

**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	Dublin Business School
Date of site visit	13 May 2019
Date of report	28 August 2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies
	Award	Bachelor of Arts
	Credit¹	180 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions² OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Embedded programme³	Title	N/a
	Award	N/a

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.

³ Copy this panel for each embedded programme.

	Exit award (Yes/No)	N/a
	Credit	N/a
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	N/a

Module⁴	Title	N/a
	Award	N/a
	Credit	N/a
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	N/a

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	Role	Principal occupation
Dr Andrew O'Regan	Chair	Assistant Registrar, Carlow College, St. Patrick's, College Street, Carlow
Professor David Gwynn Morgan	Academic in Subject area	Emeritus Professor of Law, University College Cork
Eavan Murphy	Academic in Subject area	Law Lecturer, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin 2
Mark Declan Finan BL	Professional/ Employer Representative	The Law Library, The Four Courts, Inns Quay, Dublin 7
Ellen Coll	Learner representative on the panel	Student, Trinity College Dublin
Mary Doyle	Secretary	Independent Academic QA Consultant

Part 1 B

Principal Programme – the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
DBS: Dublin Campus	100	10

Enrolment interval (normally 5 years)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	September 2023
Maximum number of annual intakes	One single intake in September	

⁴ A module leading to a QQI award is a special case of an embedded programme. Discrete modules are only validated on a stand-alone basis if they are to lead to a QQI award.

	[It should be noted that section 3.12 (Planned Intake) of the original programme document quoted maximum learner numbers based on two intakes per year. This was corrected to one in the response to the panel's report. Ref recommendation #4]
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	100
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	Full-time: 3 academic years of 24 weeks each (6 semesters)
Target learner groups	The programme is targeted at the following learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent school-leavers who wish to gain an undergraduate education in legal studies. • Learners who are seeking career advancement by obtaining a legal education, including both those currently seeking employment and those working wishing to upskill in the area of law. • To be eligible to apply for a place on this programme applicants must meet the minimum entry requirements of 5 O6/H7s, to include English or another language of full Level 5 FETAC Award or equivalent. • Applications without this will be considered on the basis of the recognition of prior learning (RPL). Such applicants are considered on a case-by-case basis.
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time, only
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 • Continuous assessment and proctored exams • 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.)	<p>The Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies programme provides learners with exposure to the core areas of law in order to work as a legal practitioner or with legal knowledge in a commercial environment. This programme provides learners with an appropriate base of relevant study in the area of law and gives a solid grounding in the fundamentals of the legal profession for those who wish to progress this as a career. Learners analyse legal problems, receive sound knowledge on legal theoretical frameworks and gain a comprehensive perspective of the legal system.</p> <p>The module content is not only focused on domestic law but also exposes learners to an EU and global perspective reflecting the key issues within that subject area, in addition to the evolving issues likely to impact future legal regulation. In this way learners gain an appreciation of how the different sources of law interrelate and also an appreciation of how the international legal system aligns to</p>

	this. Embedded within the programme is a skills pillar built into this programme aimed at developing competencies in learners, to enable them to face the challenges of working in a legal or commercial environment. On successful completion of the BA in Legal Studies, learners are entitled to enter the award stage of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme.	
Summary of specifications for teaching staff	Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Masters' degree and/or PhD in Law, or an Honours Bachelors Level 8 degree and a professional legal qualification.	
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	Staff to learner ratio	Learning activity type
	1/50	Classroom sessions
	1/25	Workshops
	1/25	Practical sessions
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.⁵	1.15/50 = 0.023	

Programmes being replaced by the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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"	
PG21108	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies	September 2018	Teach out	2021

Embedded programme⁶

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
N/a	N/a	N/a

Other noteworthy features of the application

The panel evaluated the observations, comments and suggestions from internal and external stakeholders and these were duly factored into the review process. Internal stakeholders consisted of students and staff (academic, support and administrative).

⁵ 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.

⁶ This only needs to be completed where embedded programmes may be offered independently of the principal programme. Add more subsections if there are more than one embedded programmes proposed to lead to QQI awards.

In the review and design of the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies for re-validation, the Programme Team, carried out consultations on the programme design and module content with relevant employers and a range of key industry stakeholders and utilised strategic as well as academic sources and comparator analysis. They have engaged with the professional bodies as well as within industry to ensure the programme is appropriate for graduates who wish to pursue a variety of paths. In addition, an extensive consultation with graduates of the programme was also carried out for the review.

The panel found that the consultation process had been comprehensive and it was concluded that the proposed programmes were fit for purpose. In general, the panel found that the documents provided were well structured, clear in the presentation of facts and easy to read.

