



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Independent Evaluation Report on an Application for Validation of a Programme of Education and Training

Part 1 A

Provider name	DBS
Date of site visit	22 nd March 2018
Date of report	28 th August 2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology
	Award	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
	Credit¹	180 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions² OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

¹ Specify the credit units because more than one system of units is in use. E.g. 20 (ECTS).

² Normally an application that fails to meet the criteria in any of its aspects will be considered as not satisfactory. Nevertheless, so as to ensure that the validation process will not be implemented unreasonably, if an independent evaluation finds that a programme virtually meets the validation criteria but needs some minor modifications, the independent evaluation could conclude "Satisfactory subject to recommended special conditions" where the special conditions prescribe the defects that require to be corrected.

Further, in exceptional cases the 'special conditions' may be used to identify parts of the application that are considered satisfactory on a stand-alone basis. For example, an application might propose a programme to be provided at two locations but the independent evaluation report may find the application satisfactory on condition that it be provided only at one specified location and not at the other. These conditions will not however be used to recommend that QQI can be satisfied with a programme conditional on a different QQI award (e.g. at a lower NFQ level or having a different CAS award title) being sought than the one identified in the application.

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	Role	Principal occupation
Donna Bell	Chair	Independent Consultant
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Independent Consultant
Dr Sinéad Smyth	Subject specialist	Assistant Professor in Psychology, DCU
Dr Áine Behan	Industry representative	Industry Expert and CEO, CortechsConnect
Susan McBride	Learner representative	Final year BA Hons Psychology student at NCI

Part 1 B

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
DBS	120	10

Enrolment interval (normally 5 years)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	August 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	Two per annum	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	120	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	3 years (6 semesters) Full-Time 4 years (8 semesters) Part-Time	
Target learner groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners entering through the CAO process who wish to pursue a career as a professional Psychologist Full-time and part-time learners who may already work in caring professions and are seeking career progression through the attainment of the degree qualification Mature learners (23+), both full-time and part-time. 	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time/part-time	
The teaching and learning modalities	<p>DBS's pedagogy is grounded in the union of teaching and research, with the student experience at its heart. DBS's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) 2018-22 is based on the development of evidence-informed models of learning, teaching and assessment, enriched by appropriate and effective use of digital technologies and quality face-to-face teaching. It identifies and support students as co-creators and partners in learning, and in learning and teaching enhancement.</p>	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	<p>The BA(Hons) in Psychology programme is designed to provide an understanding of human thought and behaviour through the application of Psychology to a wide range of areas. The programme combines the pedagogical depth of core disciplines in Psychology with knowledge of other relevant perspectives of behaviour, practical skills, and 'soft' skills training in, for example, communication, teamwork, planning and reflection.</p> <p>The programme prepares, develops and facilitates independent learners who wish to enter professional training in Psychology, pursue postgraduate studies, and/or to become more employable for a variety of positions in the public or private sector. Graduates of this programme will</p>	

	be eligible to apply for Graduate Membership of the relevant professional society, PSI.
Summary of specifications for teaching staff	Faculty lecturing on the current BA (Hons) in Psychology are experienced Modules Leaders with most qualified to Doctoral level or experienced psychoanalytical practitioners with a minimum relevant recognised qualification at level 9 (NFQ). All have research and teaching experience within the field of Psychology
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	This can vary by module. Note: For lab- based modules the ratio students to teacher is 25:1 There is the possibility of greater flexibility in this ratio as more mobile labs come on stream in order to facilitate new methods of learning.
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.³	2:1

Programmes being replaced by the Principal Programme

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)			Arrangement for enrolled learners	Date when replaced programme is planned to cease completely
Code	Title	Last enrolment date	Indicate whether "Teach out" or "Transfer to replacement programme"	
PG21079	BA (Hons) in Psychology	January 2019	Transfer to replacement programme	September 2019

³ This is the total wholetime equivalent number of staff dedicated exclusively to this programme divided by the maximum number of learners that can be enrolled with that complement of staff.

Other noteworthy features of the application

The panel found that the Programme Team had engaged in a significant consultative process to ensure that the programme provides an appropriate and relevant mix of academic content and practical application to address the needs of the various stakeholders. The panel noted that the process was comprehensive and informed by consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including current learners, external examiners, regulatory bodies, employer organisations, faculty and current reports by government agencies on labour force requirements. The panel concluded that the proposed programme was fit for purpose.

A quantitative analysis was provided for the programme, covering the areas specified in the Programme Review Manual 2016/2017 Section 3.

The panel found that a comparison was made against the corresponding results from nine other providers. The analysis shows how the percentage of learners achieving each degree classification follows a consistent trend across academic years 2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17 with the exception of H1 classifications. The percentage of H1 classifications increased from 2014/15 to 2015/16 (25% 14/15; 30% 15/16), before decreasing again in 2016/17 (23%). The percentage of students achieving a H2.1 classification was fairly consistent across the three academic years (41% 14/15; 39% 15/16; 44% 16/17), while the percentage of H2.2 and Pass classifications has remained consistent (H2 26% 14/15; 25% 15/16; 25% 16/17 and Pass 6% 14/15; 5% 15/16; 6% 16/17). A separate analysis of grades achieved by module demonstrated to the panel that the data warranted no particular concern with learner performance in this area.

