

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

Part 1 A

Provider name	DBS
Date of site visit	22 nd May 2019
Date of report	20 th August 2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance
	Award	Master of Science 90 ECTS
	Credit¹	90 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions² OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Embedded programme³	Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Science in International Accounting and Finance
	Award	Postgraduate Diploma in Science

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)	Yes
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Evaluators

Name	Role	Affiliation
Donna Bell	Chair	Independent Consultant
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Independent Consultant
Dr Fabrice Rousseau	Subject Expert	Head of Department, Economics, Finance and Accounting, NUI, Maynooth
Marie O Flynn	Subject Expert	Former Head of Dept of Finance TU Dublin (formerly DIT)
Enoyoze Obazee	Learner Representative	Student, MSc Griffith College, Dublin
David Walsh	Employer Representative	Senior Manager S&O Finance, Deloitte Consulting

All members of the panel have declared that they are independent of DBS and have no conflict of interest.

Part 1 B

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
DBS Campus, Dublin	100	15

Enrolment interval (<i>normally 5 years</i>)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	August 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	2, September and January	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	100	
Programme duration (<u>months</u> from start to completion)	Full-time: 3 semesters of 12 weeks across 12 months Part-time: 5 semesters of 12 weeks across 24 months	
Target learner groups		
Approved countries for provision	Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time and part-time	
The teaching and learning modalities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom lectures 2. Case-based learning 3. Practical skills sessions 4. Workshops 5. Tutorials 6. Individual and group work 7. Online synchronous and asynchronous 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>This programme is aimed at learners with second class second division (2.2) primary undergraduate honours bachelor degree (Level 8) in a cognate area who wish to specialise in the field of accountancy and finance with a view to entering industry. Cognate subjects include general business, accountancy, and finance related undergraduate/ bachelor degrees, or an equivalent professional qualification such as ACCA or CIMA. Those with a second class second division (2.2) primary undergraduate honours bachelor degree (Level 8) in a non-cognate area plus 3-5 years professional experience in a related field and who require a qualification in this area in order to progress professionally. Learners can also access this programme through RPL and will be assessed on a case by case basis.</p> <p>English Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 	

	<p>above on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).</p> <p>The programme is aimed at learners who wish to specialise in accountancy and finance functions with a view to entering industry in a medium/high-level operational and/or managerial role. Learners will have the foundational knowledge and skills to progress professionally and/or to undertake further professional studies. Learners will achieve the financial expertise and personal skills to work within existing operational teams and make strategic financial management decisions. Learners will be capable of dealing with diverse intrinsic and extrinsic financial business realities in a manner to ensure the sustainability and growth of the business model. Through the applied project learners will develop independent research and problem-solving skills reflective of their expansion of financial management competencies and contribute to their chosen field of enquiry which will be valuable in a variety of contexts in the workplace. Technological innovation has created a wave of disruptive activity that will change the shape of the global economic and financial system over the next decade. Digitisation and ever-increasing volumes of data has led to a demand for graduates (employees) from programmes specifically tailored to the skills required for a changing and increasingly competitive and globalised business landscape.</p>
<p>Summary of specifications for teaching staff</p>	<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters or PhD in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance including treasury, research, trading, data analysis, lecturing on financial theory and practice • Finance and accounts postgraduate levels and professional levels. • Finance and accounting postgraduate and professional levels • Computing including information security, cloud computing and computer networking. • Financial economics including development and execution of strategic initiatives designed to improve business performance, creator of data-driven solutions to critical business needs. • Business intelligence, predictive analytics, data management and software engineering, accredited IT project management. • In modules where industry experience is desirable, holders of Level 8 honours degrees in the above

	disciplines, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant senior industry experience may also be considered.
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	1/50 classroom sessions 1/25 workshops 1/25 practical sessions
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.⁴	0.63/50=0.013=0.013:1

Programmes being replaced by the Principal Programme

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)			Arrangement for enrolled learners	Date when replaced programme is planned to cease completely
Code	Title	Last enrolment date	Indicate whether "Teach out" or "Transfer to replacement programme"	
PG19606	MSc International Accounting and Finance	September 2018	Teach out	September 2019

Postgraduate Diploma in Science in International Accounting and Finance

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre)	Minimum number of learners
DBS Dublin Campus	100	15

Enrolment interval (normally 5 years)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	August 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	2, September and January	
Maximum total number of learners per intake	100	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	Full-time: 2 semesters of 12 weeks each across 12 months. Part-time: 4 semesters of 12 weeks each across 24 months.	
Target learner groups		
Approved countries for provision	Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time and part-time	
The teaching and learning modalities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom lectures 2. Case-based learning 3. Practical skills sessions 4. Workshops 5. Tutorials 6. Individual and group work 	

⁴ 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.