A summary and quantitative analysis of the recruitment, learner enrolment, application and performance statistics for the existing programme over the past five years was provided for the existing programme covering the areas specified in the Programme Review Manual 2016/2017 Section 3. At the time of the review, enrolments and applications were at their highest level since 2014.

However, in terms of benchmarking grades and QQI Award Classifications the panel concluded that the analysis provided for both programmes was not comprehensive. 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.

Commentary was provided on the teaching strategy, the use of guest speakers, the use of Moodle as a virtual learning environment and the current and planned developments for the blended learning elements of the programme.

Programme-specific arrangements for monitoring progress and guiding, informing and caring for learners were also discussed. A tour, including a short presentation of the facilities and services, was provided, and the panel concluded that the learning environment was consistent with the needs of the learners.

Evidentiary documentation of the implementation of the programme quality assurance arrangements were provided for the panel in the documentation pack. The panel concluded that the quality assurance arrangements applied to the programmes are generally effective, however, the College needs to ensure that it is taking all the steps to close the quality assurance loop and address the issues identified through the application of the quality assurance feedback processes.

Part 1C Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable).

N/a

Comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme.

N/a

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. ⁷	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

DBS participated in the Pilot Re-Engagement process for re-approval of QA procedures with QQI in 2017/18 and has submitted an application for full Re-Engagement to QQI in early 2019. Process, policies and procedures were reviewed as part of the re-engagement application and self-evaluation process.

⁷This 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.

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

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.⁸
 - (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.⁹

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel found that the aims, objectives and rationale for the programme were expressed clearly.

The MIPLOs were informed by the QQI Generic Awards Standards and have been mapped against these standards. The panel concluded that the MIPLOs and MIMLOs have been clearly outlined and were appropriate to the level of the award.

⁸Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

⁹Not 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.¹⁰
- 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 evidence¹¹ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant¹².
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.¹³
- 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 in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel stated that oversight is vital to assure that programme is delivered as identified, and the panel was informed of the externality of the oversight of the current programme (through internal moderator and external examiner process), and the comprehensive consultation process undertaken for this review. The panel commended the process of the review undertaken within the College, as outlined both in the documents and to the panel, the resulting documentation generated and presented, and the DBS team input and openness to engagement with the panel.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ This might be predictive or indirect.

¹² It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

¹³ 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 comments and suggestions from internal and external stakeholders were noted and duly factored into the review process. Feedback had been sought from students, graduates, staff (academic, support and administrative), external examiners and professional bodies. The panel noted that more detail on these exercises, and their interpretation, would be welcome in the documentation provided, as they are currently quite briefly presented, but they were well described at the panel event. The panel concluded that the consultation process had been comprehensive.

It was noted that the part-time academic staff did not seem to attend external examiner meetings and seemed poorly involved in programme review on an on-going basis. **The panel recommends that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme.** This would also serve to enhance overall programme cohesiveness - i.e. considering the placement and integration of modules within the programme, and the development of knowledge, skills and competencies.

Students and graduates with whom the panel met indicated that the programme was useful in enabling them to achieve their academic and professional objectives.

The panel commends the fact that this BA in Legal Studies programme facilitates an alternative entry point for learners to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme, by RPL into the year 3, thereby facilitating learners, who might not otherwise get a chance to engage with an honours Law degree programme, ultimate access to a level 8 programme. However, **the panel recommends that more communication would help learners progressing from this BA in Legal Studies to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) to understand the concept of ordinary and honours degrees, and the ladder system which they support.**

In addition, **the panel recommends that some interpersonal developmental work may be required to facilitate the progression of graduates of this programme to Year 3 of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme, to ease the progression of a significant group of learners into an already established class group, and to support class integration.**

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 satisfied¹⁴.
- 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

¹⁴ 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

<p>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 (CEFR¹⁵) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the <i>core intended programme learning outcomes</i>, 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. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel was satisfied that the programmes' access, transfer and progression arrangements are clearly articulated and working in practice. Information on access, transfer and progression is provided for students through DBS website, promotional material and the Student Handbooks. This includes information on EU and non-EU entry requirements and information for students with disabilities.