An analysis of completion and attrition rates for the programme was also provided to the panel. For learners enrolled on the full time BA (Hons) in Psychology, completion rates exceed 75% across the academic years 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, with full time Award Stage learners having a completion rate exceeding 80% in all but 2016/17. Part time learner completion rates approach or exceed 80% for most years with three exceptions. Continuing and first year part time learners in 2013/14 and 2016/17 had completion rates of 72.85% and 70.46% respectively, while in 2015/16 the Award Stage completion rate dipped to 65.22%. In these three years there were quite high withdrawal and deferral rates within these cohorts, which may account for the lower completion rates.

In relation to the benchmarking analysis and the analysis of completion and attrition rates, the panel noted that no commentary was provided on how DBS has responded to the trends in performance.

The panel concluded that the analysis provided in relation to benchmarking was of a varying degree of quality. The panel now notes that QQI has recently produced a draft report on award classification distributions across higher education institutions and access to this will allow DBS to better address this piece of analysis going forward.

DBS provided information to the panel on the First Destination of graduates of the programme which indicated that there were opportunities for graduates to gain employment in the health and social care sector. It was noted that graduates from the BA (Hons) in Psychology had staircased to Masters programmes in Psychology- related disciplines, including cyber psychology, criminology, mental health and forensic psychology.

Part 2A Evaluation against the validation criteria

QQI's validation criteria and sub-criteria are copied here in grey panels.

Criterion 1

The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme	
a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.	
b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.	
c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements. ⁴	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

As an established provider of higher education programmes DBS has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of this programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression. DBS has also established arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) which have been approved by QQI. Access, transfer and progression procedures are detailed in Section 4 of Programme Document and in Chapter 6 of the DBS Quality Assurance Handbook.

The panel was informed that DBS is currently taking part in the re-engagement process with QQI and has completed the Pilot Phase. As part of the re-engagement process, policies and procedures were being reviewed.

At the time of the site visit the panel was advised that the signature and declaration required under criteria 1(b) and 1(c) had yet to be provided.

Accordingly a **condition** was imposed that **DBS provides the signature and declaration required under 1(b) and 1(c) when the revalidation application is submitted to QQI.**

Following the site visit, DBS provided a copy of the letter to be submitted to QQI with the application for the revalidation of the programme. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

⁴This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration of enforcing such requirements.

Criterion 2

The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought

- a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.
- b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.
 - (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.
- c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).
- d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*.
- e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.
- f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are
 - (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.
 - (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.
- g) For each programme and embedded programme
 - (i) The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.⁵
 - (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are **consistent with** the relevant QQI awards standards.
- h) Where applicable, the **minimum intended module learning outcomes** are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.
- i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.

For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.⁶

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel is satisfied that the aims, objectives and rationale for the programme were expressed clearly as set out in Section 2 of the Programme Document. The programme and module learning outcomes are clearly outlined and appropriate for the level of the award and are set out in Sections 2.1 and 2.4 of the Programme Document. The title of the programme was deemed to be appropriate and in line with the QQI standard for the corresponding Major Award Type and Stem on the NFQ. It was noted that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes were informed by the QQI Generic Awards Standards and have been mapped against these standards. The mapping is set out in Section 10 of the Programme document.

⁵ Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

⁶ Not all modules will warrant minor awards. Minor awards feature strongly in the QQI common awards system however further education and training awards may be made outside this system.

Criterion 3

The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

- a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁷
- b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
 - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
 - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
 - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).
 - (iv) There is evidence⁸ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁹.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.¹⁰
- c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.
- e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel evaluated the observations, comments and suggestions from the appropriate professional and regulatory bodies and these were duly factored into the review process. Regulatory bodies included The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), with whom DBS has a long-standing relationship, and CORU, Ireland’s multi-professional health regulator. The review process was also informed by the comparator analysis undertaken by DBS, a review of External Examiner reports and feedback obtained from industry and professional organisations.

⁷ Awards standards however detailed rely on various communities for their interpretation. This consultation is necessary if the programme is to enable learners to achieve the standard in its fullest sense.

⁸ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁹ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

¹⁰ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners’** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

The panel found that the programme concept, implementation strategy and interpretation of QQI awards are well informed, taking into consideration social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives. The extensive consultation with the health sector, as well as students and graduates was further evidenced in Sections 3.1; 3.3 and 3.14 of the Programme Document and had informed the evolution of the programme.

It was the view of the panel that there has been insufficient evidence in the documentation and at the site visit in relation to the employment opportunities available to graduates. It was noted however that the Employability Module did provide students with useful insights and information on possible progression and employment opportunities. Students interviewed cited the assistance provided by the Careers Office in relation to provision of information on some employment opportunities.