	7. Online synchronous and asynchronous learning
<p>Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)</p>	<p>This programme is aimed at learners with second class second division (2.2) primary undergraduate honours bachelor degree (Level 8) in a cognate area who wish to specialise in the field of accountancy and finance with a view to entering industry. Cognate subjects include general business, accountancy, and finance related undergraduate/ bachelor degrees, or an equivalent professional qualification such as ACCA or CIMA. Those with a second class second division (2.2) primary undergraduate honours bachelor degree (Level 8) in a non-cognate area plus 3-5 years professional experience in a related field and who require a qualification in this area in order to progress professionally. Learners can also access this programme through RPL and will be assessed on a case by case basis.</p> <p>English Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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). <p>The programme is aimed at learners who wish to specialise in accountancy and finance functions with a view to entering industry in a medium/high-level operational and/or managerial role. Learners will have the foundational knowledge and skills to progress professionally and/or to undertake further professional studies. Learners will achieve the financial expertise and personal skills to work within existing operational teams and make strategic financial management decisions. Learners will be capable of dealing with diverse intrinsic and extrinsic financial business realities in a manner to ensure the sustainability and growth of the business model. Through the applied project learners will develop independent research and problem-solving skills reflective of their expansion of financial management competencies and contribute to their chosen field of enquiry which will be valuable in a variety of contexts in the workplace. Technological innovation has created a wave of disruptive activity that will change the shape of the global economic and financial system over the next decade. Digitisation and ever-increasing volumes of data has led to a demand for graduates (employees) from programmes specifically</p>

	tailored to the skills required for a changing and increasingly competitive and globalised business landscape.
Summary of specifications for teaching staff	<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters or PhD in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance including treasury, research, trading, data analysis, lecturing on financial theory and practice • Finance and accounts postgraduate levels and professional levels. • Finance and accounting postgraduate and professional levels • Computing including information security, cloud computing and computer networking. • Financial economics including development and execution of strategic initiatives designed to improve business performance, creator of data-driven solutions to critical business needs. • Business intelligence, predictive analytics, data management and software engineering, accredited IT project management. • In modules where industry experience is desirable, holders of Level 8 honours degrees in the above disciplines, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant senior industry experience may also be considered.
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	<p>1/50 classroom sessions 1/25 workshops 1/25 practical sessions</p>
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.	0.63/50=0.013=0.013:1

Programmes being replaced by the Embedded 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"	
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), partner institutions, professional bodies included ACCA, CIMA and CFA. Consultations were conducted with key stakeholders such as government agencies in Ireland including Enterprise Ireland and the IDA. Further consultations were held with graduates and with a wide range of employers in the financial services sector. The review process was also informed by the comparator analysis undertaken by DBS, a review of External Examiner reports and feedback obtained from industry and professional organisations.

The aims, objectives and graduate profiles of the programme were outlined. The panel found that the proposed programme learning outcomes have been mapped to the QQI Science Award Standards and satisfy the QQI Award Standards for the Science Award at Level 9. It was stated the programme focuses on learners' in-depth knowledge of the theory and practice in accounting and finance, with an emphasis on the development of analytic, research and problem-solving skills. The ultimate aim is to assist them to obtain employment and apply these skill and knowledge in a variety of areas in a broad range of companies.

A number of the modules on this programme have already been mapped successfully to the Foundation (F) Papers on the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) global curriculum. It is proposed to apply to ACCA for further 3 exemptions at the Foundation level for the proposed new programme. Students who successfully complete these modules are then eligible to apply to ACCA for exemption from the corresponding paper(s).