The panel commended the fact that the BA in Legal Studies programme facilitates an alternative entry point for learners to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme, by RPL into the year 3, thereby easing learners' ultimate access to a level 8 programme of those learners who might not otherwise get a chance to engage with an honours Law degree programme. **The panel recommended that more communication would help learners progressing from the BA in Legal Studies to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) to understand the concept of ordinary and honours degrees, and the ladder system which they support.**

There was variance in the programme document between the number of intakes identified in the programme details section of the programme document (section 1.2.1) and the planned Intake section (section 3.12). This was clarified at the panel meeting and **the panel recommended that the College provides clarity on the number of intakes to this programme in any academic year in the programme document.**

The admission process, and the need to support learners with lower entry points, was discussed. In addition, supports for the learners are provided in relation to the class size, with particular focus on learner retention and engagement. Academic Staff indicated that they are cognisant of the

¹⁵http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

pedagogical aspect of dealing with the small class and the in-class experience resulting from this. The panel praised the team's positivity and focus on student experience at DBS (particularly in the case of small class size and lower entry qualifications of learners). Teaching is adjusted to facilitate the smaller class size and peer supported learning is a specific feature. The student supports available within DBS, and the commitment of module leaders to academic process and student development were particularly remarked upon.

The panel recommended that some interpersonal developmental work may be required to facilitate the progression graduates of this programme to Year 3 of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme, to ease the progression of a significant group of learners into an already established class group, and to support class integration.

Following feedback from students, the panel stated that it is important that where learners are required to complete continuous assessment assignments, as far as possible, there is coordination between various lecturers in the setting of deadlines, to ensure that learners are not unduly burdened with competing deadlines. **The panel recommends that the programme team consider creating an assessment schedule for the full programme, visible to all.** This would serve to support learner examination performance and progression. Therefore, **the panel recommends that the programme team create a programme assessment schedule, visible to all, and that this would also be provided for learners in hard-copy.**

The level of feedback provided on assignments appeared to be very helpful, and mostly in a timely fashion, and learners appeared satisfied that they could meet with lecturers for further feedback if they so desired. **The panel recommended that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe. This is especially important where there is an assignment component and a written exam – learners should be made aware of their results in an assignment prior to sitting their exam.**

The panel were advised that when recruiting staff, the Faculty manager identifies new staff to the academic appointments sub-committee. The establishment and role of this committee was particularly commended in terms of assuring that sufficient qualified and capable programme staff are available to implement the programme as planned. The committee also identifies the requirements for each newly appointed member of staff to be supported through their orientation at the College.

A CPD programme/strategy is being developed for academic staff within the College to support their teaching and learning endeavours, which will be anchored by a planned teaching and learning qualification (with small number of credits).

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 principles ¹⁶ . 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. ¹⁷	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel was generally satisfied that the programmes and their modules were appropriately structured and scheduled. The rationale for the inclusion of new modules, and the stakeholder engagement which informed their content and that of the revised modules, was discussed with the programme team.

The panel commended the DBS team input and openness to engagement with the panel. It was also noted that the part-time academic staff did not seem to attend the external examiner meetings/boards and seemed poorly involved in programme review on an on-going basis. **The panel recommended that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme.** This would also serve to enhance overall programme cohesiveness - i.e. considering the placement and integration of modules within the programme, and the development of knowledge, skills and competencies.

The programme team identified how the programme progresses and develops through its stages (appropriate to a Level 7 award), with scope to develop into the Level 8 programme (on progression, if the graduate chooses to do so). The BA in Legal Studies is different to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) – there is a broader range of topics on the BA, with more depth provided in the Level 8 programme.

The panel also recommended that the programme team would create an assessment schedule and consider clarifying re-assessment strategy into clearly articulated forms, for each (all) module(s) within the programmes.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

The panel also recommends that learners receive a hardcopy of the assessment deadlines' schedule for the programme modules at the commencement of the semester/stage, rather than rely on learners accessing the information via Moodle.

In reviewing the structure, the panel explored the concept of independent learning versus directed-learning (the college supports scaffolded learning through Moodle, online, in-class). eLearning resources (and recorded lectures) may be used to facilitate students' engagement with programme material. DBS have recently recruited a Learning Technologist and are intending to recruit an Instructional Designer to support lecturers' teaching and learning strategies.

The panel recommended that the programme team define the e-learning element of each module within its module descriptor for clarity. This need not be identical for each module.

The level of feedback provided on assignments (online/Moodle in annotated docs or in hard copy) appeared to be very helpful, and mostly in a timely fashion. General overall feedback was provided to the class, and often supplemented with an interview (face to face) will be held with the learners. **The panel recommended that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe.** This is especially important where there is an assignment component and a written exam – learners should be made aware of their results in an assignment prior to sitting their exam. Learners appeared satisfied that they could meet with lecturers for further feedback if they so desired.

When reviewing the individual module descriptors, the panel recommended that the programme team clarify Essential Texts versus Recommended Texts, to rationalise the text book list to identify a key/primary text with supplementary reading.

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 staff¹⁸ (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 development¹⁹ opportunities²⁰.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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

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 (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel was informed that many of the teaching staff are qualified to NFQ Level 9, with many experienced practitioners involved in the delivery of the programme.

