

**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	17 th April 2019
Date of report	27 rd August 2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Higher Diploma in Arts Counselling and Psychotherapy
	Award	Higher Diploma in Arts Counselling and Psychotherapy
	Credit¹	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions² OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

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

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

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

Evaluators

Name	Role	Affiliation
Donna Bell	Chair	Independent Consultant, Education and QA
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Independent Consultant
Gerry Moore	Subject Expert	Associate Professor and Chair of the Masters in Psychotherapy, DCU
Gerry Myers	Subject Expert	Course Director for MA in Integrative Psychotherapy, University of Limerick; Psychotherapist in Private Practice
Alan Dignam	Learner Representative	MA student in Psychotherapy ICP College, Tallaght, Dublin
Eileen Prendiville	Employer Representative	Private Practitioner, psychotherapist, Director of Academic Affairs, Children's Therapy Centre.

Part 1 B

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

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 (over all centres)	120	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	2 years (4 semesters of 12 weeks each) Part-time or 6 months	
Target learner groups	<p>The Higher Diploma is aimed at non-counselling and/or psychotherapy graduates of a Level 8 full award (a bachelor's honours degree or equivalent). The programme is aimed, primarily, at graduates of disciplines outside of this field, introducing them to the core theoretical and practical elements of the disciplines and bringing them to the point of sufficient skills, knowledge and know-how to match those of a graduate of a Level 8 award. In addition, graduates of this programme, who progress on to the Masters in Psychotherapy and complete the four-year training required of the professional bodies, will be eligible to apply for pre-accredited membership of the relevant professional body of IAHIP.</p> <p>The programme is aimed at applicants who are drawn to study and work involving the exercise of listening who have encountered counselling and psychotherapy in some capacity and have been drawn to pursue formal study and training in the field. They may or may not have engaged in prior formal study of counselling and psychotherapy but will possibly have been involved experientially in areas related to psychology or psychotherapy or have engaged in their own personal therapy.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	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. Blended 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>The orientation of the programme is humanistic, psychodynamic from an integrative model and learners are also introduced to the principles of psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, family systems, group psychotherapy, and psychopathology and so on. The programme is centred on the learners’ personal development, and provides them with experience of counselling and psychotherapy through both group and individual settings. Alongside the learners’ own experiential learning, the programme also develops knowledge of different forms of psychopathology and theories of psychotherapy and counselling.</p> <p>The programme includes the required counselling skills, personal development and theoretical components which mean that the Master of Arts in Psychotherapy in combination with this Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy is recognised by the Irish Association for Humanistic Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP). The programme is constructed as a two-year part-time programme of 12 modules leading to an award of Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy.</p> <p>The Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy consists of three interconnected strands: experiential training groups; personal development through the experience of psychotherapy and process groups.</p> <p>In summary, the Higher Diploma, as the first two years of the four-year professional training in combination with the Master of Arts in Psychotherapy, is crucial to allow a decision to be made on the basis of a knowledge of a learner’s work and participation concerning their suitability for supervised clinical practice. The Higher Diploma is therefore a period primarily of personal development for the learner and allows DBS to establish a profile of the learner so that a fair and balanced informed decision can be made regarding suitability for supervised clinical practice. Suitable candidates may progress to the MA in Arts in Psychotherapy.</p>
<p>Summary of <u>specifications</u> for teaching staff</p>	<p>Staff to be qualified to at least Masters Level 9 or equivalent in counselling and/or psychotherapy related disciplines, with some teaching, training, supervising or research experience within the counselling and psychotherapy field and also specific to the modality being taught. Staff in a practice-oriented programme should</p>

	have considerable practical/clinical experience in mutually supporting theory and practice learning opportunities for learning.
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	1:60 Classroom 1:15 Skills 1:12 Process work
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.³	0:062

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"	
PG21071	Higher Diploma in Arts Counselling and Psychotherapy	September 2018	Teach out	September 2019

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

Other noteworthy features of the application

The panel 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). Professional bodies included the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) Irish Council for Psychotherapy (ICP) Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP) and CORU, Ireland's multi-professional health regulator. Consultations with key stakeholders such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), private counselling and psychotherapy providers such as Pieta House, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and CAHMS.