Meetings with students and graduates did provide evidence of their knowledge of available progression pathways through different avenues both within DBS and in other institutions.

There was evidence of transferable skills being built into the structure of programmes to enhance the prospect of employability among graduates of the programmes

It is recommended that DBS provide further information on the breakdown of the First Destination of the graduates of the programme.

The panel now notes that this information has been provided by DBS in Section 3.11 of the updated Programme Document, showing the opportunities available to graduates and is satisfied that this response has addressed the recommendation.

The panel concluded that the implementation of the proposed modifications to the programmes was not sufficiently outlined with regard to the impact on existing students, particularly in relation to the proposed change from 10ECTS to 20ECTS for the Final Year Project.

It is recommended that the implementation and communication to students of the change in weighting for the Final Year project should be carefully managed.

In the Team Response document, the panel noted that DBS had made a transition plan which is outlined in Section 7.2 of the Programme Review Document. The plan includes scheduled dates for presentation to learners on the change and updating of the Student Handbook. The panel is satisfied that this response meets the recommendation.

The proposed process of transition for existing students from current to proposed programme structure was not sufficiently clear: it was noted that DBS stated that it proposes to manage the transition of existing students on a 'case-by-case' basis.

The panel noted that there was a lack of explicit commitment to research—led teaching set out in the programme review documents. It was noted that, at the site visit, DBS did report that research-led teaching, a commitment to innovation and academic quality were core elements in its overall strategy as an institution.

It is recommended that DBS provide clear evidence of a commitment to a cross-cutting, research-led teaching at programme level.

In the Team Response document, the panel was informed that DBS has completed its Research Strategy for the College, which plans out the pathway for research for the next five years. A copy of

the draft Research Strategy was provided. The panel now notes that this strategy has since been agreed by the Academic Board. The panel is satisfied that this response meets the recommendation.

Criterion 4

The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

- a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied¹¹.
- b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.
- c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR¹²) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.
- d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that **target learners** are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).
- e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the **recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.
- f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-
 - (i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes*, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).
 - (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;
 - (iii) Has long-lasting significance.
- g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel was satisfied that the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements were clearly articulated and working in practice. Information on access, transfer and progression is available through DBS website, Open Days at the college, promotional material and the Student Handbooks. Applicants are also assessed under the provisions for the recognition of prior learning policy and procedures. Further details were set out in Section 4 of the Programme Document.

¹¹ Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider's evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

¹² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

Graduates from the BA (Hons) in Psychology had staircased to Masters programmes in Psychology-related disciplines, including cyber psychology, criminology, mental health and forensic psychology.

Criterion 5

The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

- a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.
- b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.
- c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
- d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.
- e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹³.
- f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
- g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
- h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
- i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
- j) The programme **duration** (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its **fulltime equivalent contact time** (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹⁴

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel was satisfied that the programme and related modules were appropriately structured and scheduled. Further details were set out in Sections 5.1;5.2 and Sections 5.4, 5.5. and 5.10 and in Section 4.1 of the Programme Document.

The panel concluded that the proposed revised weighting from 10ECTS to 20ECTS for the Final Year project in the BA Programme appropriately reflects the total student effort required on this project.

It is recommended that the title of Module 2.7 Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis and Module 1.9 Data Analysis be reconsidered to more appropriately reflect the stated learning outcomes of these modules which are more focussed on methodologies rather than analysis.

¹³ This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.

¹⁴ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

In the Team Response Document, DBS stated that the modules have been renamed as Research Technique & Analysis 1 and Research Technique & Analysis 2 in the Programme Document. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

The panel commended the introduction of the Experimental Module into the programme. This finding reflected the recommendation that DBS increase the number of experimental—led projects by students made by PSI at the last reaccreditation visit and feedback from external examiners.

A review of the programme documents and discussion with the teaching team resulted in a finding that the major issue of ethics had not been sufficiently or explicitly stated in the module titles and learning outcomes.

It is recommended that the central importance of ethics be reflected more explicitly in module titles and learning outcomes throughout the programme as appropriate, including giving consideration to having the topic of ethics as a core module in its own right.

In its Team Response document, DBS reported that ethics and ethical considerations were embedded in many contexts throughout the course. Programme Learning Outcome 4 (Section 2.4 of the Programme Documents) specifically relates to professional ethics, and ethical considerations are explicit in Modules 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 in the programme, as well as being considered in sample assessments provided. The panel is satisfied that this information met the recommendation.

Criterion 6

There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme's staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹⁵ (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.
- c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners' achievements as required.
- d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme's staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹⁶ opportunities¹⁷.
- e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.
- f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.

Satisfactory	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel was advised that teaching staff are qualified to a minimum of Masters level, with increasing numbers qualified to doctoral level or enrolled in doctoral studies. Appendix 2 of the Programme Document outlined the CVs of the faculty involved in the programme, the panel noted. Further information relating to staffing is set out in Section 7 of the Programme Document.