The panel was advised that the WTE/Learner ratio for this programme is 1:25(for workshop/practical) and 1:50 for classroom sessions, and this was deemed to be appropriate.

The panel was informed that the monitoring of the programme is implemented by the Course leader, and the internal moderator also facilitates this monitoring process.

The programme management structure had been *ad hoc*, and without records, and it was noted that this is in the process of being systematised, and the panel noted that the College is seeking to redress this matter with recent appointments and some improvement is already evident. **The panel recommended that the Programme Management structure and processes be strengthened, through greater systematisation and recording.**

The panel commends the DBS team input and openness to engagement with the panel. It noted that the part-time academic staff did not seem to attend the external examiner meetings/boards and seemed poorly involved in programme review on an on-going basis. **The panel recommended that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme.** This would also serve to enhance overall programme cohesiveness - i.e. considering the placement and integration of modules within the programme, and the development of knowledge, skills and competencies.

The panel recommended that scheduling of assessment should be considered by the programme team to ensure learners aren't overburdened and workload is appropriate. To support this, the panel recommended that the programme team would create an assessment schedule, and consider clarifying re-assessment strategy into clearly articulated forms, for each (all) module(s) within the programme.

The panel also recommended that learners receive a hardcopy of the assessment deadlines' schedule for the programme modules at the commencement of the semester/stage, rather than rely on learners accessing the information via Moodle.

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.

The recent appointment of Learning Technologist and plan for recruitment of Instructional Designer to support the college's ambitions in relation to blended, e-learning, and assessment, and support staff in its implementation, was commended by the Panel.

The staff scholarship scheme was outlined and it was conformed that members of the programme staff present indicated that he had utilised this resource to support their research.

The student supports available within DBS, and the commitment of module leaders to academic process and student development, were particularly remarked upon. According to the programme team, working with small classes has its own challenges, where the classroom becomes more discursive. Greater resources are provided to support this experience.

Part-time lecturing staff provided insight into their experience of the programme, and indicated that they felt greatly supported, and praised the collegiate interaction and support received. They stated that it was a good place to come and work.

The establishment and role of the academic appointments sub-committee was particularly commended in terms of assuring that sufficient qualified and capable programme staff are available to implement the programme as planned. This committee also identifies the requirements for each newly appointed member of staff to be supported through their orientation and professional development at the College. However, **the panel cautioned that sourcing part-time staff primarily through referrals and recommendations may not be a sustainable method of assuring externality and a challenging and supportive academic environment, and recommended that alternative mechanisms be employed.**

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 in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

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

A tour of the library facilities in the Aungier Street Campus was undertaken, and the open meeting and study areas throughout the campus to facilitate group work and peer study support was acknowledged. It was noted that the library facilities deploy a wide range of text, which the students and graduates indicated that they like to use. Library resources are deemed sufficient to meet learners' needs; in addition, learners said that there is an arrangement with Trinity College for inter-library loans.

The panel were advised of the mobile IT laboratory facility, whereby charged laptops are available within classrooms to provide a flexible, responsive computer laboratory option – owing to the class sizes on this programme, these particular students had not needed to avail of this.

To support their course work, each learner is provided with their own cloud space.

The student quality evaluation/feedback at programme and module level showed low engagement levels and a poor response rate (20%). The panel acknowledged that the College is seeking to redress this matter with recent appointments, and some improvement is already evident. To continue to enhance the student quality evaluation/feedback practice, **the panel recommends that the system for eliciting and recording learners' quality evaluations of the programme and its modules be reviewed so as to and reflect best practice and to improve the amount and representative nature of the information received.**

Criterion 8

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

A five-year plan was provided for the programme under review. With the difference between projected numbers and those on the current programme, the feasibility of this plan was not particularly clear. The panel also noted the recent update of the DBS strategic plan, and were advised that the development of eLearning/blended learning programmes is a strategic objective of the College.

A description of the learning environment in place to support students was provided, and a tour of the physical facilities in the Aungier Street Campus, particularly the library, was undertaken.

To support their course work, each learner is provided with their own cloud space.

Academic Staff are cognisant of the pedagogical aspect of dealing with the small class and the in-class experience resulting from this. Teaching is adjusted to facilitate the smaller class size and peer supported learning is a specific feature. In addition, the adjustment of the in-class experience between the full-time and part-time delivery mode, to allow for the diversity and maturity of learners is to be commended.

In meetings with students and graduates, the panel found that they were very positive about the level of 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. However, it was also noted that in some instances, issues raised at meetings between the learners and the College may not be resolved in a timely manner.

