

Frequently Asked Questions for MPAT Evaluation Standard

MPAT related standard questions	Answers
The standard and its use	
1. Is scoring for this standard going to be included in the final MPAT score?	No, it is not going to be included this year because the standard is still being piloted.
2. When is the closing date for producing DEP for 2015/16?	The closing date is 30 September 2015.
3. Has DPME conducted a readiness assessment for implementation of the MPAT Evaluation Standard?	The piloting phase of this standard is part of the readiness assessment.
4. In view of the fact that there are concurrent functions in national and provincial departments, is there a possibility of having one plan as a cost containment measure?	It is possible to share evaluations across national and provincial departments, or across provincial departments if evaluations cross departments. In the national/provincial case departments can agree to collaborate (eg an evaluation of CASP where X province is one of the sample provinces, and the province shares the cost.) However the department should still have its own plan, indicating what evaluations it plans to undertake or collaborate on. The evaluation steering committees can include stakeholders from both spheres of government.
5. Is it possible that officials who are part of evaluation Steering Committees in NEP and PEP evaluations can use those evaluations as evidence for MPAT?	In cross-cutting interventions like Early Childhood Development (ECD) involving several departments (DBE, DSD, Health) all these departments can use evaluation evidence for MPAT standard. Evidence from NEP/PEP evaluations can only be used by officials if an evaluation is undertaken in active collaboration with their own department and it is listed on the departmental evaluation plan to be conducted with the other department. However, if an official is part of a steering committee but the evaluation is not included in his/her departmental plan, he/she cannot use the evaluation as evidence for MPAT.
6. What about provinces that do not have PEPs?	Departments can develop their own Departmental Evaluation Plans even in provinces that do not have Provincial Evaluation Plans.
7. Should evaluation results/report be posted on departmental website in order to enable departments to achieve level 4?	Yes, departments should make approved reports publically available.
8. What happens when a department does not have an Evaluation unit and outsources its evaluation, what kind of proof can be accepted in this instance?	Proof that an evaluation has been undertaken includes: Terms of Reference, Inception Report, contract and final reports.

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9. Does this standard seek to ensure establishment of Evaluation Units in departments i.e. amendment of organizational structure etc.?	No, the M&E or Research Unit is likely to be the custodian of the departmental evaluation system, and so should lead on the departmental evaluation system and act as a champion for evaluation within the department.
Capacity issues	
10. What capacity does the department need to undertake evaluations?	A department should have at least one person with expertise in evaluation and a budget to undertake at least one evaluation (refer to Section 9, page 6 of the Departmental Evaluation Guideline for details on the role of the evaluation unit within a department).
11. What type of a person is suitable to fill a post as an evaluator in a department?	The Evaluation Competency Framework for Government describes competencies required from a government evaluator (refer to the competency framework). To be an evaluator or a manager of evaluations the person must understand the research process, research methodology and be able to apply it in an evaluation context.
12. Is there a need to expand organisational structures and are there any budget constraints linked to that?	<p>Key to the successful implementation of the departmental evaluation plan is to put in place an evaluation system. This includes the establishment of a Departmental Evaluation Working Group (DEWG) to oversee the evaluation system and support it across the department. The DEWG should include relevant officials such as policy/planning unit, programme managers, CFO, M&E staff.</p> <p>The departments should have a M&E or research unit with at least one person skilled in evaluation and evaluation budget, so there is no need to expand the departmental structure, but the question is the expertise of people on the structure.</p>
13. Is there need to consider the location of evaluation units in addition to staff establishment?	Section 4, page 3 of the DEP Guideline discusses linkages between evaluations and other key departmental functions (strategic planning, M&E Framework, research unit etc). These linkages should provide guidance on the location of the M&E unit.
14. Are there any competencies and standardised job descriptions for evaluation personnel?	DPME has developed an Evaluation Competency Framework for Government and Standards for Government Evaluations. Both documents are available on the DPME website. It has also job descriptions for Evaluation Directors, Assistant Directors, and Evaluation Officers.
15. If the department is not ready and does not have capacity, what should happen?	The department should embark on setting up an evaluation system including establishing a person with evaluation skills and budget to undertake evaluation (refer to Section 6, page 4 of the DEP Guideline). In the first year the score is not included in the overall MPAT score so there is time to establish the system. Training courses have been developed by DPME which departments can ask the National School of Government or other service providers to provide, and there are also Masters courses in evaluation which staff can be encouraged to undertake. Also as many of the evaluation skills are research skills, researchers can be used to initiate the evaluation system.

