



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

Part 1 A

Provider name	DBS
Date of site visit	29 th April 2019
Date of report	29 th August 2019
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	Yes

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Certificate in Digital Marketing
	Award	Special Purpose Award in Arts
	Credit¹	40 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
Dr Michael Hall	Chair	Head of Department of Health and Leisure Studies, Institute of Technology, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Dr Patricia McHugh	Panel Member	Lecturer in Marketing and Programme Director, MSc Digital Marketing, School of Business and Economics, NUI Galway
Bairbre Brennan	Panel Member	Assistant Lecturer Technological University Dublin
Jordan Bowe	Student/Learner representative	Marketing Student National College of Ireland
Ian Bolton	Independent Industry Representative	Managing Director Colours International
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Communications Consultant

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

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	450	10

Enrolment interval (normally 5 years)	Date of first intake	September 2019
	Date of last intake	September 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	3 September, January and March/April	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	450	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	<p>Part-time: 2 semesters of 12 weeks each, evening lectures across eight months.</p> <p>Full-time: 2 semesters of 12 weeks each, day lecturers across 8 months</p>	
Target learner groups	<p>The programme is aimed at learners that have achieved a full Level 6 major award (such as Higher Certificate or full equivalent FETAC award) in any discipline and who wish to upskill and specialise in the field of digital marketing or with a view to entering an industry which requires this skill set. Applicants who have at least 3 years' experience working in a business environment may also be considered through the colleges normal RPL procedures.</p> <p>On completion of this programme, learners will have the Digital Marketing skills necessary to move into various customer focused (either B2C or B2B) industry roles where the presentation of services or products through a digital channel is a key function of the organisation. These learners will also have the competencies in general website design and presentation should they prefer those roles. The learners will gain an understanding of the impact of Digital Marketing on a business and its customers so they can take a more focused view and effectively integrate their knowledge of the digital channel into decision-making in an organisation. Through the assignments and projects as part of the assessment criteria, learners will develop independent research and problem-solving skills which will be valuable in a variety of contexts in the workplace.</p> <p>Participants who complete this course will be able to pursue opportunities within the digital marketing environment in many different business disciplines and settings.</p>	

Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time and part-time
The teaching and learning modalities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom lectures 2. Case-based learning 3. Practical skills sessions 4. Workshops 5. Tutorials 6. Individual and group work 7. Blended delivery and resources
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	<p>This programme is targeted towards the learner who wishes to specialise in the field of digital marketing with a view to entering industry, or those who are working in an industry that requires the input of digital marketing techniques to enhance, or in some cases drive, the overall marketing function and strategy.</p> <p>The massive growth of social media and mobile marketing in recent years means that marketers need a strong skill set and knowledge base that is digital. Therefore, they will need both the visibility and traceability that digital marketing affords.</p> <p>Given how fast the digital marketing arena moves in terms of technologies and practice all modules are written with flexibility in mind. Students are facilitated in exploring new ideas and technologies where applicable. In this way, the programme remains up-to-date with industry trends and best practice. Students will be exposed to both the classroom environment to understand and learn the theoretical concepts and models which will then be applied in a laboratory environment.</p> <p>On completion of the programme the learner will be equipped with the skills needed to work in a digital marketing environment either stand alone as part of a business function. This programme accommodates a wide audience of learners whose specific interests in digital marketing may be either technically focused or business focused.</p> <p>The programme is a 1-year programme with four taught modules each of 10 ECTS which combined lead to a Certificate in Digital Marketing, Level 7 Special Purpose Award. Learners who have taken this programme previously have been funded by the HEA Springboard+ fund and this programme will continue to be offered as part of the DBS Springboard+ portfolio.</p>

Summary of <u>specifications</u> for teaching staff	<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 8 Bachelors Honours degree qualification in the following areas:</p> <p>Marketing: digital marketing; strategic marketing; services marketing; other relevant marketing disciplines.</p> <p>In modules where industry experience is desirable, holders of Level 8 Honours Degree in Marketing who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of senior, significant business experience may also be considered.</p>
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	<p>1/150 Classroom Sessions 1/25 Workshops 1/25 Practical Sessions</p>
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.³	<p>1.12/150 =0.01 ratio</p>

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 found that these were duly factored into the review process. Internal stakeholders consisted of students and staff (academic, support and administrative).

Further consultations were held with graduates and with a wide range of employers in the services sector, including SMEs, larger corporate companies and marketing agencies.