The panel concluded that there had not been sufficient information provided on staffing resources for the proposed programme.

¹⁵ Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme's provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.

¹⁶ Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.

¹⁷ Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff's professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

It is recommended that the ratio be expressed in FTEs.

In its Team Response Document, DBS provided detailed information indicating that the FTE ratio was 2:1 and the panel deemed this to be appropriate.

The panel found that documentation had not been provided evidencing that staffing resources relative to student numbers conforms to established professional norms as stipulated by PSI. It was noted that the reported percentage of teaching hours provided by part-time staff at 27% is approaching the limit set by PSI of 30%.

It is recommended that DBS take appropriate steps to ensure that staffing resources relative to student numbers remain within professional standards and to provide the appropriate documentation evidencing this.

In its Team Response Document DBS confirmed that it is making an application to PSI with all appropriate documentation regarding staffing qualification and student/staff ratios and incorporating the changes as agreed under Programmatic Review. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

It was acknowledged that continuous professional development is mainly focussed on scholarly activities. The panel was advised that research activities are monitored through the Register of Scholarly Activity maintained by the library. Staff publications are included in the College's open access institutional repository eSource. It was noted that scholarly activities undertaken by staff include conference presentations, committee membership, consultancy and publications (books and peer reviewed articles).

The panel welcomed enabling mechanisms from DBS that allow for research time for Psychology staff in the form of the DBS research scholarship scheme. However, the panel noted the relatively modest research provision available to staff. Since the research time allocated via scholarship is limited to 7.5% of contracted hours, it was concluded that this made for an asymmetry in the time available to part-time staff to scholarship time.

It is recommended that DBS take steps to further incentivise and reward research among psychology teaching staff, including giving consideration to an amended scholarship scheme for part-time staff.

In its Team Response document, DBS advised that it had developed a Research, Enterprise and Innovation Strategy, which lays out its mission and vision for research. It stated that DBS will also review its scholarship scheme and give due consideration to part-time staff. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:
 - (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme's learning environments including the workplace learning environment)
 - (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)
 - (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment
 - (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable
 - (v) technical support
 - (vi) administrative support
 - (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable
- c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).
- d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address
 - (i) Planned intake (first five years) and
 - (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.
- e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programme under review.

A tour of the physical facilities in the Aungier St and Castle House campuses was undertaken including the dedicated psychology laboratory (VR equipment, bio-feedback laboratory and multi-media laboratory). Interviews with students indicated that staff in the laboratory facility were supportive of their efforts to make optimum use of this facility for project assignments.

The panel commends DBS's investment in experimental research facilities and continued investment in up-to date technologies.

The panel noted that the number of experimental projects in psychology was very low (4-5). It was also noted that this was the case at the last PSI reaccreditation of the programme and it was concluded that a slow rate of progress had been made on this issue to date.

It is recommended that further investment and expansion in experimental research facilities be undertaken by DBS in order to enable a greater number of experimental research projects.

In its Team Response document, DBS stated that it would keep the requirements of the experimental research facilities under review and will give due consideration to expansion should the need arise. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

The panel noted that the number of experimental projects in psychology was very low (4-5). It was also noted that this was the case at the last PSI reaccreditation of the programmes and it was concluded that a slow rate of progress had been made on this issue to date.

It is recommended that a clear communications plan be made and implemented to inform students of the resources available and to encourage more students to undertake experimental research projects.

In its Team Response document, DBS indicated that specific details about the laboratory facilities and resources would be made available to students in an appendix to the Student Handbook. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

The library facilities were viewed by the panel. It was noted that the facilities deploy a wide range of technology resources to support learners and staff, including access to an assignment planner, a Kindle lending facilities, a registrar of scholarly activity as well as a user-friendly search engine to enable ease of search for books and academic journals. The library is engaged in publishing DBS's own journal of research, featuring peer-reviewed research by both staff and students. This is in line with a core pillar of DBS's strategy on achieving academic excellence. It was noted that this facility won a Best Library Team award in the Education Awards 2017.

The panel noted the on-going development and upgrading of common meeting and study areas to facilitate group work and peer study support. Detailed information on the physical resources available is set out in Section 8 of the Programme Document.

Criterion 8

The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners

- a) The programme's physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.
- b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme's learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.
- c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel was advised that DBS uses a number of mechanisms to develop and implement supports for students including:

- Learner surveys – an Operations and Facilities survey in week 2, followed by a Learning & Teaching survey in week 10
- Class representative meetings
- Peer Mentoring Support (with training provided for mentors)
- Student representation on the Academic Board and Board of Studies
- Support for, and engagement with, an elected Student Union
- Student services for:
 - Accommodation
 - Counselling and referral services, including specific contact with the provider of mental health for young people, *Jigsaw*
 - Sports and societies, with many student-led events
 - Entertainment
 - Study and meeting spaces within the campus

The panel concluded that the staff with responsibility for support services were proactive in responding to student feedback for improvements in facilities which was undertaken on a continuous basis. Further details were set out in Section 5.8 and 5.9 of the Programme Document. It was noted that this section of DBS received an Education Awards 2017 for Best Student Engagement.