These professional bodies provide pathways to professional accreditation in accountancy. DBS stated that they will reapply for accreditation with ACCA following successful revalidation of the programme. The current programme is also accredited with CIMA and DBS intend to reapply for this accreditation for the proposed programme.

Learner profile

Almost 60% of the learners are from Asia, the majority of these from India. The diverse nature of the remaining learners demonstrates the international nature of the programmes. The number of learners from Asia has increased over the period, while the number from Europe has decreased.

Learners are predominantly in the 23-30-year-old bracket.

Quantitative analysis

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

- Enrolment analysis

The total number enrolled on the programme from 2014/15-2017/18 was 133. The number of enrolled learners increased from 14 learners in 2014/15 to a high of 43 learners in 2018/19. The increase demonstrates the demand for the programme has increased significantly/

- Attrition, transfer, progression and completion by stage

The overall pass rate in the period under review is 87.78%. The improved levels of progression on the programme can be directly correlated to the implementation of an 'early alert' system introduced in 2016/17 academic year which identifies learners at risk of falling behind. This followed

an extensive review of the academic performance over the previous two years of delivery. The alert system facilitates interventions by the Student Engagement Officer and/or Course Director, who assist the learner to continue with the programme by providing appropriate supports. Specific support is provided around research methods and research work for the dissertation element of the programme in particular which was proving demanding for some students. See Section 7.5 for further commentary.

- Analysis of grades and QQI award classifications

It was noted that there was a significant decline in the First-Class Honours awards for the programme in 2017/18. This decline can be correlated with the significant increase in second class honours for the 2017/18. The programme team has interpreted the overall narrowing of the distribution of awards as a direct consequence of a more concentrated distribution of the learners' previous academic and/or industry experience.

- Graduate destinations

Graduates of the programme have taken up roles as accountants, financial analysts, portfolio managers, business analysts, business intelligence managers and consultants.

Companies employing MSc graduates in Ireland include Merrill Lynch, Central Bank of Ireland, Circle, Accenture, Grant Thornton and Bank of Ireland.

Exit Award and other modifications

It is proposed to introduce a 60 ECTS exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Science in International Accounting and Finance to allow learners who, for one reason or another, are not able to complete the finance research project. The panel welcomed this initiative.

The panel noted that several modules are to be re-named in order to more accurately reflect updates in the content. It is also proposed to re-distribute and re-organise a total of 20 credits within the programme's content, through removal of some out of date modules and the introduction of new/updated modules. All modules reading lists will be reviewed and updated for the proposed programme.

Overall, the panel concluded that the proposed modifications would enhance the programme which met educational needs in a sector that presents many employment opportunities in the domestic and international financial services sector.

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. ⁵	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

As an established provider of higher education programmes DBS has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of this programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression. DBS has also established arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) which have been approved by QQI. The panel was informed that DBS is currently taking part in the re-engagement process with QQI and has completed the Pilot Phase. As part of the re-engagement process, policies and procedures were being reviewed.

DBS has 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).

⁵ This 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.⁶
 - (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.⁷

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel found that the aims, objectives and rationale for the programmes were expressed clearly and were comprehensive and consistent with a Level 9 award as set out in Section 2.1 of the Programme Document.

It was found that the programme and module learning outcomes have been clearly outlined in Section 2.4 of the Programme Document and were appropriate to the level of the award. It was the view of the panel that it is ambitious to develop a critical understanding of the core principles of accounting, finance and quantitative analysis, which are set as objectives, while also enhancing a broad range of practical technical skills.

In conversation with staff, the panel was informed that the intention was to offer ambitious programmes that challenged learners and prepared them for employment in the ever-evolving and demanding industry of financial services.

The title of the programmes were deemed to be appropriate and in line with the QQI standard for the Major Award Type on the NFQ. It was noted that the minimum intended programme learning

⁶ Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

⁷ 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.

outcomes for the proposed programmes were informed by the QQI Science Award Standards and have been mapped against these standards as set out in Sections 2.2. and 2.1 of the Programme Document.