The panel found that the consultation process had been comprehensive and it was concluded that the proposed programme was fit for purpose. The aims, objectives and graduate profile for the programme were outlined and the outcomes were clear and consistent with the QQI award sought. It was stated that the Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy programme aims to create and foster a learning environment that produces learners who are theoretically well informed about the field of counselling and psychotherapy.

Quantitative analysis

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

The panel noted that in choosing programmes for benchmarking purposes, DBS needs to ensure that they have access to the learning outcomes of those programme so that a more comprehensive data gathering and analysis can be undertaken.

- Enrolment analysis

It was noted that recruitment numbers are steady on the Higher Diploma programme despite the marked increase in the number of Counselling and Psychotherapy courses being offered by a variety of colleges and institutes.

- Attrition, transfer, progression and completion by stage

The number of enrolled learners has remained reasonably consistent with an average of 42 learners per Academic Year across both first and second year, although there was a small reduction in Academic Year 2016/17 (N=35) which reversed in Academic Year 2017/18 (N=44). In part, this is due to learners who already possess a primary degree who would have traditionally enrolled on the BA (Hons) in Counselling and Psychotherapy are choosing to enrol on the Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy due to the further progression possibility to the Masters of Arts in Psychotherapy and thereby completing a postgraduate qualification in Psychotherapy at Level 9 on the NFQ. In addition, the number of competitors offering a qualification in Counselling and Psychotherapy has also increased over the years.

- Analysis of grades and QQI award classifications

The percentage of learners who pass each programme year exceeds the DBS benchmark of 85%, with the exception of first year in Academic Year 2015/16 and first year in Academic Year 2014/15, where the pass rate is 79.17% and 81.82% respectively. However, it should be noted that 0 learners failed the year, rather, the reason for non-completion was due to deferrals or withdrawals. The panel noted that the pass rates are quite high in comparison

to the fails and non-active percentages. Since the introduction of the coordinator roles in 2010, the pass rates have steadily increased, as anyone that is struggling has been supported to either continue or to step away from the programme by deferring or withdrawing.

Overall, 77% of graduates from the programme have graduated with a H2:1, and 13.51% of graduates have graduated with a First. No learners have graduated with a pass award. The percentage of learners graduating with a H2:1 ranges from 68.75% in Academic Year 2017/18 to 83.33% in Academic Year 2014/15. Either side of this, a small number of learners each Academic Year generally graduate with either a First-Class honours or a H2:2. The high percentage of H2:1s is in line with DBS's other Counselling and Psychotherapy programmes. The high percentage of H2:1s is in line with our other Counselling and Psychotherapy programmes but is somewhat out of line with other Private Providers where the average percentage of H2:1s is 55%.

The panel noted that DBS had reviewed their grading and marking strategy and were of the view that they were marking too much in the middle. It was indicated that grading criteria would be reviewed and a learning lab provided for staff on the effective use of mapping grades and feedback to the grading matrix. The panel welcomed this approach.

Graduate destinations

The Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy programme is not a training in itself. However, holders of this qualification may seek employment in the following areas:

- The Voluntary Sector
- Primary Care settings
- Social Care settings
- Educational settings

The Higher Diploma can serve as a qualification in its own right informing work in such diverse fields as health and social care, policing, education and human management. Presently, there is no formal employment of psychotherapists in the health services Ireland which is beginning to change.

Although the majority of learners convert to the Master of Arts in Psychotherapy programme, there is a minority that do not as they have been recommended to defer or take a year out. This decision is made in the feedback interview at the end of the two-year Higher Diploma Programme with the objective of monitoring and evaluating learners progress in terms of their continuing suitability to train as psychotherapists.

