



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	Master of Arts in Psychotherapy
	Award	Master of Arts in Psychotherapy
	Credit¹	90 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	Minimum number of learners
DBS Dublin Campus	60	7
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)	60	
Programme duration (<u>months</u> from start to completion)	Part-time, 2 semesters of 12 weeks each completed each academic year across 2, 6 months in total	
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 	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	<p>The Master of Arts in Psychotherapy award consists of: experiential training groups, personal development through the experience of psychotherapy and process groups and supervised clinical practice. These components are represented throughout the modules over the two years of the MA programme.</p> <p>The orientation of the programme is humanistic, psychodynamic and from an integrative model, and learners are introduced to the principles of existential psychotherapy, Gestalt therapy, the body in psychotherapy and so on. The programme is centred around the learners' supervised clinical practice, skills training and continued personal development, and also provides them with experience of psychotherapy through both group and individual settings. The programme includes the required experiential skills, personal development and theoretical components which means it is recognised by the Irish Association for Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP).</p> <p>The programme is constructed as the final two years of a professional four-year postgraduate training in psychotherapy in combination with the Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy part-time programme. The Master of Arts in Psychotherapy is a thorough clinical and theoretical education in the field. It has a strong research component. It is designed for learners interested in pursuing careers in a counselling and psychotherapy</p>	

	<p>practice in diverse settings both in private practice and employment. It is designed for learners interested in developing research skills appropriate to the field of counselling and psychotherapy in order for them to support their own professional development and contribute significantly to the development of the field nationally and internationally.</p> <p>The Master of Arts in Psychotherapy programme serves to produce graduates who are employable in mental health and social care settings as well as being in a position to establish and build up a private practice. The components of the programme deliver this aim. The clinical skills components of the programme (the theory and practice modules and the clinical supervision modules) are crucial to the robustness of the programme. It is the premise of the design and rationale of the programme that these components would not be possible to learn without the requirement to be in personal psychotherapy, the modules in personal development and self-care (process group) alongside the academic modules of the programme. This combination of modules is vital to the robustness of the programme.</p>
Specifications for teaching staff	<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Masters or equivalent in Counselling and Psychotherapy. They should also have teaching, training, supervising or research experience within the counselling and psychotherapy field but also specific to the modality being taught. Staff should have considerable practical / clinical experience in mutually supporting theory and practice-learning opportunities for learning.</p>
Specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	<p>1:30 Classroom Sessions 1:12 Process 1:15 Skills classes 1:4 Supervision Group</p>
WTE	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"	
PG21067	Master of Arts in Psychotherapy	September 2018	Teach out	September 2019

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. 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 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 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. It was stated that the MA in Psychotherapy programme aims to create and foster a learning environment that produces learners who are theoretically well informed about the field of psychotherapy, skilled in the techniques of humanistic and psychodynamic psychotherapy combined, in accordance with the integrative model and practised to the highest ethical standards at Level 9 on the NFQ.

The panel found that the programme objectives and outcomes were clear and consistent with the QQI award sought. The Master of Arts in Psychotherapy is aimed at graduates of a Level 8 programme in counselling and psychotherapy or equivalent who wish to engage in supervised client practice to become a qualified psychotherapist.

The availability of the Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy, after two years of study, was considered to be an effective mechanism for the management of the question of suitability for continued clinical practice in the MA programme for those students wishing to progress to this programme, and provided students who are unable or do not wish to continue with further study with an appropriate award. The panel noted that the Higher Diploma is a separate award in its own right.

Quantitative analysis

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

- Enrolment analysis

The number of learners registered on the MA is strong but dipped in 2016 as 4 that were expected to progress decided to take a year out for various reasons, 1 of whom returned for 2017 intake. The panel was advised that the current uncertainty in relation to regulatory requirements and accreditation is causing some uncertainty around choices prospective students have to take without having all necessary information to hand.

- Attrition, transfer, progression and completion by stage

Retention rates over the past 4 years indicated a strong retention rate from 1st year with an average rate of 88% retention in 2016/2017. Given the nature of the course, the panel noted that drop-out and deferment rates are to be expected, but noted the efforts of the DBS team is providing necessary support or advice on the best course of action for the students and rates are considered to be favourable.

- Analysis of grades and QQI award classifications

The data presented in terms of academic ability and award classification highlights how learners show themselves to be highly motivated and very capable. The most significant data above came in 2015/16 with a unique cohort of learners, 7 of whom attained First Class Honours.

Overall, 78% of graduates from the programme have graduated with a H2, and 20% of graduates have graduated with a H1. By academic year, the percentage of learners graduating from the programme with a H2 ranges from 53% in the 2014/15 academic year to 100% in the 2017/18 academic year. The percentage of learners graduating with a First ranges from 0% in the 2017/18 academic year to 41% in the 2014/15 academic year. Over the previous 4 academic years there has only been 2 Pass awards in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic year. The panel was informed DBS are currently planning to review their grading systems as they had identified that they may be marking too much in the middle. The intention is to provide a learning lab for staff on the effective use of mapping grades and feedback to the grading matrix. The panel welcomed this approach.

Graduate destinations

Graduates of the programme may progress into practice as a psychotherapist on completion of the course when their pre-accreditation with the accrediting body has been completed. Some graduates go on to further study at PhD level. Others obtained employment in a variety of roles, including roles in the Learner Counsellor Department at UCD and TCD, in the health and social care and in the voluntary and community sector.

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. ³	
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 programme. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

³ 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.⁴
 - (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.⁵

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

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. It was noted that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes for the MA 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.