The student quality evaluation/feedback at programme and module level showed low engagement levels and a poor response rate (20%). This challenge, and the previously identified issue in relation to part-time academic staff involvement, seems symptomatic of an organisation focused on operational delivery, with perhaps insufficient resources being put into evaluation and improvement. However, the panel did acknowledge that the College is seeking to redress this matter with recent appointments, and some improvement is already evident. To continue to enhance the student quality evaluation/feedback practice, **the panel recommended that the system for eliciting and recording learners' quality evaluations of the programme and its modules be reviewed so as to and reflect best practice and to improve the amount and representative nature of the information received.**

The level of feedback provided on assignments appeared to be very helpful, and mostly in a timely fashion, and learners appeared satisfied that they could meet with lecturers for further feedback if they so desired. As far as possible, it would be beneficial if learners received feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe. This is especially important where there is an assignment component and a written exam – learners should be made aware of their

results in an assignment prior to sitting their exam. **The panel recommends that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe.**

The panel also recommended that learners receive a hardcopy of the assessment deadlines' schedule for the programme modules at the commencement of the semester/stage, rather than rely on learners accessing the information via Moodle.

In addition, **the panel recommended that the programme team consider clarifying the re-assessment strategy for the modules in the programme document into clearly articulated and standard format to ensure consistency.** The panel noted that additional classes (tutorials) are held to support learners' engagement with learning material, both during the academic year and in advance of reassessment opportunities.

The students' Law Society, which is open to Level 7 and Level 8 learners as well as those undertaking law modules on other programmes, facilitates learners to network with their peers within the College, and with guest lecturers and employers who present at speeches and seminars during the academic year. **The panel recommends that some interpersonal developmental work may be required to facilitate the progression graduates of this programme to Year 3 of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme, to ease the progression of a significant group of learners into an already established class group, and to support class integration.**

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, support²¹ 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 in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

²¹ 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.

The College has developed Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategies which were provided in the documentation pack for the panel, and appropriate extracts and references were included in the programme documentation. The purpose of this strategy is to support the enhancement of learning and teaching at DBS by establishing a framework, aligned with the overall College Strategy.

The recent appointment of a Learning Technologist and plan for recruitment of Instructional Designer will support the college's ambitions in relation to blended and e-learning, as outlined in the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and to support staff in its implementation. However, in relation to this programme, **the panel recommended that programme team define the e-learning element of each module within the module descriptor for clarity. This need not be identical for each module.**

In meetings with students and graduates, the panel found that they were very positive about the level of 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, clarification or feedback, which was mostly delivered in a timely manner.

Guest lecturers are also used throughout the year, and programme stages, to provide learners with a relevant and current experience, and the learners also get a change to attend court and to observe the legal system in action.

The strategy for the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU) is also aligned with this teaching and learning strategy. The establishment of the SESU, as a multidisciplinary intervention to support non-engaging students, was considered a very positive move by DBS to support learner engagement, retention and progression.

Feedback from students and graduates also confirmed that the workload was appropriate but that more structure and communication around this workload was required. **The panel were of the opinion that this could be further supported by the creation of an assessment schedule, which would be visible/accessible to all.**

The panel further noted the feedback from students confirmed the willingness of teaching staff to address any issues brought to them.

The panel recommended that the programme team clarify listings of Essential Texts versus Recommended Texts within the module descriptors.

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*²²
- 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.²³

²² See the section on transitional arrangements.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel was advised that all assessment for the programmes conforms to the DBS Assessment Regulations which are informed by QQI Assessment and Standards Revised 2013.

The panel recommends that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme. This would also serve to enhance overall programme cohesiveness - the programme team stated that there is little overlap between assessment components – integrated assessment is not a feature of the programme.

There is a significant use of continuous assessment, as the programme team considers this as a mechanism which facilitates information retention, and is therefore particularly suitable for the learners on this programme. The programme team stated that continuous assessment provides reassurance for learners in advance of their exams, with significant marks accumulated before undertaking summative exams – this may support the enhancement of quality of exams. Learners also identified the challenges of group work within the programme based on interpersonal matters, and availability of learners to participate. The student supports available within DBS, and the commitment of module leaders to academic process and student development were particularly remarked upon.

Following feedback from students, the panel stated that it is important that where learners are required to complete continuous assessment assignments, as far as possible, there is coordination between various lecturers in the setting of deadlines, to ensure that learners are not unduly burdened with competing deadlines. **Therefore, the panel recommended that the programme team create a programme assessment schedule, visible to all.**

²³ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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).

The panel also recommended that learners receive a hardcopy of the assessment deadlines' schedule for the programme modules at the commencement of the semester/stage, rather than rely on learners accessing the information via Moodle.