Part 2A Evaluation against the validation criteria

Criterion 1

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

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 the programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression as set out in Section 4 of the Programme Document. 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 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).

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

Criterion 2

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

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

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel found that the aims, objectives and rationales for the programme was expressed clearly as set out in Section 2.1 of the Programme Document. It was concluded that, overall, the programme and module learning outcomes have been clearly outlined and were appropriate to the level of the award.

The title of the programme was 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 outcomes for the Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychotherapy **were** informed by the QQI Counselling and Psychotherapy Award Standards and have been mapped against these standards.

At the site visit, in meetings with teaching staff and with students and a graduate, the panel found that the MIPLOS did not fully communicate the range of transferable skills that were evident in conversations with staff, students and graduates. Learners cited examples of how they had used the skills learned on the programme in their current employment in both the private, community and voluntary and public sector. These skills include team work, managing people, communication and presentation skills, capacity to manage stress, problem-solving and group facilitation, among others.

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

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

It is recommended that the MIPLOS are more explicitly stated to incorporate the transferable skills that the programme teaches.

In its response document, the panel was advised that the MIPLOs have been revised to more explicitly reflect transferable skills. The revised is set out in Appendix 6 of the revised Programme Document. The recommendation is met.

Criterion 3

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

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel found that the consultation process with stakeholders has been comprehensive and feedback received had been factored into the programme.

In discussions with staff and with students and a graduate, the panel was informed that work remains to be done by the incoming regulatory body CORU on clarifying regulatory arrangements and accreditation for counselling and psychotherapy. In conversation with staff, the panel learned that DBS was actively engaged in forums with professional and statutory bodies concerned accreditation and that, as a team, they were actively keeping possible developments that might affect the programme under review.

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

⁸ This might be predictive or indirect.

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

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

The panel made the observation that in choosing programmes for benchmarking purposes, DBS needs to ensure that they have access to the learning outcomes of those programmes so that a more comprehensive data gathering and analysis can be undertaken. From a review of the programme documentation, it was not clear to the panel what difficulties arose in identifying and selecting a comparable programme.

It is recommended that DBS should select the closest comparable programme for which intended programme learning outcomes are available.

In its response document, DBS informed that panel that a comprehensive analysis has been made between the DBS programme and two programmes with closely comparable intended PLOs. It was noted that the Brighton University programme used in the original submission has been replaced by a CIT programme, MSc in Integrative Psychotherapy. This is set out in Section 2.7 of the Programme Document. The recommendation is met.

Criterion 4

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

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel was satisfied that, in general, the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are clearly articulated and in line with QQI requirements and working in practice. Information on access, transfer and progression is available through DBS website, promotional material and the Student Handbooks.

As a stand-alone academic programme, the panel concluded that the entry requirements are clear, and it is stated that the programme is aimed primarily at non-cognate graduates of a Level 8 full award (a bachelor's honours degree or equivalent). The panel noted as the two years of this programme, although stand-alone, is also part of the four-year psychotherapy training for professional purposes, there may be a conflict with current professional body requirements which are not comparable, i.e., for the requirement in relation to cognate disciplines set by professional

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

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

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

bodies. It was noted that DBS is actively keeping this process under review. The panel concluded that current arrangements are in line with QQI requirements, as stated.

The panel noted that while there is an institute-wide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process, that for this programme it would be helpful to have a more specific RPL process and criteria to more effectively address professional body requirements. The panel was aware that, as the regulatory and accreditation process is currently being reviewed through the new regulatory body CORU that requirements may change. It was noted that DBS is actively keeping this process under review.

It is recommended that DBS generate a programme-specific RPL process and criteria.

In its response document, the panel was satisfied that a programme-specific RPL process and criteria have been clearly outlined in Section 4.2.9 of the revised Programme Document. The recommendation is met.

Discussions with students and a graduate confirmed that graduates from the programme have obtained employment, or continue to work in their current employment in such diverse fields as health and social care, policing, education and human management, using the many transferable skills gained.

