



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	29/05/2019
Date of report	29/8/2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Higher Diploma in Business
	Award	NFQ Level 8
	Credit¹	60 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

Name	Role	Affiliation
Marian Duggan	Chair	Limerick Institute of Technology
Deirdre Nuttall	Secretary	Independent writer and researcher
Martin Meagher	Academic Expert	Institute of Technology Carlow
Graham Heaslip	Academic Expert	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Brian Marrinan	Industry Expert	Journey Partners
Barbara Mangan	Industry Expert	Independent HR Consultant
Ivan Robertson	Academic Expert	Lecturer ISB/CEA Dublin Adjunct Professor, Champlain College (Vermont/Dublin)
Emily Costigan	Student	Maynooth University

Part 1 B

Principal Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
DBS—Dublin	450	10

Enrolment interval (<i>normally 5 years</i>)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	August 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	3 intakes (September, January and March)	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	450	
Programme duration (<u>months</u> from start to completion)	Full-time: 2 semesters of 12 weeks each across 12 months Part-time: 3 semesters of 12 weeks each across 18 months	
Target learner groups	Learners with a Level 8 Honours Bachelor's Degree in a non-cognate discipline who wish to specialise in the field of business and business administration with a view to entering industry, progress professionally or to undertake postgraduate studies in a related field.	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full time and part time	
The teaching and learning modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom-lectures • Case-based learning • Practical skills sessions • Workshops • Tutorials • Individual and group work • Blended Learning 	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	The programme is designed as a conversion course for graduates of a Level 8 non-cognate degree who aspire to enter the business world and to enter a management role. Graduates will be eligible for general management roles within a specific subfield of business complimenting their previous experience and learning.	
Summary of <u>specifications</u> for teaching staff	Teaching staff are expected to have at least a level 9 qualification in a relevant field (Business, Human Resource Management, Law, Accounting and/or Finance, Management, Marketing, Digital Marketing, Economics, ICT), which can be waived in the case of staff members with at least a level 8 qualification in a relevant field, and a broad range of relevant industry experience	

Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	<p>552 (Total contact hours) $552/500 = 1.1$ $1.1 \times 1.64 = 1.8$</p> <p>WTE = 1.8</p> <p>FT - 360 CH = 590 total WTE $[360 \times 1.64] = 1.18$ WTE [590/500]</p> <p>PT - 234 CH = 384 total WTE = 0.77</p> <p>WTE ratio is 0.64 support for 1 faculty = 1.64 total WTE Lecturing</p>
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.³	WTE ratio is 0.64 support for 1 faculty = 1.64 total WTE Lecturing

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"	
PG21051	Higher Diploma in Business	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.

Part 2A Evaluation against the validation criteria

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	Comment
Yes	DBS Executive Dean confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed. DBS has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory, and professional body requirements.

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	Comment
Yes	<p>The QQI Award sought for this programme sought in a Higher Diploma in Business as it is a conversion programme targeted at learners with a Level 8 Honours Bachelor's Degree in a non-cognate discipline who wish to specialise in the field of business and business administration with a view to entering industry, progress professionally or to undertake postgraduate studies in a related field.</p> <p>The aims and objectives of the programme were stated clearly both in the programme material provided by DBS to the panel and in meetings with the staff. The programme's minimum learning outcomes have been matched against QQI Award Standards.</p> <p>Minimum module learning outcomes are stated and are matched against minimum programme learning outcomes.</p>

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	Comment
Yes	<p>DBS has engaged with relevant stakeholders (both internal and external) to obtain feedback in the review of this programme. DBS conducts learner surveys each year, typically two weeks after commencement of each module, and two weeks before the end of each module. As part of the consultation process with industry and potential employers in the review of the programme, a number of interviews took place with details provided. DBS is actively engaged with external stakeholders on an on-going basis, e.g. through various forums, placement arrangements. This review process confirmed a continued need for the programme in industry and to learners as graduates are eligible for general management roles or management roles within a specific subfield of business complimenting their previous experience and learning.</p> <p>In addition, DBS has compared this programme not just with other similar programmes in Ireland, but also in the UK and further afield.</p>

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.