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.⁸
- 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 evidence⁹ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant¹⁰.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.¹¹
- 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	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel concluded that the proposed interdisciplinary programmes met genuine education and training needs in a sector that continued to provide employment opportunities for graduates both in Ireland and in the global financial services sector. The panel was informed of the consultation process undertaken for this review and this was outlined in Section 3 of the Programme document and at the site visit.

⁸ 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.

⁹ This might be predictive or indirect.

¹⁰ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

¹¹ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

The panel noted from meeting with staff, that there was limited evidence of peer participation in the programme development process, bearing in mind the research interests of the academic staff that the panel met.

The extensive use of guest lecturers and visits to industry sites were an integral part of the programme, providing up to date perspectives on issues and concerns in the financial services sector.

The panel noted the outcomes of a comparator analysis undertaken by DBS. Two Irish providers, Cork University's Master of Science in International Accounting Practice and DCU's Master of Science in Accounting and the University of Strathclyde's Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance were considered. The comparison showed, that while there was considerable overlap in the content and approach, DBS's programme put greater emphasis on contemporary financial and risk management functions.

Consultation with industry provided feedback that indicated that graduates should have an in-depth knowledge of all subjects listed in the module descriptors. DBS took this on board and the programmes offer no electives but focus on providing learners with a solid theoretical and practical grounding in all subject areas.

The panel concluded that the proposed programmes made a contribution towards filling the skills gaps that industry feedback and government reports had indicated was an issue for the developing industry in Ireland and abroad.

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 satisfied¹².
- 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 (CEFR¹³) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.
- d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that **target learners** are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).
- e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the **recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.
- f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-
 - (i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes*, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).
 - (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;
 - (iii) Has long-lasting significance.
- g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

The panel was satisfied that the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements, as set out in Section 4 of the Programme Document are clearly articulated and working in practice. Information on access, transfer and progression is available 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.

Postgraduate Diploma in Science in International Accounting and Finance

The panel noted that it is proposed to introduce 60 ECTS exit award, a Postgraduate Diploma in Science Accounting and Finance. The Diploma will be offered as an exit award to learners who

¹² 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

¹³ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/20)

cannot progress to completes the Masters of Science in International Accounting and Finance and learners will not be enrolled separately on the Diploma. The panel welcomed the inclusion of the proposed exit award and concluded that it was appropriate.

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 principles¹⁴.
- 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.¹⁵

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel was generally satisfied that the curriculum for the programmes was appropriately structured and fit for purpose. The rationale is set out clearly in Section 5.2 of the Programme Document. As noted, it is proposed to introduce an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Science in International Accounting and Finance for students who are not apply to complete the dissertation in the Masters in International Accounting and Finance. This was deemed to be appropriate and was welcomed by the panel.

In relation to the MSc in International Accounting and Finance the panel was informed that it was proposed to have one combined module in Research Methods with specific content on research methodologies and their application, including quantitative financial modelling. In conversation with teaching staff, and with students and graduates it was noted that for the dissertation element of the

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

programme, with a new pathway on applied research, there was support in place for students, through a Dissertation Coordinator and a Postgraduate Coordinator.

It was reported, for instance, that the appointment of supervisors with similar research interests or capacity was matched to the students' area of research as far as possible.

In addition, students had access to a Research Librarian who provided further assistance in conducting research and in refining research methodologies which they considered to be a valuable support.

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 staff¹⁶ (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 development¹⁷ opportunities¹⁸.
- 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	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel noted that teaching staff on the programme were experienced module leaders, with most qualified to Masters level or holding a professional qualification. Section 7 of the Programme Document provided relevant details of the staff and Appendix 2 contains the CVs of the teaching staff.

The panel supports the initiative of DBS to allocate a mentor to newly appointed academic staff. The panel was informed that programme leaders are readily accessible to part-time staff and this provides a welcome measure of peer support to this cohort of lecturers.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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.

The panel noted that DBS is implementing a Research, Innovation and Enterprise (REI) Strategy which had set out key objectives in these areas including partnership with industry and employers, being innovative in approach and global as well as local in outlook.

In terms of promoting a research culture, the panel was advised that DBS provides 15 scholarships for staff each year and holds an annual Research Day to facilitate teaching staff to showcase their current research. In addition, the DBS Library publishes journals for each School, including a Business Journal.