Graduates of the Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy may progress to further study in DBS on the MA in Psychotherapy or MA programmes in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and Addiction Studies, provided that they meet the standard required for clinical work with clients, the panel noted.

Criterion 5

The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <i>programme</i> learning outcomes. d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff. e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹³. f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented. g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes. h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes. i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements. j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹⁴ 	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel was generally satisfied that the programme and related modules were appropriately structured and scheduled.

It was noted that the Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy programme had been reviewed against the QQI Counselling and Psychotherapy Award Standards.

The panel was informed that the programme introduces learners to a broad range of traditions in psychotherapy. The predominant theoretical model of the course is humanistic and psychodynamic in accordance with the integrative model, which, it was noted, was not defined. Other traditions of psychotherapeutic work are represented on the curriculum. In conversation with students and a graduate, the panel found that they were able to articulate the integrating nature of the programme for themselves but that it was not sufficiently evident in the written curriculum as to how the integration would be brought about. It was concluded that this is a lost opportunity for DBS to communicate the richness of the programme.

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

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

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

It is recommended that DBS develop an explicit integrating principle to scaffold the curriculum.

In its response document, DBS presented its integrative model and the panel concluded that the recommendation is met.

The panel noted that the documentation provided in relation to clinical practice on placements does not adequately align with QQI standards, particularly QQI standards in relation to safe practice (controlled practice with volunteers under supervision) and professional practice (with volunteers).

In conversation with students and a graduate at the site visit, the panel found that they were appreciative of both the professional skills in psychotherapy as well as the transferable skills gained during the course which they had been able to apply in their existing employment over the course of their studies. These included capacity for team building and team work, decision-making critical thinking, research skills, self-awareness and self-regulation around stress, for instance.

The panel was advised that the Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy, awarded after successful completion of two years of study, is a stand-alone programme that provides learners with a range of transferable skills as noted above. It is also an effective mechanism for the management of the question of suitability for continued clinical practice in the four-year MA programme, or provides students who are unable or do not wish to continue with further study with an appropriate award, the panel found.

Criterion 6

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

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel was advised that teaching staff are qualified to a minimum of NFQ Level 9 with many qualified to doctoral level or enrolled in doctoral studies. Further details were outlined in Section 7 of the Programme Document and the CVs of the teaching staff were provided in Appendix 2 of the document.

The panel noted that the WTE is 0:062 and this was deemed this to be appropriate.

In conversation with staff, the panel was informed that DBS had mechanisms in place for the large cohort of staff involved in the programme to meet for regular reviews as a team or in small groups to ensure that there was a cohesive and coordinated approach to delivery of the programme. There are a number of coordinator roles specific to the programme, following the distinctions in the programme between experiential, skills-based modules, theoretical modules and supervision and

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

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

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

group process modules which assist in the coordination of the faculty as well as the work of the learners.

It was noted that some staff expressed the view that they were not fully up to speed with the consistent and effective use of MOODLE. The panel was informed that DBS now taken action to increase the competence of staff in the use of this technology, with training initiatives underway through the office of the newly appointed Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning in the college.

It was further noted that DBS has a research strategy in place to encourage staff to undertake research in their own disciplines. The staff scholarship scheme for research was outlined at the site visit and the panel was informed about the annual Research Day at the college where faculty from different disciplines presented updates on current research projects. DBS publishes its own scholarly journal, featuring research by both staff and students.

The panel welcomed the initiatives, now in their early stage of implementation, being undertaken by DBS in relation to supporting scholarly activities. The panel noted, for instance, that students are actively encouraged to engage in joint projects with staff which may then be published by DBS or other peer-reviewed journals and welcomed this development.

The panel found that there is an emerging research culture within DBS. This culture needs to be developed so that synergies can arise between staff CPD and faculty and student research.

It is recommended that DBS further develop the research strategy in order to create a synergy between CPD, staff scholarly activities and student research.