The panel found that there was insufficient evidence in the documents and at the site visit, to demonstrate how feedback from students was taken on board by DBS.

It is recommended that DBS set out an action plan, with clear metrics and a timeline on how agreed improvements or modifications would be implemented to ensure that there is a closed loop between the feedback received and any subsequent changes made as a result.

In its Team Response document, DBS indicated that all approved updates and improvements to programmes are discussed and planned through the Programme Boards and Boards of Studies in DBS. They indicated that students feedback to faculty on an informal and formal basis regularly through surveys, feedback forms and class rep meetings which are minuted and items tracked until closed. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies

- a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.
- b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.
- c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).
- d) Learning is monitored/supervised.
- e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁸ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

In meetings with students and graduates, the panel found that they were very positive about the level of responsiveness and support received from lecturers and other staff. They appreciated the small class sizes and the easy access to teaching staff, who were generally very responsive to requests for support or feedback, which was delivered in a timely manner.

It was noted that, in cases where students had identified workload issues particularly in relation to clashing deadlines for assessments, staff worked collaboratively to resolve these issues.

In discussion with senior staff, the panel noted DBS's commitment to consultation with PSI and graduates ensure that the programme continued to serve the needed of learners including the development of innovative learning and teaching strategies, such as modules with an e-learning component; peer-led instruction; the design of spaces to facilitate active learning environments and encouraging collaborative research between students and between students and staff.

The panel found the workload to be appropriate and noted the willingness of teaching staff to address any issues brought to them by the students. The panel noted that the Learner Workload is one of the areas monitored by the Programme Team through feedback from learners, alumni, external examiners, professional bodies and through review and discussion at team meetings. Detailed timetables for the courses are provided.

Further details on the teaching and learning strategy were provided in Section 5.5., 5.6.and 5.8 of the Programme Document.

¹⁸ Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

Criterion 10

There are sound assessment strategies

- a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with *Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards*¹⁹
- b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.
- c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.²⁰
- d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.
- e) There is a satisfactory written **programme assessment strategy** for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.²¹
- f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.
- g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.
- h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.²²

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel was satisfied that all assessment for the programme conforms to the DBS Assessment Regulations which are informed by QQI Assessment and Standards Revised 2013. The evaluation of assessment is based on feedback from learners, external examiners, employers, as well as feedback from reviews and validations. Further information was provided in Section 5.10 of the Programme Document. It is the subsequent actions taken to 'close the loop' that should have a positive impact on improving the effectiveness of assessment procedures.

The panel noted that it was not clear what proportion of the final award is contingent on continuous assessment and what proportion by written examination. It was further noted that no rationale was provided for the assessment mix currently proposed at a programmatic level.

It is recommended that a full review of the assessment strategy be conducted to provide a clear rationale for the assessment strategy determining the final award of the programme.

¹⁹ See the section on transitional arrangements.

²⁰ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

²¹ The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

²² If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

In its team response document, DBS indicated that a full review of the assessment strategy for the programme was conducted as part of the overall programmatic review. The document indicated that an appropriate blend of assessment instruments is utilised across modules, including continuous assessment, group work, presentations, experimental and laboratory work, in-class tests and exams as set out in the Programme Document, Section 5.10. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Criterion 11

Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

- a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.
- b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.
- c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.
- d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.
- e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.
- f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.
- g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.
- h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²³.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²⁴ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.
- j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel noted that the Student Handbooks, notice boards and website contained relevant information in relation to many of the supports and services available to students. Use was made of notice boards to provide up-to-date information throughout the campus.

The panel found, when meeting graduates and current students, that class representatives played a role in providing support and information to students. Students reported that lecturers and staff were generally responsive to requests for support and information when requested.

²³ For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

²⁴ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

The panel noted that students' awareness of information regarding central student services such as appeals and complaints protocols was not evident. Teaching staff were identified as the point of contact in relation to information about the processes for appeals and complaints.

It is recommended that the information DBS provides regarding appeals and complaints protocols be more effectively disseminated.

In its Team Response Document, DBS indicated that the review of appeals and complaints has been revisited and additional information documented. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Further information as to how learners are well informed, guided and cared for was provided in Sections, 5.1, 5.9 and 8.2 of the Programme Document.

Criterion 12

The programme is well managed

- a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider's general or institutional procedures.
- b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider's QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI's statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.
- c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.
- d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.
- e) Quality assurance²⁵ is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.
- f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.
- g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.
- h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

The panel has evaluated the programme having regard to the criterion and sub-criteria and recommends that QQI can be satisfied that the programme meet this criterion.