In conversation with staff, it was evident that progress is being made in opening up opportunities for academic staff to pursue CPD and research activities. There was evidence that staff were involved in continuous professional development with professional bodies and several were also active members of committees on professional bodies such as ACCA. They were actively involved in industry forums concerned with understanding the impact of new technology on financial services and brought fresh insights into the continuous development of the programme content and programme development.

At the site meeting, it was noted that several staff conveyed to the panel that they were actively engaged in pursuing interests in pedagogy and innovative teaching methods, for instance, and were supported to do so. It was evident that staff were aware of how to apply for attendance at events, seminars or short courses and stated that, in recent times, the time and resources available for CPD had significantly improved.

It was noted that some staff were pursuing PhDs and were supported through flexible scheduling in continuing their studies and that such support would be important in the future.

The panel was advised that it was a strategic objective of DBS is to achieve Delegated Authority. The panel concluded that in order to achieve that objective there will be a requirement for higher qualifications and advanced research capability among academic staff. This will raise the profile of DBS and can be achieved through academic research and research-led teaching.

It is recommended that supports be put in place for staff to pursue PhD, academic research and CPD.

In its response document, the panel was informed that while DBS is currently reviewing its research initiatives as well as the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy, as well as supports and training for CPD, a number of initiatives are already in place. Examples of these were detailed in the document provided, entitled R01 Staff Academic Research Supports and CPD. The panel is satisfied that this response has met the recommendation.

The panel was informed that the WTE is $0.63/50=0.013=0.013:1$ and deemed this to be appropriate.

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	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel was generally satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources available to implement the programmes as planned. Further details were provided in Section 8 of the Programme Document. It was noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programmes under review.

A tour of the physical facilities in the Aungier St and Castle House Campuses was undertaken by the panel. The on-going development and upgrading of common meeting and study areas throughout the campus to facilitate group work and peer study support was acknowledged. In conversation with students and graduates, the panel noted however that even with these developments, finding available places to study and meet often proved difficult.

Students reported that there were constraints in terms of infrastructure available for social interaction and achieving a sense a campus life experience. The panel observed that the recreational space in the Castle House campus was limited in size for the number of students enrolled.

The panel welcomed a number of initiatives being considered by DBS including opening up the 5th floor of Castle House for classrooms and other student spaces in the short term. In the longer term, it was noted that DBS is considering other ways to increase its overall capacity in the city centre for staff and students. It was noted that, as it is a key strategic objective of DBS to grow, the identification of additional space is an on-going process. There was evidence that DBS's Senior Management Team had been active in pursuing suitable premises within the constraints of finance, urban zoning and competitive market conditions for office-type space.

The panel found that the library uses technology effectively to support learners and staff, including access to an assignment planner, Kindle lending facilities, a Registrar of Scholarly Activity as well as a user-friendly search engine to enable ease of search for books and academic journals. It was noted that specialist library staff are employed to assist students to develop their research capabilities. The library is engaged in publishing the DBS journals for the School of Arts and the School of Business featuring peer-reviewed research by both staff and students. This initiative is in line with a core pillar of DBS's strategy on achieving academic excellence.

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	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel was generally satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of learners.

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

- Learner surveys
- Peer Mentoring Support (with training provided for mentors)
- Student representation on the Academic Board and Board of Studies
- Support for, and engagement with an elected Student Union
- Student services for:
 - Accommodation
 - Counselling and referral services, including specific contact with the provider of mental health for young people, *Jigsaw*
 - Sports and societies, with many student-led events
 - Entertainment
 - Study and meeting spaces within the campus
 - Careers office, providing advice and information on employment opportunities and professional development

The panel concluded that the staff with responsibility for support services were proactive in responding to student feedback for improvements in facilities which was undertaken on a continuous basis, within the constraints of the physical facilities available. The panel visited the central student hub which had been created and was satisfied that this provided the basis for an integrated approach to providing accessible services.

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, support¹⁹ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel was satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place for the programmes overall as detailed in Sections 5.5, 5.6 and 5.9 of the Programme Document.