In its response document, DBS outlined details of existing supports in place and its plans to further strengthen the research culture. The panel noted that reference made to discipline-based research groups is noted and the emphasis on CPD for learning, teaching and assessment. The recommendation is met.

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	

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.

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.

The panel considered that the information technology facilities were of a high standard, with mobile laboratories available to students throughout the campus, providing ease of access to library and MOODLE resources. The panel noted that the information technology support services had been integrated with other student services making it easier for students to avail of this service on an on-going basis.

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	

An overview of the support services available to students is outlined in Section 5.8 of the Programme Document. The panel noted that the Student Handbooks and website contained relevant information in relation to the supports and services available to students. Use was made of notice boards to provide up-to-date information throughout the campus.

Students and the graduate with whom the panel met confirmed that support services are well publicised. Information technology skills were provided and this service is integrated with other student services, making it very accessible for students.

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.

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.

The panel was informed of the state of uncertainty and ambiguity around upcoming state regulation and accreditation in the area of counselling and psychotherapy and the difficulty this caused in providing clarity to students around accreditation requirements, registration and awards standards. The panel was informed by staff and learners that senior management and teaching staff were monitoring developments in this area and provided oral briefings to learners on developments on an informal basis.

In discussion with students and a graduate at the site visit, there was evidence that learners had not been given clear information in relation to issues related to professional body accreditation requirements, forthcoming statutory registration (CORU) and clear awards standards.

It is recommended that transparency is captured in the form of appropriate written material being developed to inform learners in relation to professional body accreditation requirements, forthcoming statutory registration (CORU) and clear awards standards.

In its response document the panel was advised of the commitment of DBS to acting upon any requirements set out by CORU and IAHIP in an appropriate timeframe is noted. The additional material provided in the Student Handbook and DBS website has addressed the recommendation.

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel noted that there was a clear structure for the coordination of the programme with specific responsibility assigned to staff in a coordination role. It was clear that staff were suitably qualified (see Criterion 6) and brought a wide variety of theoretical, practical and specialised knowledge to the programme, particularly in the area of supervision, which is a key component of the programme.

What was less clear to the panel was any ‘anchoring philosophy’ or pedagogy and delivering the programme among the large cohort of staff, many of whom are part-time.

The panel found that there was a mismatch between the documentation and the subsequent discussion with teaching staff regarding pedagogy and they concluded that the pedagogy was not clear and explicit.

It is recommended that, as the teaching team develops, that they make their teaching and learning strategy and pedagogy more explicit.

In its response document DBS advised the panel that it has made a commitment to making the teaching and learning strategy and pedagogy of the programme more explicit, and further developing it. A comprehensive process has been outlined for achieving this objective. The recommendation is met.

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

Criterion 10

There are sound assessment strategies

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

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

Despite the challenges of the workload involved in the programme, the panel were made very aware of the students' and graduates' commitment to finishing the journey, on which they placed a high personal and professional value.

Given the high credit load and workload, the panel noted that it would be important that DBS ensure that prospective students be made aware of this and consider the capacity of learners to maintain work-life balance.

In conversation with learners the panel found that academic assignments central to the programme were clear and well-thought out assessments and tailored to what was being assessed. It was noted that staff were responsive to specific queries on assignments and assessments, both in class and on MOODLE, with clear and constructive feedback provided in a timely manner.

The panel concluded that the generic grading system used for assessment does not take sufficient account of the intended learning outcomes.

¹⁹ See the section on transitional arrangements.

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

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

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

It is recommended that DBS review the assessment strategy with a view to evaluating the nature and effectiveness of assessment, with use of assignment-specific marking rubrics, bearing in mind the intended learning outcomes.

In its response document DBS provided evidence to the panel of a planned review process of the current assessment strategy. This was outlined in Section 5 of the revised Programme Document The use of marking rubrics for assessment activities is noted. The recommendation is 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 disabilities²³.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²⁴ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.
- j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

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

Students and the graduate with whom the panel met confirmed that support services are well publicised. Information technology skills were provided and this service is integrated with other student services, making it very accessible for students. They made particularly positive comments on the responsiveness of staff to queries or problems arising in relation to their studies and to the effective system of class representatives that provided an effective dialogue mechanism between students and the college.