The panel noted the possibility that an overloading of continuous assessment assignment deadlines may also inadvertently cause a decrease in attendance, as learners may concentrate on completion of assignments they are required to submit rather than attend classes. The recent appointment of Learning Technologist and plan for recruitment of Instructional Designer to support the college's ambitions in relation to blended and e-learning, and assessment, and to support staff in its implementation, was commended by the Panel.

The establishment of the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU), as a multidisciplinary intervention to support non-engaging students, was considered a very positive move by DBS to support learner engagement, retention and progression.

The level of feedback provided on assignments appeared to be very helpful, and mostly in a timely fashion, and learners appeared satisfied that they could meet with lecturers for further feedback if they so desired. **The panel recommended that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe.** This is especially important where there is an assignment component and a written exam – learners should be made aware of their results in an assignment prior to sitting their exam.

The panel recommended that the programme team consider clarifying the re-assessment strategy for the modules in the programme document into a clearly articulated and standard format to ensure consistency.

The establishment and role of the academic appointments sub-committee was particularly commended in terms of assuring that sufficient qualified and capable programme staff are available to implement the programme as planned (including assessment). The committee also identifies the requirements for each staff to be supported through their orientation and professional development at the College.

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 disabilities ²⁶ .	
i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i> ²⁷ 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 in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel noted that the Student Handbooks and website contain information on the supports and services available to students.

The learners and graduates that met with the panel spoke extremely positively and impressively about the BA Legal Studies programme (and the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme). It appeared they were well informed of what assignments were required of them and learners praised their lecturers highly. It appeared that the lecturers were very dedicated to lecturing and to the learning of their students.

However, it also noted that where learners are required to complete continuous assessment assignments, **the panel recommended that the programme team create a programme assessment schedule, visible to all, to ensure that learners are not unduly burdened with competing deadlines.** In addition, **the programme team should clarify the re-assessment strategy for the modules in the programme into clearly articulated and standard format.**

The panel recommends that the programme team should define the e-learning element of each module within the module descriptor for clarity. This need not be identical for each module.

The composition and role of the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU) was outlined to the panel. The panel considered this a very positive move by DBS to support learner engagement, retention and progression.

The panel recommended that more communication would help learners progressing from the BA in Legal Studies to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) to understand the concept of ordinary and honours degrees, and the ladder system which they support.

Collaborative and transnational provision is not applicable here.

²⁶For 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).

²⁷See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

Criterion 12

The programme is well managed	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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-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 assurance²⁸ 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 in Legal Studies

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

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

The panel were satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programmes under review. The Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) contains the governance structures for the College and procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning.

It was noted that the QAH and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines, and that DBS have submitted an application to QQI for reengagement. The process for interim programme change was outlined to the panel by the programme team.

The programme management structure had been *ad hoc*, and without records, and it was stated that this was in the process of being systematised. The panel acknowledged that the College is seeking to redress this matter with recent appointments and some improvement is already evident.

The panel recommended that the Programme Management structure and processes be strengthened, through greater systematisation and recording.

²⁸See also QQI’s Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

The student supports available within DBS, and the commitment of module leaders to academic process and student development were particularly remarked upon. However, it was also noted that the part-time academic staff did not seem to attend the external examiner meetings/boards and seemed poorly involved in programme review on an on-going basis. **The panel recommended that the part-time practice based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme.** This would also serve to enhance overall programme cohesiveness - i.e. considering the placement and integration of modules within the programme, and the development of knowledge, skills and competencies.

The recent appointment of Learning Technologist and plan for recruitment of Instructional Designer to support the college's ambitions in relation to blended and e-learning, and assessment, and to support staff in its implementation, was commended by the Panel.

The student quality evaluation/feedback at programme and module level showed low engagement levels and a poor response rate (20%). The panel acknowledged that the College was seeking to redress this matter with recent appointments, and that some improvement was already evident. To continue to enhance the student quality evaluation/feedback practice, **the panel recommended that the system for eliciting and recording learners' quality evaluations of the programme and its modules be reviewed so as to and reflect best practice and to improve the amount and representative nature of the information received.**

In relation to areas for improvement, following feedback from students, the panel stated that it is important that where learners are required to complete continuous assessment assignments, as far as possible, there is coordination between various lecturers in the setting of deadlines, to ensure that learners are not unduly burdened with competing deadlines. **Therefore, the panel recommended that the programme team create a programme assessment schedule, visible to all.**

The panel noted the possibility that an overloading of continuous assessment assignment deadlines may also inadvertently cause a decrease in attendance, as learners may concentrate on completion of assignments they are required to submit rather than attend classes. The establishment of the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU), as a multidisciplinary intervention to support non-engaging students, was considered a very positive move by DBS to support learner engagement, retention and progression.