In conversation with teaching staff, the panel noted that there was a balance between the use of interactive classroom techniques, use of guest lecturers from business as well as regulatory bodies and on-line resources to encourage effective learning. It was further stated that every effort was made to ensure that practical, fresh content was delivered, based on current events and new developments in the financial services sector as well as core principles and theories.

The panel found that students and graduates appreciated the support and access to lecturers on the programme, including smaller tutorial groups and additional support via the library on academic writing seminars. It was considered that the programmes represent good products and in terms of the modifications to proposed programmes the panel considered they enhanced and augmented what was already in place. The panel noted the comment made by students and graduates that it was evident that their feedback had been reflected in the design of the proposed programmes.

¹⁹ 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*²⁰
- 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.²¹
- 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.²²
- 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.²³

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

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. Further details were provided in Section 5.10 of the Programme Document.

The panel concluded that workload is deemed to be appropriate and it was reported by students and graduates that academic staff are responsive and flexible in terms of scheduling continuous assessment.

Students and graduates reported to the panel that there were inconsistencies in the amount of feedback provided on assessments which varied according to individual lecturers.

It is recommended that DBS put in place standard feedback procedures across all modules.

In its response document, the panel noted DBS's commitment that the timing and nature of feedback is to be examined as part of the review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

²⁰ See the section on transitional arrangements.

²¹ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

²² 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.

²³ 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 noted DBS's initiative to map the Assessment Strategy to enhance the consistency of the feedback process and to avoid over-assessment and welcomed this development.

The panel is satisfied that this recommendation has been met.

In relation to the MSc in International Accounting and Finance, the panel concluded that the dissertation is an important aspect of the programme's curriculum. It was further concluded that learning within the Research Methods Modules and Dissertation might be augmented and tracked by provision of a logbook. This would provide a method for teaching staff, supervisors and learners to cooperate in an area that many of the students and graduates indicated they found challenging.

It is recommended that DBS considers using a logbook for the Research Methods and Dissertation modules.

In its response document, the panel noted that DBS has recommended that students keep a log book to aid with reflection on their research journey through the Research Module and the Capstone Module. The panel noted that the Module and Assessment Documentation had been updated accordingly.

The panel is satisfied that this recommendation has been met.

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 disabilities²⁴.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²⁵ 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	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

An overview of the support services available to students was outlined in Section 5.9 of the Programme Document and at the site visit. The panel noted that the Student Handbooks and website contained relevant information in relation to the supports and services available to students.

Students and graduates reported that lecturers and staff were generally responsive to requests for support and information. They were aware of the appeals and complaints procedures. It was stated that complaints had been resolved speedily, fairly and at an informal level where possible.

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

The panel noted that learners were particularly appreciative of the assistance provided with finding accommodation, and was informed that DBS has 50 accommodation units for international students within a reasonable distance of the DBS campus. It was added that the student support services were helpful with regard to dealing with immigration issues such as securing visas. The induction process and general support prior to coming to DBS as well as during the course of their studies was highly valued by them.

The panel commends DBS on the high standard of support provided for international students.

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 assurance²⁶ 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	

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

The panel was satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programmes under review. Further detail was available in Sections 7 and 8 of the Programme Document. The 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.

²⁶ See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance

Select one	
Satisfactory	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination); ²⁷
	Not satisfactory.

The panel is satisfied that all criteria have been met.

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance (Embedded Programme) between May 2019 and August 2019.

This proposed embedded programme was considered as part of the review process for the MSc in International Accounting and Finance.

The programme is due for review under the QQI requirement for periodic monitoring and review, and also requires 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*. As advised by QQI, the proposed programme has been mapped to the Science Award Standards.

The review comprised four stages:

- A desk review by the panel of the self-evaluation report on the internal programme review prepared by the Programme Leaders and Programme Team and a review of the initial proposed revised programmes to be submitted for revalidation of the programmes.
- A site visit on 22nd May 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 programmes and a tour of the DBS campus to review facilities
- The preparation of a panel report, outlining the process and evidence pursued and proposing three recommendations.
- A follow-up desk review of revised documentation provided by DBS addressing the panel's recommendations.

²⁷ 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.