The aims, objectives and graduate profile of the programme was outlined. The panel found that the proposed programme learning outcomes have been mapped to the QQI General Awards Standards and satisfy the QQI Generic Awards Standards for the Special Purpose Award at Level 7.

Enrolment

The total number of Learners enrolled on the programme from 2014/15 to 2018/19 is 1,020. The number of enrolled Learners decreased from 312 Learners in 2014/15 to 209 Learners in 2017/18. The 138 Learners enrolled on the programme in 2018/19 does not include the March 2019 intake as they were not enrolled at time of writing this report.

The cohort of learned is predominantly from Ireland (over 80%) and they are mature, with over 60% over the age of thirty.

Attrition, Transfer, Progression and completion by stage

For the years 2014-2018 an overall average pass rate (total passed enrolled) of 62.24%. Overall, 12.24% of Learners failed the programme, and 25.51% of Learners were non-active

Across intakes and academic years, the pass rate ranged from 49.12% (March intake, Part-time 2015/16) to 80.49% (March intake, Part-time, 2017/18). The pass rate for academic year 2017/18 shows a significant increase across all intakes compared to previous academic years.

At the end of the academic year 2016/17, a review of academic performance on the programme over the previous three years of delivery was undertaken and an Early Alert report was introduced to identify students at risk at an early stage in programme delivery. Additionally, once students had been identified as at risk, interventions were put in place by the Student Engagement Officer and the Course Director where the focus was on encouraging and supporting the student to continue with the programme and not withdrawing. This approach was successful as evidenced by the academic year 2017/18 pass rates compared to previous academic years, and has been introduced across other programmes for the academic year 2018/19.

Analysis of grades and QQI award classifications

As this Certificate in Digital Marketing is a pass/fail programme there is no analysis of distinction, merit or any other award classifications.

The average mark in 2014/15 ranges from approximately 45% (B7IS104 and B7MK108) to 60% (B8IS122). The average mark in 2015/16 ranges from approximately 40% (B7IS104) to 65% (B8IS122). The average mark in 2016/17 ranges from approximately 45% (B7IS104 and B7MK110) to 55% (B7MK108 and B8IS112) and the average mark in 2017/18 ranges from approximately 50% (B7IS104) to 65% (B8IS112).

It appears from the figures above that Learners perform consistently poorly in B7IS104 (E-Business) whilst performing much better in B8IS112 (Implementing Digital Media). The module E-Business has been renamed and updated as part of the programme review process to ensure relevancy in the context of digital marketing.

Graduate destinations

Taking one of the year's intake as an example of progression (March intake 2016), below outlines the type of roles that graduates have taken up in a wide variety of organisations.

Director, Editor, Administration, IT Support, Sales, Marketing Assistant, Digital Marketing Assistant, Visual Artist, Client Associate, Digital Marketing Executive, Digital Marketing Intern, PA, Advertising Operations Manager, Consultant, Digital Selling Consultant.

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 this programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression. DBS has also established arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) which have been approved by QQI. The panel was informed that DBS is currently taking part in the re-engagement process with QQI and has completed the Pilot Phase. As part of the re-engagement process, policies and procedures were being reviewed.

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

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, overall, the aims, objectives and rationale for the programme were expressed clearly and were comprehensive and consistent with a Level 7 Awards on the NQF.

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

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

Criterion 3

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

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

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

The panel was informed of the consultation process undertaken for this review and it was concluded that this was comprehensive. Consultation was carried out with industry representatives, including employers and industry representative bodies. The panel noted that Faculty staff were actively involved in the process of developing the proposed changes to the programme which includes reviewing course content to reflect current trends in a rapidly changing environment.

The panel was informed that there was no directly comparable programme at Level 7 in the digital marketing area. The panel was further informed that the programme offered by DBS was consistently oversubscribed, indicating that it met a need for this type of programme and award on this topic.

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.

At the site visit, the panel was informed by staff that feedback from industry has indicated that, in general, there was a requirement for marketing graduates to have broad skills in marketing and that specific competencies in digital marketing were needed in today's business environment. This was particularly so for the SME sector which, in Ireland, the panel learned, has not, as yet, embraced the possibilities that digital technology can offer. This programme aims to equip graduates with the skills necessary to support business and other enterprises. Graduates needed to have the capacity to understand where digital marketing fitted into the needs of the business, i.e., not just be able to 'design a web site' but be able to analyse the need for digital marketing initiatives. This need was reflected in the content of the modules taught, which included digital planning, management, understanding media technologies and online consumer behaviour as well as the theory and practice of digital marketing, the panel found.