The panel commends DBS on the culture of care and responsiveness generated that is enjoyed by the students.

The panel noted from the Programme Review document that no formal appeals or complaints were lodged by students in the period under review. In discussion with staff the panel was informed that

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

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

learners are systematically provided with feedback on their performance and that this practice is an integral part of the programme. The students and graduate met confirmed that this was the case. This constant dialogue means that any issues arising are dealt with as early as possible at the local level with lecturers and supervisors. The students and graduate further confirmed that they were aware of how to make a complaint or an appeal and that this information was widely disseminated throughout the college.

Criterion 12

The programme is well managed

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel was satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programme 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.

Programme-specific quality assurance also comply with the guidelines laid down by IAHIP in relation to clinical training, governance, quality assurance, assessment, access, transfer and progression. Mandatory workshops are provided on DBS's Child Protection Policy and on Clinical Induction, prior to taking up client practice. Learners must sign a declaration that they have read and understood DBS Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants.

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

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

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

Reasons²⁷ for the overall recommendation

The criteria have been met.

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of the Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychotherapy.

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 QQI Counselling and Psychotherapy 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 17th April 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 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 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
 - R04 Appendix 7 Philosophy of Integrative model

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

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

- R06 Staff Research, CPD and TLA review
- R07 Student Handbook Updated

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychotherapy 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:

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

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).

Under Criterion 2: The panel found that the aims, objectives and rationales for the programme were expressed clearly as set out in Section 2.1 of the Programme Document. It was concluded that, overall, the programme and module learning outcomes have been clearly outlined and were appropriate to the level of the award.

The title of the programme was deemed to be appropriate and in line with the QQI standard for the Major Award Type on the NFQ.

At the site visit, the panel found that the MIPLOS did not fully communicate the range of transferable skills that were evidence in conversations with staff, students and graduates.

It is recommended that the MIPLOS are more explicitly stated to incorporate the transferable skills that the programme teaches.

In its response document, the panel was advised that the MIPLOs have been revised to more explicitly reflect transferable skills. The recommendation is met.

Under Criterion 3: The panel found that the consultation process with stakeholders has been comprehensive and feedback received had been factored into the programme.

The panel made the observation that in choosing programmes for benchmarking purposes, DBS needs to ensure that they have access to the learning outcomes of those programmes so that a more comprehensive data gathering and analysis can be undertaken.

It is recommended that DBS should select the closest comparable programme for which intended programme learning outcomes are available.

In its response document, DBS informed that panel that a comprehensive analysis has been made between the DBS programme and two programmes with closely comparable intended PLOs. The recommendation is met.

Under Criterion 4: The panel was satisfied the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are clearly articulated and in line with QQI requirements and working in practice.

The panel noted that while there is an institute-wide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process, it would be helpful to have a more specific RPL process and criteria for this programme to more effectively address professional body requirements.

It is recommended that DBS generate a programme-specific RPL process and criteria.

In its response document, the panel was satisfied that a programme-specific RPL process and criteria have been clearly outlined in the revised Programme Document. The recommendation is met.

Under Criterion 5: The panel was generally satisfied that the programme and related modules were appropriately structured and scheduled.

The predominant theoretical model of the course is humanistic and psychodynamic in accordance with an integrative model, which, the panel noted, was not defined.

It is recommended that DBS develop an explicit integrating principle to scaffold the curriculum.

In its response document, DBS presented its integrative model and the panel concluded that the recommendation is met.

Under Criterion 6: The panel was advised that teaching staff are qualified to a minimum of NFQ Level 9 with many qualified to doctoral level or enrolled in doctoral studies.

The panel noted that the WTE is 0:062 and this was deemed this to be appropriate.