The revised documentation consisted of:

- DBS’s updated Programme Document (referred to as Programme Document hereafter)
- The Programme Team’s response to the Independent Programme Review Report (referred to as Team Response hereafter) including the following documents related to the recommendations made
 - R01 Staff Academic Research Supports and CPD.
 - R02a Feedback Procedures.
 - R02b Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance - Indicative Assessment Strategy

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance (Embedded Programme) as presented to QQI for revalidation, satisfies the core policies and criteria for revalidation by QQI of programmes of education and training.

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

Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance

Select one	
Satisfactory	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination); ²⁸
	Not satisfactory.

The panel is satisfied that all criteria have been met.

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of the Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance between May 2019 and August 2019.

The programme is due for review under the QQI requirement for periodic monitoring and review, and also requires 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*. As advised by QQI, the proposed programme has been mapped to the Science Award Standards.

²⁸ 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.

The review comprised four stages:

- A desk review by the panel of the self-evaluation report on the internal programme review prepared by the Programme Leaders and Programme Team and a review of the initial proposed revised programmes to be submitted for revalidation of the programmes.
- A site visit on 22nd May 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 programmes and a tour of the DBS campus to review facilities
- The preparation of a panel report, outlining the process and evidence pursued and proposing three recommendations.
- A follow-up desk review of revised documentation provided by DBS addressing the panel's recommendations.

The revised documentation consisted of:

- DBS's updated Programme Document (referred to as Programme Document hereafter)
- The Programme Team's response to the Independent Programme Review Report (referred to as Team Response hereafter) including the following documents related to the recommendations made
 - R01 Staff Academic Research Supports and CPD.
 - R02a Feedback Procedures.
 - R02b Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance - Indicative Assessment Strategy

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance as presented to QQI for revalidation, satisfies the core policies and criteria for revalidation by QQI of programmes of education and training.

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

Specifically, in relation to Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance (Principal Programme) and the Postgraduate Diploma in Science International Accounting and Finance (Embedded Programme), the panel is satisfied that:

Under **Criterion 1:** 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 DBS Quality Assurance Handbook. The panel noted that DBS has in place arrangements for Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL), documentation for which is provided to QQI with every submission for revalidation of a programme.

Under **Criterion 2:** the programme objectives and programme outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI award sought. They are outlined in Sections 2.1 and 2.4 of the Programme Document. It was noted that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes for the proposed programmes were informed by the QQI Science Award Standards and have been mapped against these standards. The mapping is set out in Section 10 of the Programme Document.

Under **Criterion 3**: the panel found that the programme concept, implementation strategy and interpretation of the QQI award is well informed taking into consideration social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives. The panel was satisfied that a comprehensive consultation process had been undertaken and the feedback obtained had been factored into the review process. The panel concluded that the proposed interdisciplinary programmes met genuine education and training needs in a sector that continued to provide employment opportunities for graduates both in Ireland and in the global financial services sector. Further details were provided in Section 3 of the Programme Document and at the site visit.

. Under **Criterion 4**: the programmes' access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory. Detailed information is set out in Section 4.2 of the Programme Document.

The panel noted that it is proposed to introduce 60 ECTS exit award, a Postgraduate Diploma in Science Accounting and Finance. The Diploma will be offered as an exit award to learners who cannot progress to completes the Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance and learners will not be enrolled separately on the Diploma. The panel welcomed the inclusion of the proposed exit award and concluded that it was appropriate.

Under **Criterion 5**: The panel was generally satisfied that the curriculum for the programmes was appropriately structured and fit for purpose. The rationale is set out clearly in Section 5.2 of the Programme Document.

In relation to the MSc in International Accounting and Finance the panel was informed that it was proposed to have one combined module in Research Methods with specific content on research methodologies and their application, including quantitative financial modelling. A new pathway on applied research was proposed, with support in place for students, through a Dissertation Coordinator, a Postgraduate Coordinator as well as the services of the library.

Under Criterion 6: The panel noted that teaching staff on the programmes were experienced module leaders, with most qualified to Masters level or holding a professional qualification. Section 7 of the Programme Document provided relevant details of the staff and Appendix 2 contains the CVs of the teaching staff.