The panel also recommended that learners receive a hardcopy of the assessment deadlines' schedule for the programme modules at the commencement of the semester/stage, rather than rely on learners accessing the information via Moodle.

The level of feedback provided on assignments appeared to be very helpful, and mostly in a timely fashion, and learners appeared satisfied that they could meet with lecturers for further feedback if they so desired. As far as possible, **the panel recommended that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe.** This is especially important where there is an assignment component and a written exam – learners should be made aware of their results in an assignment prior to sitting their exam.

In addition, **the panel recommended that the programme team consider clarifying the re-assessment strategy for the modules in the programme document into clearly articulated and standard format to ensure consistency.**

The establishment and role of the academic appointments sub-committee was particularly commended in terms of assuring that sufficient qualified and capable programme staff are available to implement the programme as planned (including assessment). The committee also identifies the requirements for each staff to be supported through their orientation and professional development at the College.

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies

Select one	
X	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); ²⁹
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons³⁰ for the overall recommendation

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies between May and August 2019. 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/ revised proposed BA in Legal Studies programme documentation to be submitted for revalidation.

²⁹Normally 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.

³⁰Give 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.

- A site visit on 13 May 2019 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 on the programme, and a tour of the DBS campus (and College Library) to review facilities.
- The preparation of a panel report, outlining the process and evidence pursued and a series of recommendations.
- A follow-up desk review of revised documentation provided by DBS addressing the panel's recommendations

The revised documentation consisted of:

- DBS Programme Review Document for the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies (referred to as the Programme Document hereafter)
- DBS Appendix 5 Module Descriptors for the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies (Referred to as the Module Descriptors hereafter)
- Programme Team's response to the Independent Programme Review Report (referred to as the Team Response hereafter)
- Proposed Assessment Schedule for the programme
- A zipped folder of supporting documentation which include details of the DBS LLB (Hons) Buddy System Programme; Terms of Reference for the Programme Board and Programme Team meetings; Terms of Reference for the Research Committee; Module Guide 2019-2020; and sample Module Feedback Form.

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies, as presented to QQI for revalidation, satisfies the core policies and criteria for revalidation by QQI of programmes of education and training, specifically as follows:

Criterion1: DBS meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of these programmes. The panel was informed DBS is currently taking part in the re-engagement process with QQI. QA policies and procedures are therefore under review. Access, transfer and progression procedures are detailed in Section 4 of Programme Document and Chapter 6 of the current DBS Quality Assurance Handbook.

The panel noted that DBS has arrangements in place for Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL), documentation for which is provided to QQI with every submission for revalidation of a programme.

Criterion2: the programme objectives and programme outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI award sought. They are set out in Sections 2.1 and 2.4 of the Programme Document. The Interpretation of the awards standards and research supporting the programme's aims, objectives and the MIPLOs is provided in section 3.6. MIPLOs are mapped against the QQI Generic Awards Standards as set out in Section 13 of the Programme Document, and are compared with those of comparable programmes in section 2.7.

Criterion3: 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. Extensive consultation with legal stakeholders, as well as students and graduates, was evidenced in Section 3.4 and 3.7 of the Programme Document and had informed the evolution of the programme.

Criterion4: the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory. Entry criteria and progression options, including those for the LLB (Hons), are clearly documented, as per section 3.2 and chapter 4 of the Programme Document, in relation to the specification of learning that target learners are expected to possess before enrolment, and for progression purposes.

The panel recommended that more communication would help learners progressing from this BA in Legal Studies to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) to understand the concept of ordinary and honours degrees, and the ladder system which they support. This has been further developed in the learners' induction programme, delivered annually. The panel also recommended that graduates be supported in their progression to Year 3 of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) programme, to ease class integration – an enhanced Buddy system within the LLB (Hons) is going to be used to support this integration.

Criterion5: the programme's written curriculum and modules are well structured and fit-for-purpose. The panel recommended that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme, to enhance overall programme cohesiveness.

In its response the programme team took the recommendation on board and provided evidence of greater clarity and cohesion in the structure and the terms of reference for the course boards and programme team meetings. The panel is satisfied with these responses have addressed the recommendations.

Criterion 6: there are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned. The panel was advised that the minimum qualification for teaching staff is a NFQ Level 9 (Master) and/or PhD in law, or an Honours Bachelors Level 8 degree and a professional legal qualification. This is evidenced in the suite of staff CVs [Appendix 2 Programme Staff CVs] which set out the qualifications of staff, and those undertaking further studies including at Level 10. Other staffing matters are set out in section 1.2 and chapter 7 of the Programme Document.

Criterion7: there are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned, as set out in chapter 8 of the Programme Document. The wide range of resources utilised to support learners, and support their progression and retention, was noted.