The panel noted that all DBS quality assurance policies and procedures are detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH). The programme under review has been designed to comply with the DBS QAH and, in turn, with QQI's statutory quality assurance guidelines with respect to governance, quality assurance, assessment access to transfer and progression. Programme-specific quality assurance considerations include continuing to meet the PSI accreditation criteria and conducting research in accordance with the DBS Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants.

The panel found that the internal review process outlined in the documentation was highly descriptive and lacked critical self-reflection. It was stated that all teaching staff and several support staff were involved in the review process, although there was a lack of clear written evidence as to the outcome of these on-going reviews.

It was noted, for example, that no clear rationale had been provided as to how proposed modifications to the way programmes were to be assessed. In other cases, there was insufficient evidence as to how proposed changes would be monitored and measured in a structured way, with

²⁵ See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

clear metrics and KPIs, e.g. how a greater number of experimental projects by students would be encouraged and facilitated.

It is recommended that the internal review process be revisited to ensure that the review translates into measurable outcomes.

The panel noted that in the Team Response document provided that DBS has indicated that it will put mechanisms in place to ensure that overall Programmatic Review process changes will be monitored and outcomes measured. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

Select one	
Satisfactory	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination); ²⁶
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons²⁷ for the overall recommendation

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology between March and November 2018. The programme was due for review under the QQI requirement for periodic monitoring and review, and also require review to conform with recent policies, including QQI Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training (QQI, 2016), Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines (QQI, 2016) and in accordance with the QQI Programme Review Manual 2016/2017.

The review comprised four stages:

- A desk review by the panel of the self-evaluation report on the internal programme review prepared by the Programme Leaders and Programme Team and a review of the initial proposed revised programmes to be submitted for revalidation of the programmes.
- A site visit on 22nd March 2018 involving a series of meeting with academic staff and administrative staff engaged in programme delivery and support, a meeting with recent graduates and current learners a on the programmes and a tour of the DBS campus on two sites to review facilities.
- The preparation of a panel report, outlining the process and evidence pursued and proposing one recommendation.
- A follow-up desk review of revised documentation provided by DBS addressing the panel's condition and recommendations.

The revised documentation consisted of:

²⁶ Normally an application that fails to meet the criteria in any of its aspects will be considered as not satisfactory. Nevertheless, so as to ensure that the validation process will not be implemented unreasonably, if an independent evaluation finds that a programme virtually meets the validation criteria but needs some minor modifications, the independent evaluation could conclude "Satisfactory subject to recommended special conditions" where the special conditions prescribe the defects that require to be corrected.

²⁷ Give precise reasons for the conclusions organised under each of the 12 criteria (for the programme and each embedded programme and any modules proposed to lead to QQI awards) citing supporting evidence. If any criteria or sub-criteria are not met by the application this must be stated explicitly giving precise reasons with evidence. A "Not Satisfactory" recommendation may be justified if any one of the applicable criteria or sub-criteria are not demonstrated to be satisfied.

- DBS's Programme Review Document for the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology (referred to as Programme Document hereafter)
- Programme Team's response to the Independent Programme Review Report (referred to as Team Response hereafter)
- DBS Research Strategy
- Proposed Course Schedules for the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology, as presented to QQI for revalidation, satisfies the core policies and criteria for revalidation by QQI of programmes of education and training.

Detailed commentary relating to the Core Validation Criteria is included in Part 2A of this report.

Specifically, the panel is satisfied that:

Under **Criterion 1**: As an established provider of higher education programmes DBS has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of this programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression. DBS has also established arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) which have been approved by QQI. Access, transfer and progression procedures are detailed in Section 4 of Programme Document and in Chapter 6 of the DBS Quality Assurance Handbook.

At the time of the site visit the panel was advised that the signature and declaration required under criteria 1(b) and 1(c) had yet to be provided.

Accordingly a **condition** was imposed that DBS provides the signature and declaration required under 1(b) and 1(c) when the revalidation application is submitted to QQI. Following the site visit, DBS provided a copy of the letter to be submitted to QQI with the application for the revalidation of the programme. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

Under **Criterion 2**: The panel is satisfied that the aims, objectives and rationales for the programme were expressed clearly as set out in Section 2 of the Programme Document. The programme and module learning outcomes are clearly outlined and appropriate for the level of the award and are set out in Sections 2.1 and 2.4 of the Programme Document. The title of the programme was deemed to be appropriate and in line with the QQI standard for the corresponding Major Award Type and Stem on the NFQ. It was noted that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes were informed by the QQI Generic Awards Standards and have been mapped against these standards. The mapping is set out in Section 10 of the Programme Document.

Under **Criterion 3**: The panel found that the programme concept, implementation strategy and interpretation of QQI awards are well informed, taking into consideration social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives. The extensive consultation with the health sector, including regulatory bodies such as The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) and CORU, Ireland's multi-professional health regulator, as well as students and graduates was evidenced in Sections 3.1; 3.3 and 3.14 of the Programme Document and had informed the evolution of the programme.