It was evident that progress is being made in opening up opportunities for academic staff to pursue CPD, further studies to PhD level as well as research activities. There was evidence that staff were involved in continuous professional development with professional bodies and industry forums. Newly appointed staff were supported by peers through a mentoring initiative.

The panel was informed that the WTE is $0.63/50=0.013=0.013:1$ and deemed this to be appropriate.

It is recommended that supports be put in place for staff to pursue PhD, academic research and CPD.

In its response document, the panel was informed that a number of initiatives are already in place. Examples of these were detailed in the document provided, entitled R01 Staff Academic Research Supports and CPD. The panel is satisfied that this response has met the recommendation.

Under **Criterion 7**: The panel was generally satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources available to implement the programmes as planned. Further details were provided in Section 8 of the Programme Document. It was noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programmes under review.

A tour of the physical facilities in the Aungier St and Castle House Campuses was undertaken by the panel. Students reported that there were constraints in terms of infrastructure available for social interaction and achieving a sense a campus life experience. It was noted that DBS is considering many ways to increase its overall capacity in the city centre for staff and students.

The panel found that the library uses technology effectively to support learners and staff.

Under **Criterion 8:** The panel was generally satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of learners. The panel was advised that DBS uses a number of effective mechanisms to develop and implement supports for students.

The panel concluded that the staff with responsibility for support services were proactive in responding to student feedback for improvements in facilities. The panel visited the central student hub which had been created and was satisfied that this provided the basis for an integrated approach to providing accessible services.

Under **Criterion 9:** The panel was satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place for the programmes overall as detailed in Sections 5.5, 5.6 and 5.9 of the Programme Document.

The panel noted that there was a balance between the use of interactive classroom techniques, use of guest lecturers from business as well as regulatory bodies and on-line resources to encourage effective learning in a fast-paced financial services sector.

The panel found that students and graduates appreciated the support and access to lecturers on the programme. It was considered that the modifications to the proposed programmes would enhance what was already in place.

Under **Criterion 10:** 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. Further information is set out in the Programme Document Section 5.10.

The panel concluded that workload is deemed to be appropriate.

Students and graduates reported to the panel that there were inconsistencies in the amount of feedback provided on assessments which varied according to individual lecturers.

It is recommended that DBS put in place standard feedback procedures across all modules.

In its response document, the panel noted DBS's commitment that the timing and nature of feedback is to be examined as part of the review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The panel also noted DBS's initiative to map the Assessment Strategy to enhance the consistency of the feedback process and to avoid over-assessment and welcomed this development.

The panel is satisfied that this recommendation has been met.

In relation to the MSc in International Accounting and Finance the panel concluded that learning within the Research Methods Modules and Dissertation might be augmented and tracked by provision of a logbook. This would provide a method for teaching staff, supervisors and learners to cooperate in an area that many of the students and graduates indicated they found challenging.

It is recommended that DBS considers using a logbook for the Research Methods and Dissertation modules.

In its response document, the panel noted that DBS has recommended that students keep a log book to aid with reflection on their research journey through the Research Module and the Capstone Module. The panel noted that the Module and Assessment Documentation had been updated accordingly.

The panel is satisfied that this recommendation has been met.

Under **Criterion 11:** An overview of the support services available to students was outlined in Section 5.9 of the Programme Document and at the site visit. The panel noted that the Student Handbooks and website contained relevant information in relation to the supports and services available to students.

Students and graduates reported that lecturers and staff were generally responsive to requests for support and information and in resolving complaints.

The panel noted that learners were appreciative of the assistance provided with finding accommodation and assistance in to dealing with securing visas.

The panel commends DBS on the high standard of support provided for international students.

Under **Criterion 12:** The panel was satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programmes under review. Further detail was available in Sections 7 and 8 of the Programme Document. The 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.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. It is recommended that supports be put in place for staff to pursue PhD, academic research and CPD.
2. It is recommended that DBS put in place standard feedback procedures across all modules.
3. It is recommended that DBS considers using a logbook for the Research Methods and Dissertation modules for the principal programme, Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance.

Summary of commendations to the provider

1. The panel commends DBS on the high standard of support provided for international students.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

No interests have been declared.

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

Panel chairperson:

Date: 20 August 2019

Donna Bell

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Disclaimer

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