⁴ Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

⁵ 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.⁶
- 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 evidence⁷ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁸.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁹
- 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	

It was concluded 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁸ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

⁹ 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 satisfied¹⁰.
- 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 (CEFR¹¹) 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 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.

The panel noted that one of the criteria for entry requirements stated that 'Ideally candidates also have experience either professionally or on a voluntary basis in a role which can be related to the work of counselling/psychotherapy'. It was considered that this was not sufficiently clear and may not address professional body requirements for future accreditation. It was 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

¹⁰ 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

¹¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

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. See Section 7.3.

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 as therapists in the health and social care areas. Some had begun the process of accreditation and towards private practice in the profession. They also indicated that many of the skills learned were transferable to a range of occupations.

It was noted that graduates of the MA in Psychotherapy may progress to further study in DBS in the MA programmes in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and Addiction Studies.

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 principles¹².
- 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.¹³

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 MA in Psychotherapy programme had been reviewed against the QQI Counselling and Psychotherapy Award Standards. The programme is a supervised practice-based training programme in humanistic and psychodynamic psychotherapy in the integrative model.

It was advised 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 an 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.

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

¹² 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.

¹³ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

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

The panel also found that the students and graduate 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, self-awareness and self-regulation around stress, for instance.

It was concluded 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). This point was discussed with teaching staff, including those with responsibility for clinical placements and clinical supervision and the panel concluded that the application of these standards in relation to safe practice was not clear.

It is recommended that DBS develop a suite of documents, both for students and placement partners, that would set out suitable clinical practice for Levels 7, 8 and 9, in accordance with QQI standards.

The clarification in the documents provided is welcome and the panel is satisfied that the issue of suitability for clinical practice at Level 7 and 8 and 9 has been clarified. The recommendation has been met.

The availability of the Higher Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapy, after two years of study was considered to be an effective mechanism for the management of the question of suitability for continued clinical practice in the MA programme for those students wishing to progress to this programme, and provided students who are unable or do not wish to continue with further study with an appropriate award. It was noted that the Higher Diploma is a separate award in its own right. The programme is accredited by IAHIP which ensures that the hours accrued during this training contribute towards the student's accreditation. Each learner will still have to present to IAHIP once they complete the pre-accreditation hours required post-graduation.

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 staff¹⁴ (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 development¹⁵ opportunities¹⁶.
- 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	

It 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 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

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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. It was 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 concluded 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 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.

It was concluded 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. It was 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. It was concluded 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 act 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, support¹⁷ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

It was concluded 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.

¹⁷ 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*¹⁸
- 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.¹⁹
- 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.²⁰
- 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.²¹

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

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 noted that in conversation with students and the graduate that there is a high work load on the programme and that they are having difficulty in achieving any kind of work life balance as a result. Despite the challenges it was clear that there is a 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. It was noted, for instance, that there was a significant increase in the workload for the MA course in the proposed programme, which is to be expected since the ECTS rises from 30-45 and that incoming students be made aware of this increased demand.

In conversation with the students and graduate the panel found that assessments were clear and well-thought out and tailored to what was being assessed. It was advised 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.

With more hours devoted to client work and supervision in the 3rd and 4th years, as is appropriate, the panel concluded that the generic grading system used for assessment does take sufficient

¹⁸ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁹ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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).

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. This was outlined in Section 5 of the revised Programme Document. 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 disabilities²².
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²³ 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 observed 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

²² 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).

²³ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

that 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-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 assurance²⁴ 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.

²⁴ 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); ²⁵
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons²⁶ for the overall recommendation

The criteria have been met.

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of the Masters of Arts in Psychotherapy programme.

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 a number of 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
 - R05 MAP Suitability for Clinical Practice Level 9
 - R06 Staff Research, CPD and TLA review

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

- R07 Appendix 4 MA Psychotherapy Handbook Updated

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Master of 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: It was concluded 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 programmes 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 concluded, 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.

The panel concluded 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).

It is recommended that DBS develop a suite of documents, both for students and placement partners, that would set out suitable clinical practice for Levels 7, 8 and 9, in accordance with QQI standards.

The panel welcomes the clarification in the documents provided in DBS's response document and is satisfied that the issue of suitability for clinical practice at Level 7 and 8 and 9 has been clarified. The recommendation has been 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 to be appropriate.

It was noted that 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.

It was concluded that the library uses technology effectively to support learners and staff. It was noted that specialist library staff are employed to assist students to develop their research capabilities.

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

The panel was informed of the state of uncertainty and ambiguity around upcoming state regulation and accreditation in the area of counselling and psychotherapy.

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 clear structure for the coordination of the programme.

It was concluded 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 programme conforms to the DBS Assessment Regulations which are informed by QQI Assessment and Standards Revised 2013.

With more hours devoted to client work and supervision in the 3rd and 4th years, as is appropriate, the panel noted that the generic grading system used for assessment does not take sufficient account of the practice and reflective elements of the work and the intended learning outcomes that are to be achieved 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 with whom the panel met confirmed that support services are well publicised. 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.

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

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 comply 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 develop a suite of documents, both for students and placement partners, that would set out suitable clinical practice for Levels 7, 8 and 9, in accordance with QQI standards.
6. It is recommended that DBS further develop the research strategy in order to create a synergy between CPD, staff scholarly activities and student research.
7. 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.
8. It is recommended that, as the teaching team develops, that they make their teaching and learning strategy and pedagogy more explicit.
9. 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 signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Disclaimer

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Part 4: Appendices