	<p>In terms of student enrolments, DBS explained that the programme secured Springboard funding for A/Y 2015/16, which resulted in a peak of registered students for that academic year. However, the panel expressed concern at the decline in student numbers since A/Y 2015/16 and recommended that a marketing plan be put together to increase student numbers enrolled on the programme.</p>
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Graduate Destination Surveys indicated that for 2017 and 2018 graduates of the programme, 82% of graduates 36% were in employed and 46% were in further education within 6 months of course completion.

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	Comment
Yes	<p>Minimum entry requirements are stated as a Level 8 primary honours degree award of at least pass level in a non-cognate discipline from a recognised third level institution. RPL applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account educational record, work experience, problem solving skills and a capacity to successfully participate in the programme. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that they have sufficient knowledge appropriate for Level 8 Business Award Standards.</p> <p>Programme information is clearly enunciated. The panel notes that marketing material for the programme states that work placement/work-based learning is available, and the panel recommends that a work placement module be included in the programme or the reference to work placement in marketing material be clarified.</p>

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)

DBS confirmed that international applicants whose first language is not English and who have not previously undertaken a degree taught in English must provide evidence of proficiency in English language equivalent to B2+ or above on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Evidence of overseas awards will be assessed via the NARIC Ireland Foreign Qualification Database. Such international students are also supported in improving their English language skills while they are studying at DBS through provision of additional tuition (if applicable).

Potential progression opportunities to postgraduate level on successful completion of the programme are also outlined.

The title as a Higher Diploma in Business reflects that the programme is a conversion course for those wishing to enter the field of business.

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	Comment
Yes	<p>The programme is of 60 credits, delivered on a full-time basis over 2 semesters of 12 weeks each across 12 months and on a part-time basis over 3 semesters of 12 weeks each across 18 months.</p> <p>The full-time programme consists of 6 modules of 5 credits each in the first semester and 5 modules (4 of which are 5 credits and one of 10 credits) in the second semester. The programme is suitably structured to enable learners to achieve the programme learning outcomes. However the panel recommends that the programme team reviews the mix of modules included in the programme and especially the number of credits allocated to 'marketing' modules (currently 3 modules of 5 credits each) to the possible detriment of other areas within the business discipline.</p> <p>As the programme is a one-year full-time conversion course, electives are not deemed feasible. The panel recommends that DBS review the mix of modules and, in terms of helping the learner to manage workload, to consider the number of credits attached to each module (i.e. being a multiple of 5 credits).</p> <p>Module documentation is comprehensive. However, the panel recommends that the topics of e-commerce and ethics be reflected more clearly in the programme modules.</p>

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

	<p>The programme does not contain a module on work placement. The panel notes that marketing material for the programme states that work placement/work-based learning is available, and the panel recommends that a work placement module be included in the programme or the reference to work placement in marketing material be clarified.</p>
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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	<p>Staffing requirements to deliver the programme are precise and appropriate, with DBS having an identified complement of staff who are in a position to provide the specified programme. The staff are well-qualified to enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. Considering the focus of the course, the panel noted that staff members have a broad range of industry experience.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged and facilitated to engage in appropriate continuous professional development opportunities. Staff members attend conferences with learning and networking opportunities, and there is (limited) funding available for research. Staff are subject to current DBS staff appraisal procedures.</p>

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.

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	Comment
Yes	<p>Physical resource requirements to deliver the programme are precise and appropriate. DBS provides a suitable environment for learning in which students can study comfortably and safely, either individually or in groups.</p> <p>DBS uses Moodle as its virtual learning environment, and also has a full range of online and other digital resources (electronic journals, etc.) along with a highly-qualified complement of staff to assist students in this area. There is college-wide WIFI access. DBS has an award-winning library facility with a wide variety of printed and digital materials for teaching, learning, and assessment. Classrooms and other venues for learning are fully equipped with all elements necessary for an appropriate learning experience.</p> <p>DBS has provided estimates of costs and income associated with the course for the next five years.</p>

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	The programme's social, cultural and intellectual environment, including resources and support systems, is consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes. Learners are supported not only by the lecturing team but also by staff in the range of support services available within DBS.