The panel recommended that DBS provide further information on the breakdown of the First Destination of the graduates of the programme. The panel now notes that this information has been provided by DBS in Section 3.11 of the updated Programme Document and is satisfied that this response has addressed the recommendation.

The panel recommended that the implementation and communication to students of the change in weighting for the Final Year project should be carefully managed. In the Team Response document, the panel noted that DBS had made a transition plan which is outlined in Section 7.2 of the Programme Review Document. The panel is satisfied that this response meets the recommendation.

The panel recommended that DBS provide clear evidence of a commitment to a cross-cutting, research-led teaching at programme level. In the Team Response document, the panel was informed that DBS has completed its Research Strategy for the College, which plans out the pathway for research for the next five years. The panel is satisfied that this response meets the recommendation.

Under **Criterion 4**: The panel was satisfied that the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements were clearly articulated and working in practice. Further details were set out in Section 4 of the Programme Document. Graduates from the BA (Honours) in Psychology had staircased to Masters programmes in Psychology- related disciplines, the panel noted. The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been met.

Under **Criterion 5**: The programme's written curriculum and modules are well structured and fit for purpose. The panel was satisfied that the programme and related modules were appropriately structured and scheduled. Further details were set out in Sections 5.1, 5.2 and Sections 5.4, 5.5. and 5.10 and in Section 4.1 of the Programme Document.

The panel concluded that the proposed revised weighting from 10ECTS to 20ECTS for the Final Year project in the BA Programme appropriately reflects the total student effort required on this project.

The panel recommended that the title of Module 2.7 Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis and Module 1.9 Data Analysis be reconsidered to more appropriately reflect the stated learning outcomes of these modules. In its Team Response Document, DBS stated that the modules have been renamed as Research Technique & Analysis 1 and Research Technique & Analysis 2 in the Programme Document. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

The panel recommended that the central importance of ethics be reflected more explicitly in module titles and learning outcomes throughout the programme as appropriate, including giving consideration to having the topic of ethics as a core module in its own right. In its Team Response document, DBS reported that ethics and ethical considerations were embedded in many contexts throughout the course. Programme Learning Outcome 4 (Section 2.4 of the Programme Documents) specifically relates to professional ethics, and ethical considerations are explicit in Modules 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 in the programme, as well as being considered in sample assessments provided. The panel is satisfied that this information met the recommendation.

The panel commended the introduction of the Experimental Module into the programmes. This finding reflects the recommendation that DBS increase the number of experimental—led projects by students made by PSI at the last reaccreditation visit and feedback from external examiners.

Under **Criterion 6:** There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned. The panel was advised that teaching staff are qualified to a minimum of Masters level, with increasing numbers qualified to doctoral level or enrolled in doctoral studies. Appendix 2 of the Programme Document outlined the CVs of the faculty involved in the programme, the panel noted. Further information relating to staffing is set out in Section 7 of the Programme Document.

The panel recommended that the ratio of learners to staff be expressed in FTEs. In its Team Response Document, DBS provided detailed information indicating that the FTE ratio was 2:1 and the panel deemed this to be appropriate. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

It was further recommended that DBS take appropriate steps to ensure that staffing resources relative to student numbers remain within professional standards and to provide the appropriate documentation evidencing this. In its Team Response Document DBS confirmed that it is making an application to PSI with all appropriate documentation regarding staffing qualification and student/staff ratios and incorporating the changes as agreed under Programmatic Review. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

The panel also recommended that DBS take steps to further incentivise and reward research among psychology teaching staff. In its Team Response document, DBS advised its recently completed Research Strategy states that DBS will review its scholarship scheme and give due consideration to part-time staff. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Under **Criterion 7:** There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned. It was noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programme under review. Detailed information on the physical resources available is set out in Section 8 of the Programme Document.

The panel commended the College's investment in experimental facilities and continued investment in up-to-date technologies.

It was recommended that further investment and expansion in experimental research facilities be undertaken by DBS in order to enable a greater number of experimental research projects. In its Team Response document, DBS stated that it would keep the requirements of the experimental research facilities under review. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

The panel recommended that a clear communications plan be made to encourage more students to undertake experimental research projects. In its Team Response document, DBS indicated that specific details about the laboratory facilities and resources would be made available to students in an appendix to the Student Handbook. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Under **Criterion 8:** The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners. The panel was advised that DBS uses a wide number of mechanisms to develop and implement supports for students. Further details were set out in Section 5.8 and 5.9 of the Programme Document.

The panel recommended that DBS set out an action plan, with clear metrics and a timeline on how agreed improvements or modifications would be implemented to ensure that there is a closed loop

between the feedback received from students and any subsequent changes made as a result. In its Team Response document, DBS indicated that all approved updates and improvements to programmes are discussed and planned through the Programme Boards and Boards of Studies in DBS. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Under **Criterion 9**: There are sound teaching and learning strategies. The panel noted DBS's commitment to develop innovative learning and teaching strategies, such as modules with an e-learning component; peer-led instruction; the design of spaces to facilitate active learning environments and encouraging collaborative research between students and between students and staff. The panel found the workload to be appropriate and noted the willingness of teaching staff to address any issues brought to them by the students.

