draft Main Findings and Recommendations (Part I). All members of the committee, including the reviewed member, can access Part I from O.N.E. two weeks before the review meeting.

## Peer Review Meeting

23. The review process culminates in a half-day peer review meeting, led by the DAC Chair, at the OECD in Paris. The meeting focuses on a discussion in the Committee of the draft DAC Main Findings and Recommendations (Part I), presented by the examiners. The Secretariat Report (Part II), including the annexes on the country visit(s), may also be discussed. This is followed by a thematic session selected by the reviewed member focused on effectiveness, innovation and impact, to allow learning and sharing of good practice alongside accountability.<sup>3</sup>

24. The reviewed member's Delegation is typically led at political level, supported by relevant staff of the ministry or agency including their DAC Delegate. Members may agree to invite civil society and/or parliamentarians to the peer review meetings as part of their delegation or as observers. Members may also agree to support the participation of partner countries in the meeting. Participation should be discussed and agreed with the Secretariat well ahead of the meeting. The Delegation is given an opportunity to present its response to the report, and to engage in a debate with the DAC. While the examiners take the lead, other members of the Committee are invited and indeed encouraged to raise questions, offer comments and share their own experience in the interest of mutual learning. The DAC ultimately agrees recommendations to the member under review.

## Approval, Publication and Launch

25. Immediately after the peer review meeting, the Secretariat organises an editorial session in order to incorporate any comments from the DAC into the Main Findings and Recommendations (Part I). The editorial session is attended by the examiners, the reviewed member representatives and the Secretariat, who chairs. Revisions to the Secretariat Report (Part II) may be necessary to ensure coherence with any changes in Part I.

26. Changes to any of the documents are strictly factual or reflect an adjustment agreed by the DAC during the Peer Review meeting. For purposes of transparency, any change in language or disagreement with conclusions or recommendations should be raised by the reviewed member in the Peer Review meeting itself. This is to ensure that only issues that seem legitimate to other members are considered. The edited Part I text is sent to DAC delegates for final approval. After the three-day deadline the Secretariat cannot consider any further amendments.

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<sup>3</sup> Peer learning by the Committee is also supported by an annual learning event based on the themes that emerged from the reviews conducted that year, and contextualised with broader learning and trends, commencing in 2019.

27. At this stage, the Main Findings and Recommendations and the Secretariat Report are posted on O.N.E. in final form. The complete report is subsequently placed on the DAC web-site along with, subject to the member's approval, the memorandum. Publication of the report is usually timed with a launch in the reviewed member's capital, held within six weeks of the review meeting. The report is published through the OECD iLibrary, and it can also be published separately as a "pre-print" at the request and the expense of the reviewed member.

28. It has now become practice that the reviewed member invites the DAC Chair and/or the Secretariat to join in an event to launch the report to the media, civil society and other stakeholders. This serves to increase accountability at home and to increase awareness about the development co-operation efforts among the public. Members are also encouraged to launch the peer review report in parliamentary settings, with the presence of parliamentarians, government and civil society, as appropriate to their national context. Members are also encouraged to launch and disseminate their reviews in partner countries.

29. A link to the peer review report is systematically sent by the Secretariat to all stakeholders who were interviewed for the review, including in capitals, partner countries and in multilateral organisations.

### **Follow-Up: Management Response and Mid-term Reviews**

30. In support of and in addition to mid-term reviews, each member is invited to submit, on a voluntary basis, a management response to the peer review recommendations articulating the intended follow-up. The management response should be provided to the Secretariat within six months of the DAC peer review being published. The purpose of the management response is to strengthen accountability around the implementation of peer review recommendations, and to enable closer Secretariat follow-up and support, including through the mid-term review process.

31. Mid-term reviews, while voluntary, have become part of the standard peer review process. A senior representative of the Secretariat visits the headquarters of the reviewed member 24 to 36 months after the peer review meeting to discuss implementation of the DAC's recommendations. Prior to the visit, the reviewed member presents relevant information on actions taken or planned as a consequence of the peer review. Following the visit, a report is submitted to the DAC. Members are increasingly opting to publish the mid-term review report on the DCD website, or on their own websites.

Table 1. Overview of Peer Review – Illustrative Timeline

	Peer Review minus 9 months	Peer Review minus 4-5 months	Peer Review minus 2-3 months	Meeting & Editing Session	Post-Peer Review
Roles	Preparation	Visits to HQ & Field	Document Drafting	Peer Review Meeting	Publication & Follow-up
<b>DAC Chair</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets agenda with Examiners &amp; Secretariat</li> <li>• Chairs PR meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends Launch</li> <li>• Promotes main findings and recommendations on social media</li> </ul>
<b>Reviewed Member</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrees timeline with the Secretariat</li> <li>• Proposes Field Visit options</li> <li>• Submits Memorandum to Secretariat</li> <li>• Ensures annual Statistical Reporting has been submitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranges full agenda of meetings in collaboration with Secretariat.</li> <li>• Provides logistical support and ensures visit co-ordination.</li> <li>• For the country visit(s), field staff inform and co-ordinate with local authorities, in addition to above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides factual check of draft Part 2 report prior to publication on O.N.E.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to issues and questions raised by examiners and the DAC</li> <li>• Participates in editing session.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orders publications, as needed.</li> <li>• Launches the report, including in HQ, Parliament and/or partner country.</li> <li>• Submits management response within 6 months of publication (optional).</li> <li>• Facilitates Mid-Term Review 2-3 years after full review.</li> </ul>
<b>Secretariat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selects examining countries and briefs the examiners</li> <li>• Co-ordinates overall team planning.</li> <li>• Co-ordinates internally DCD/OECD</li> <li>• Sends Guidance material to Examiners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinates visits with reviewed member.</li> <li>• For the country visit(s), co-ordinates with the member's field staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads drafting of core documentation.</li> <li>• Publishes to O.N.E. prior to peer review meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Part 1: 2 weeks prior;</li> <li>– Part 2: 3-4 weeks prior.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Facilitates translation, when required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates organisation of the PR meeting</li> <li>• Supports Examiners during PR meeting.</li> <li>• Chairs the editing session directly after the meeting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publishes final report on O.N.E. and online.</li> <li>• Facilitates launch of the report.</li> <li>• Reviews management response, if submitted.</li> <li>• Initiates and undertakes Mid-Term Review and follow-up.</li> </ul>
<b>Examiners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Memorandum, and identify key issues</li> <li>• Participate in preparatory meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree field visit country based on Secretariat's analysis and recommendation.</li> <li>• Lead meetings and consultations during Missions</li> <li>• Share experience with reviewed member</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to core documentation: agree outline of the report and; comment on drafts of Parts 1 and 2.</li> <li>• Bring learning back to their own organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present Part 1 main findings and recommendations, and lead the discussion.</li> <li>• Agree any final edits to the documents during the editing session on behalf of DAC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback to Secretariat on PR experience (including via a survey).</li> </ul>
<b>Observer (as relevant)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in preparatory meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in preparatory meetings.</li> <li>• Participates in the Missions</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends DAC meeting, contributes perspectives and at the discretion of the Chair comments on Part 1.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides feedback to Secretariat on PR experience (including via a survey).</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Management Response – Draft Template**

Recommendation	Accepted Yes/No	Planned Action for Implementation (If no action planned, explain why)	Timeline
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