DBS has a research strategy in place to encourage staff to undertake research in their own disciplines. The panel found that there is an emerging research culture within DBS. This culture needs to be developed so that synergies can arise between staff CPD and faculty and student research.

It is recommended that DBS further develop the research strategy in order to create a synergy between CPD, staff scholarly activities and student research.

In its response document, DBS outlined details of existing supports in place and its plans to further strengthen the research culture. The recommendation is met.

Under Criterion 7: A tour of the physical facilities in the Aungier St and Castle House Campuses was undertaken by the panel.

The panel found that the library uses technology effectively to support learners and staff. It was noted that the information technology support services had been integrated with other student services.

Under Criterion 8: Students and the graduate with whom the panel met confirmed that support services are well publicised.

The panel was informed of the state of uncertainty and ambiguity around upcoming state regulation and accreditation in the area of counselling and psychotherapy and the difficulty this caused in providing clarity to students around accreditation requirements, registration and awards standards.

It is recommended that transparency is captured in the form of appropriate written material being developed to inform learners in relation to professional body accreditation requirements, forthcoming statutory registration (CORU) and clear awards standards.

In its response document the panel was advised of the commitment of DBS to acting upon any requirements set out by CORU and IAHIP in an appropriate timeframe is noted. The additional material provided in the Student Handbook and DBS website has addressed the recommendation.

Under Criterion 9: The panel found that there was a mismatch between the documentation and the subsequent discussion with teaching staff regarding pedagogy and they concluded that the pedagogy was not clear and explicit.

It is recommended that, as the teaching team develops, that they make their teaching and learning strategy and pedagogy more explicit.

In its response document DBS advised the panel that it has made a commitment to making the teaching and learning strategy and pedagogy of the programme more explicit, and to further developing it. A comprehensive process has been outlined for achieving this objective. The recommendation is met.

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.

The panel was informed that the generic grading system used for assessment does take sufficient account of the practice and reflective elements of the work and the intended learning outcomes that are to the fore in this part of the programme.

It is recommended that DBS review the assessment strategy with a view to evaluating the nature and effectiveness of assessment, with use of assignment-specific marking rubrics, bearing in mind the intended learning outcomes.

In its response document DBS provided evidence to the panel of a planned review process of the current assessment strategy. The recommendation is met.

Under Criterion 11: Students and the graduate made particularly positive comments on the responsiveness of staff to queries or problems arising in relation to their studies and to the effective system of class representatives.

The panel commends DBS on the culture of care and responsiveness generated that is enjoyed by the students.

The panel noted from the Programme Review document that no formal appeals or complaints were lodged by students in the period under review.

Under Criterion 12: The panel was satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programme 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.

Programme-specific quality assurance also complies with the guidelines laid down by IAHIP in relation to clinical training, governance, quality assurance, assessment, access, transfer and progression.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. It is recommended that the MIPLOS are more explicitly stated to incorporate the transferable skills that the programme teaches.
2. It is recommended that DBS should select the closest comparable programme for which intended programme learning outcomes are available.
3. It is recommended that DBS generate a programme-specific RPL process and criteria.
4. It is recommended that DBS develop an explicit integrating principle to scaffold the curriculum.
5. It is recommended that DBS further develop the research strategy in order to create a synergy between CPD, staff scholarly activities and student research.
6. It is recommended that transparency is captured in the form of appropriate written material being developed to inform learners in relation to accreditation requirements, CORU registration and clear awards standards.
7. It is recommended that, as the teaching team develops, that they make their teaching and learning strategy and pedagogy more explicit.
8. It is recommended that DBS review the assessment strategy with a view to evaluating the nature and effectiveness of assessment, with use of assignment-specific marking rubrics, bearing in mind the intended learning outcomes

Summary of commendations to the provider

The panel commends DBS on the culture of care and responsiveness generated that is enjoyed by the 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: Donna Bell

Date: 28th August 2019

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Bell". The letter "D" is large and stylized, followed by a period and the name "Bell".

Disclaimer

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