Further details on the teaching and learning strategy were provided in Section 5.5., 5.6. and 5.8 of the Programme Document.

Under **Criteria 10**: There are sound assessment strategies. The panel was satisfied that all assessment for the programme conforms to the DBS Assessment Regulations which are informed by QQI Assessment and Standards Revised 2013. The evaluation of assessment is based on feedback from learners, external examiners, employers, as well as feedback from reviews and validations. Further information was provided in Section 5.10 of the Programme Document.

The panel recommended that a full review of the assessment strategy be conducted to provide a clear rationale for the assessment strategy determining the final award of the programme. In its Team Response document, DBS indicated that a full review of the assessment strategy was conducted as part of the overall programmatic review. The document indicated that an appropriate blend of assessment instruments was utilised across modules as set out in the Programme Document, Section 5.10. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Under **Criteria 11**: Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for. The panel noted that the Student Handbooks, notice boards and website contained relevant information in relation to many of the supports and services available to students.

The panel recommended that the information DBS provides regarding appeals and complaints protocols be more effectively disseminated. In its Team Response Document, DBS indicated that the review of appeals and complaints has been revisited and additional information documented. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Further information as to how learners are well informed, guided and cared for was provided in Sections, 5.1, 5.9 and 8.2 of the Programme Document.

Under **Criteria 12**: the programme is well managed. The panel found that all DBS quality assurance policies and procedures are detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH). The programme under review has been designed to comply with the DBS QAH and, in turn, with QQI's statutory quality assurance guidelines with respect to governance, quality assurance, assessment access to transfer and progression. Programme-specific quality assurance considerations include continuing to meet the PSI accreditation criteria and conducting research in accordance with the DBS Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants

The panel recommended that the internal review process be revisited to ensure that the review translates into measurable outcomes. The panel noted that in the Team Response document provided that DBS has indicated that it will put mechanisms in place to ensure that overall Programmatic Review process changes will be monitored and outcomes measured. The panel is satisfied that this response met the recommendation.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

1. DBS provides the signature and declaration required under 1(b) and 1(c) when the re-validation application is submitted to QQI.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. DBS provides further information on the breakdown of the First Destination of the graduates of the programme.
2. The implementation and communication to students of the change in weighting for the Final Year project should be carefully managed.
3. DBS provides clear evidence of a commitment to a cross-cutting, research-led teaching at programme level.
4. The title of Module 2.7 Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis and Module 1.9 Data Analysis be reconsidered to more appropriately reflect the stated learning outcomes of these modules which are more focussed on methodologies rather than analysis.
5. The central importance of ethics be reflected in module titles and learning outcomes throughout the programme as appropriate, including giving consideration to having the topic of ethics as a core module in its own right.
6. The staff/student ratios for the programme be expressed in FTEs.
7. DBS take appropriate steps to ensure that staffing resources relative to student numbers remain within professional standards and to provide the appropriate documentation evidencing this.
8. DBS take steps to further incentivise and reward research among psychology teaching staff, including giving consideration to an amended scholarship scheme for part-time staff.
9. Further investment and expansion in experimental research facilities be undertaken by DBS in order to enable a greater number of experimental research projects.
10. A clear communications plan be made and implemented to inform student of the resources available and to encourage more students to undertake experimental research projects.
11. DBS sets out an action plan, with clear metrics and a timeline on how agreed improvements or modifications would be implemented to ensure that there is a closed loop between the feedback received and any subsequent changes made as a result.
12. A full review of the assessment strategy be conducted to provide a clear rationale for the assessment strategy determining the final award of the programme.
13. Information regarding appeals and complaints protocols be more effectively disseminated.
14. The internal review process be revisited to ensure that the review translates into measurable outcomes.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

No interests have been declared.

This report has been agreed by the evaluation panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Panel chairperson:

Date: 28th August 2019



Signed:

Addendum

n/a

Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While QQI has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk, and in no event will QQI be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from, or in connection with, the use of the information contained in the Report of the External Evaluation Panel.



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Revalidation of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) In Psychology provided by Dublin Business School - 2019

In its original independent evaluation report dated 17th April 2018, the independent panel specified 1 condition and 14 recommendations regarding the above programme. Dublin Business School formally responded to the report on 12 November 2018 and has addressed each of the conditions and recommendations to the satisfaction of the independent panel members.

The panel confirmed that it recommended the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology programme to QQI for revalidation.

QQI is satisfied that each condition made by the independent panel has been met and each recommendation has been taken on board and the recommended action has been taken or is scheduled to be taken.

Signed:

Carmel Kelly - Validation Manager, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Date: 18 November 2019