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16. What should be done to address the lack of evaluation technical capacity in departments?	<p>Some practical ideas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officials can attend courses at universities offering M&E qualifications. • If a department has an evaluation in the National Plan, DPME offers courses on evaluation. • Affiliating to the South African M&E association and participating in events. • Using DPME Guidelines and Templates. • Departments can consider recruiting evaluation interns. • Learning through the process of actually undertaking an evaluation <p>DPME is currently developing an Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) Strategy for government. The strategy will provide direction on what needs to happen to address the lack of evaluation technical capacity in departments.</p>
17. Is there a way of incorporating the evaluation function with monitoring?	It can either be linked to monitoring or research. The monitoring data should form the basis of the evaluations of the interventions that are in the DEP, and research skills and budgets can be used for evaluation.
18. Some departments do not have a fully-fledged Evaluation unit, they have a research unit. Will the job description\Performance Agreements indicating some functions of Evaluation surface as evidence?	If the research unit staff members have specific evaluation functions in the job descriptions this will be adequate. However the Evaluation Competency Framework for Government provides details on competencies expected from evaluators, evaluation advisors and evaluation managers. It is recommended that people who undertake evaluations should have specialized evaluation skills. While research skills are a key component they are not sufficient.
The evaluation system	
19. Does government have standard operating procedures?	The National Evaluation Policy Framework, evaluation guidelines, evaluation standards for government, evaluation competency framework and quality assessment tool should be used as guiding documents/ standard operating procedures.
20. Can evaluations be done internally or externally?	<p>Yes, evaluations can be undertaken both internally and externally. Internal can mean that the evaluation is undertaken internally within a department by the evaluation/M&E unit supported by programme staff, whereas external evaluation usually means that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an evaluation is commissioned to external evaluators; • it is undertaken by an external body such as the Public Service Commission; or • It is in the National/Provincial Evaluation Plan involving DPME or Offices of the Premier. <p>It is advisable that major evaluations are conducted externally so they are properly independent, and not subject to influence by the department if the results are not convenient.</p>

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21. Evaluations contain sensitive information that cannot be made public. Is it then fair to have this requirement in the MPAT standard?	Departments are spending public money and should be accountable for this. Evaluators should express findings in a constructive way but challenges must be acknowledged otherwise it will be impossible to improve. Departments can only remove the sensitive section (s) if there are security concerns, otherwise evaluation reports together with management response and improvement plan should be made public.
22. Who has access to DPME templates and toolbox?	All stakeholders have access to DPME templates, guidelines and tools on the DPME website.
23. Is there a Template for Terms of References for departmental evaluations?	Yes, it is available on the DPME website.
24. Is there a quality assessment of evaluations in national and provincial departments?	Yes, DPME has developed a Quality Assessment Tool which is available on the DPME website. DPME is aiming to offer quality assessments of all provincial and departmental evaluations (subject to budget).
Funding evaluations	
25. What is the average cost of evaluations according to the type of evaluation?	<p>Costs for NEP evaluations range from R1 million to R4 million depending on several factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology • Amount of primary data collection needed • Sample size • Duration <p>Provincial evaluations are likely to be around half this cost due to smaller samples needed to represent the country.</p>
26. What happens if departments do not have the necessary funding to fund capacity and to conduct evaluations, is the DPME planning to fund these evaluations?	<p>DPME only co-funds evaluations in the NEP. OTPs should co-fund evaluations in the PEP.</p> <p>The departmental M&E/ Evaluation unit should make presentations to EXCO/Manco to secure senior management support and budget for evaluations and discuss the significance of the evaluation system and the expectations in terms of MPAT evaluation standards 1.3.2.</p>
27. How can provincial departments experiencing serious budget constraints mitigate against this challenge?	Without undertaking evaluations it is likely that programmes are performing suboptimally. The cost of evaluations should be covered from programme budgets and the costs will be covered from improved performance. The department should make presentations to provincial Treasury/Manco to secure support and budget for evaluations and discuss the significance of the evaluation system and the expectations in terms of MPAT evaluation

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	standards 1.3.2. Treasury should be a major ally of the evaluation system.
Addressing challenges in evaluation	
28. The focus has been on monitoring and reporting which has resulted in the lack of qualitative data. How can this be resolved?	This is one of the key reasons foregrounding the importance of undertaking evaluations and developing departmental evaluation plans. This is done to ensure that both qualitative and quantitative evidence is made available. Monitoring data is insufficient for evaluation which asks questions of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and causality.
29. What actions should be taken for programmes that are not evaluable due to data issues?	All programmes can be evaluated but the methodology differs according to the data available. In addition DPME is finalizing the development of an evaluability assessment tool to help guide the methodology choices. Departments should also put in place an effective data management system.
30. What is the role of offices of the premier in the provinces?	The Office of the Premier (OTP) should champion evaluations in the province. Part of the OTP's role is to ensure that evaluations are undertaken systematically across the province to improve performance and accountability, and that some evaluations are identified and supported as provincial priorities. As part of developing the provincial evaluation system, provincial departments should have been consulted as systems and guidelines emerge. (Refer to Section 10 page 7, of DEP Guideline).
Learning lessons	
31. Does DPME have a report on the evaluation gaps and lessons learnt?	Every year DPME Evaluation and Research Unit publishes an Annual Report which covers issues and lessons emerging during implementation of the National Evaluation System (check the DPME website for the Annual Report). In 2016/17 DPME will be undertaking an in-depth Evaluation of the National Evaluation System, which will hopefully identify the gaps in the system.
32. Will the outcomes of the MPAT moderation inform training of officials in departments and how will the process unfold since evaluations is a technical field and on the other hand departments are already expected to conduct evaluations?	DPME will undertake moderation of the evaluation standard and use this to draw out learnings. Departments should set aside budget for evaluation capacity building to address capacity needs.