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	Comment
Yes	<p>The teaching strategies are thoughtful and well-designed. While modules will be delivered through a mix of lectures, workshops, tutorials and practical sessions, teaching and learning focuses on the learner applying problem-solving skills and undertaking critical reflection and critique of case studies. However, the panel recommends that the mix of modules and, in terms of helping the learner to manage workload, to consider the number of credits attached to each module (i.e. being a multiple of 5 credits).</p> <p>Students benefit from a close relationship with lecturers, which provides an environment in which mentorship and attention to the students' needs is given great importance.</p>

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	Comment
Yes	<p>Assessments are fair and consistent to ensure that the programme learning outcomes are achieved by learners who successful completes the programme,</p> <p>The assessment strategy adopted for the programme needs to be considered, particularly,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a)_ in terms of skills development as identified in the module and programme intended learning outcomes. b) the number of assessments across the programme be reviewed and joint assessment. c) the mixture of group and individual assessment. d) the consistency/equity across modules with regard to assignment expectation, exam lengths and % of total module marks given for particular assessment elements. <p>External examiners comments received over the last number of years reviewed, with no major issues identified.</p>

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).

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	Comment
Yes	<p>Students are well-informed, with DBS having systems in place to keep students up to date with schedules that relate to their learning. Students are given full information about all the learning supports that are available to them. From the outset, the students are given the information they need to make appeals and complaints in a manner consistent with best quality assurance practice. Only one complaint to date has been received from a student pursuing the programme.</p> <p>The teaching and learning methodologies adopted are enriched by a diverse student population. DBS welcomes student diversity and accommodates diverse needs. DBS has a well-developed sense of its duty of care, and actively engages with all students enrolled on its programmes, including reaching out to those who have been identified as at risk.</p> <p>Reasonable provision is made for students with a range of needs. For example, supports are in place for students with dyslexia, etc. Reasonable accommodation is made for students with disabilities.</p>

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)

	<p>A large portion of DBS's students comes from overseas, and the college places great emphasis on support with language, technology and with adjusting to different cultural expectations, etc. DBS feels that a diverse student population is one of its great strengths and fosters a strong sense of collegiality and support for students from overseas.</p>
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DBS's duty of care extends to providing students with a safe physical and psycho-social environment, and it is cognisant and mindful of this fact.

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	Comment
Yes	<p>DBS is actively engaged with QQI in ensuring that all quality assurance requirements are met.</p> <p>DBS has effective procedures in place for selecting suitably qualified staff to teach on the programme.</p> <p>DBS is committed to ensuring that programmes are provided with the specific resources necessary to create the optimum learning environment.</p> <p>Programme operation and management arrangements are carefully documented and suited to their purpose.</p>

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

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

Principal programme

Select one	
Yes	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

DBS provides an intellectual and physical environment that enables the learner to achieve the programme learning outcomes.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

- 1) The assessment strategy adopted for the programme needs to be considered, particularly,
 - a) in terms of skills development as identified in the module and programme intended learning outcomes.
 - b) the number of assessments across the programme be reviewed and joint assessment.
 - c) the mixture of group and individual assessment.
 - d) the consistency/equity across modules with regard to assignment expectation, exam lengths and % of total module marks given for particular assessment element.
- 2) A work placement module be included in the programme or the reference to work placement in marketing material be clarified.
- 3) The mix of modules be reviewed, especially the number of credits allocated to 'marketing' modules (currently 3 modules of 5 credits each) to the possible detriment of other areas within the business discipline.
- 4) The application for Digital Badges is encouraged.
- 5) Ecommerce needs to be brought to the fore and reflected more across a range of modules.

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.

- 6) Ethics also needs a more focused approach in different modules.
- 7) A marketing plan be put together to increase student numbers enrolled on the programme and improve student experience on the programme.

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: Marian Duggan Date: 29/8/19



Signed:

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.

DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

Programme Review and Revalidation

Higher Diploma in Business

Certificate in Business and English Language

Agenda: Wednesday 29th May 2019

[Room 1.2, DBS, 13/14 Aungier Street, Dublin 2]

Time	Location	Item	DBS Attendees
08.45hrs		Panel Private Meeting (with Tea & Coffee)	N/a
10.00 hrs		<p>1. Evaluation of Programme Proposed for Revalidation against QQI validation criteria</p> <p><i>Criterion 1. The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programmes(s)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Conlan-Trant, Executive Dean • Kerry McCall Magan, Head of Academic Programmes • Lori Johnston, Registrar
10.15 hrs		<p>2. Evaluation of the Programme Review Process and Report</p> <p>a. the fitness for purpose of the programme (including its objectives, intended learning outcomes, organisation, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, staffing, resources and management) in light of experience;</p> <p>b. the actual achievement by the programme of its stated objectives;</p> <p>c. the profile of learners who were enrolled and its suitability for the programme;</p> <p>d. the performance of enrolled learners (grades, attrition, completion, benchmarking) and how the provider has responded to this;</p> <p>e. the quality of the learning environment and the learning opportunities afforded to learners by the programme;</p> <p>f. the suitability of the learner workload in light of experience (whether it is excessive or inadequate);</p> <p>g. the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners including summative and formative assessment of learners and external examining procedures;</p> <p>h. the quality assurance arrangements that are specific to the programme;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emma Balfe, Head of Faculty and School (Acting) • Tony Murphy, Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning • Shane Mooney, Head of Student Experience • Ann Masterson, Course Director (Acting), Business and Law • Michael Kielty, Head of Department, Arts, Language and Study Abroad • Martin Doris, Assistant Registrar • Grant Goodwin, QA Officer

		i. the proposed modifications to the programme.	
10.45 hrs		Break – Tea & Coffee	N/a
11.00 hrs		<p>3. Evaluation of Programme Proposed for Revalidation against QQI validation criteria</p> <p>Programme Rationale and overall structure</p> <p><i>Criterion 2: Programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with QQI awards sought.</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 3: Programme concept, implementation strategy and interpretation of QQI award standards are well informed and soundly based</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 4: Access Transfer & Progression arrangements are satisfactory</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Masterson, Course Director(Acting), Business and Law • Michael Kielty, Head of Department, Arts, Language and Study Abroad • Kerry McCall Magan, Head of Academic Programmes • Lori Johnston, Registrar • Emma Balfe, Head of Faculty and School (Acting) • Shane Mooney, Head of Student Experience • Martin Doris, Assistant Registrar • Grant Goodwin, QA Officer • Tanya Balfe, Admissions Manager
11.45hrs		4. Tour of College for Panel	
12.15hrs		Private Panel Discussion (with Lunch)	N/a
13.00hrs		<p>5. (a) Curriculum, Learning Teaching & Assessment</p> <p>Programme: HDip in Business</p> <p><i>Criterion 5: Written curriculum is well structured and fit for purpose</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 9: There are sound learning and teaching strategies</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 10: There are sound assessment strategies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Masterson, Course Director (Acting), Business and Law • Teaching Faculty (list provided separately)
14.00hrs		Private Panel Discussion	N/a
14.15hrs		<p>(b) Curriculum, Learning Teaching & Assessment</p> <p>Programme: Certificate in Business and English Language</p> <p><i>Criterion 5: Written curriculum is well structured and fit for purpose</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 9: There are sound learning and teaching strategies</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 10: There are sound assessment strategies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Kielty, Head of Department, Arts, Language and Study Abroad • Teaching Faculty (list provided separately)
15.15hrs		Private Panel Discussion	N/a

15.30hrs		6. Panel Meeting with Student and Graduate Representatives	
16.00hrs		7. Resourcing and Supports for Learners <i>Criterion 6: There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned</i> <i>Criterion 7: There are sufficient physical resources available to implement the programme as planned</i> <i>Criterion 8: The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme learners</i> <i>Criterion 11: Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed and cared for</i> <i>Criterion 12: The programme is well managed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ann Masterson, Course Director(Acting), Business and Law • Michael Kielty, Head of Department, Arts, Language and Study Abroad • Kerry McCall Magan, Head of Academic Programmes • Lori Johnston, Registrar • Emma Balfe, Head of Faculty and School (Acting) • Tony Murphy, Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning • Shane Mooney, Head of Student Experience • Darragh Breathnach, Head of Academic Operations • Jane Buggle, Deputy Librarian • Martin Doris, Assistant Registrar • Grant Goodwin, QA Officer • Programme Coordinator (tbc)
16.30hrs		Deliberation of the panel	N/a
17.15hrs-17.45hrs		Oral feedback to Senior DBS Staff	