The panel noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programme under review as evidenced in Section 3.13 of the Programme Document, however, the variation in projected learner numbers makes it very difficult to interpret the proposed programme's viability.

Criterion8: the learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners. The panel was advised that DBS uses a number of mechanisms to develop and implement supports for students as set out in sections 5.8 and 5.9 of the Programme Document.

There is no work placement on the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies.

Criterion9: there are sound teaching and learning strategies. These are outlined in chapter 5 of the Programme Document. In meetings with students and graduates at the site visit, the panel noted that they were very positive about the support received from staff.

The panel recommended that the e-learning element of each module is defined within the module descriptor for clarity. This is being implemented in conjunction with the Colleges developing Teaching and Learning Strategy.

The panel found that the lists of texts required a review to reflect on essential vs recommended for

the Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies. DBS provided evidence that reading lists have been updated in the Module Descriptor document provided.

Criterion 10: there are sound assessment strategies. The panel was advised that all assessment for the programmes conform to the DBS Assessment Regulations which are informed by QQI Assessment and Standards Revised 2013 as set out in section 5.10 of the Programme Document, and within the individual modules.

The panel recommended that an assessment schedule be prepared for the programme and that a hardcopy be provided to learners at the commencement of the semester/stage., and are satisfied that appropriate measures have been put in place to provide this.

Arrangements have also been put in place by the college in response to the panel's recommendation that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe.

The programme team has also clarified the re-assessment strategy for the modules in the programme.

Criterion 11: learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for. The panel noted that the Student Handbooks and website reviewed contained relevant information in relation to the supports and services available to students. Students and graduates with whom the panel met confirmed that support services are well publicised. Supports for learners are detailed in sections 5.9 and 8.2 of the programme document.

Criterion 12: the programme is well managed. The panel were satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programmes under review. The College is enhancing its processes to ensure that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme are more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme.

The Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) contains the governance structures for the College and procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning. It was noted that the QAH and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines, and have been redrafted and are currently subject to completion of DBS's reengagement process with QQI.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

There were no conditions identified by the panel.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. The panel recommends that the part-time practice-based lecturers on the programme be more closely involved in the overall annual oversight, evaluation and review of the programme. This would also serve to enhance overall programme cohesiveness.
2. The panel recommends that more communication would help learners progressing from the BA in Legal Studies to the Bachelor of Laws (Hons) to understand the concept of ordinary and honours degrees, and the ladder system which they support.
3. The panel recommends that some interpersonal developmental work may be required to facilitate the progression graduates of this programme to Year 3 of the Bachelor of Laws (Hons)

programme, to facilitate the progression of a significant group of learners into an already established class group, and to support class integration.

4. The panel recommends that the College provides clarity on the number of intakes to this programme in any academic year.
5. The panel recommends that the programme team consider creating an assessment schedule for the full programme, visible to all.
6. The panel recommends that learners receive a hardcopy of the assessment deadlines' schedule for the programme modules at the commencement of the semester/stage, rather than rely on learners accessing the information via Moodle.
7. The panel recommends that learners receive feedback on assignments within the recommended four-week timeframe. This is especially important where there is an assignment component and a written exam – learners should be made aware of their results in an assignment prior to sitting their exam.
8. The panel recommends that the programme team clarify the re-assessment strategy for the modules in the programme into clearly articulated and standard format.
9. The programme team should define the e-learning element of each module within the module descriptor for clarity. This need not be identical for each module.
10. Clarify listings of Essential Texts versus Recommended Texts within the module descriptors.
11. The panel recommends that the Programme Management structure and process be strengthened through greater systematisation and recording.
12. The panel recommends that the College utilise alternative mechanisms for sourcing part-time staff (rather than through referrals and recommendations, which may not be a sustainable method of assuring externality and a challenging and supportive academic environment).
13. The panel recommends that the system for eliciting and recording learners' quality evaluations of the programme and its modules is reviewed to ensure it reflects best practice and improves the amount and representative nature of the information received.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

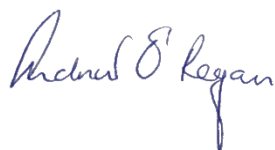
Panel secretary, Mary Doyle has previously held the position of Registrar at Dublin Business School. Since leaving this role, in 2009, she has not engaged in any professional relationship with the College and/or its staff. In addition, there have been extensive changes at senior/middle management within DBS in the interim and Ms Doyle has not had any professional relationship with the incumbents, during or prior to their taking up their roles at DBS.

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

Panel chairperson: Dr Andrew O'Regan

Date: 28 August 2019

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

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.

Part 4: Appendices