The programme offers students the opportunity to upskill in this area of marketing in order to enhance their opportunities for employment or advancement in their careers. The panel was informed that the mix of students for this government funded Springboard programme, had changed over the years: initially the programme was aimed at people who were unemployed and now the programme has 70% of students who are in employment but needed to develop their skills.

The panel found that the SWOT analysis undertaken as part of the review, raised some issues which warranted further consideration by the DBS team. It had been identified through the review process that students needed more exposure to industry speakers and to 'live' problems, have more e-learning capabilities and a requirement for a more interactive MOODLE system, Threats identified included the need to address the changing needs of learners regarding flexibility and mode of delivery and the challenge of keeping pace with advances in digital marketing education and research. The panel concluded that it was not clear what strategies DBS proposed to put in place to address these weaknesses and threats. The panel noted that there were also opportunities identified including the employer demand for continued education. The panel considered that there may be opportunities for further funding from employers as the SWOT analysis indicated that there was likely to be a continuing demand for the programme.

It is recommended that DBS address weaknesses, threats and opportunities in the SWOT analysis with strategies to address each one identified through the programmatic review.

In its response document, DBS provided supporting documentation (R01 Addressing SWOT in Cert in Digital Marketing) which details how this can be achieved in the programme review cycle for the Certificate in Digital Marketing. The panel is satisfied with this response.

It is recommended that DBS explore funding opportunities from employers for the programme.

In its response document, DBS informed the panel actively visits companies in Dublin promoting the programme through an organisation's Learning and Development or Human Resources Department and provided documentary evidence on this approach. DBS is also in contact about the programme with its partner colleges in Europe. The panel is satisfied with this response.

The panel concluded that the programme met genuine education and training needs in a sector that continued to provide employment opportunities for graduates.

DBS is commended for the range and breadth of its industry links and engagement with large and smaller companies from different sectors.

Criterion 4

<p>The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the <i>core intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

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

As this is a Special Purpose Award has not been developed with international students in mind, the panel noted.

AS the Special Purpose Award does not qualify for a full award, there is no pathway to a higher- level programme.

In discussion with students and with staff at the site visit, the panel considered that the opportunities for progression might be more thoroughly outlined for students so that could see options for further study more clearly, either in DBS courses or in other institutes.

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)

It is recommended that DBS hold focus groups with students on career progression opportunities provided by their studies.

In its response document, DBS outlined a number of initiatives to meet this recommendation. These include an Employer Engagement Board and Career Pathways focus group sessions. The panel is satisfied with this response.

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 noted that the proposed programme will now be mapped to the QQI Generic Award Standard and was further advised that all MIMLOs and MIPLOs have been mapped against the General Award Standard.

The panel was generally satisfied that the programme curriculum was appropriately structured and fit for purpose. The panel noted the proposed changes to the programme and deemed them to be appropriate.

The panel was concerned that it was not clear that the 10-credit module on Digital Marketing Concepts was different to the module of the same title on the BA (Hons) in Digital Marketing which carried 5 credits and this may cause confusion among stakeholders.

It is recommended that DBS re-name 10 credit Digital Marketing Concepts to Digital Marketing or other similar name to distinguish it from the 5-credit module of the same title on the BA (Hons) in Digital Marketing.

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 was advised in the DBS response document that the 10-credit module 'Digital Marketing Concepts' has been renamed as 'Digital Marketing Fundamentals' and the Programme Document has been revised accordingly. The panel is satisfied with this response.

In reviewing the module descriptors and following discussion with staff at the site visit, the panel concluded that it was not sufficiently clear that the module on Digital Marketing Environment covered the topic of the ever-changing trends in digital marketing tools.

It is recommended that DBS amend the content of the module in Digital Marketing Environment to allow for ever-changing trends in digital marketing tools.

In its response document DBS outlined the revisions and edits that have been made to the module 'Digital Marketing Environment'. The panel is satisfied with this response

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	

There was evidence that staff were involved in continuous professional development, acting as external examiners, serving on editorial boards for industry publications, as well as writing articles in business journals, including DBS's own business journal, published by DBS library. It was noted that DBS staff have a considerable network with industry and employers and they bring this to bear on the programme. The panel further noted that many were practitioners in the field and brought this experience in bringing up to date content to the programme.

At the site visit, the panel found that there was evidence of good team work and cooperation among staff and a sense of collegiality.

DBS is commended for the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of staff.

DBS is commended for the team work and collegiality evident among staff.

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

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

- a) The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 1.2 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	

The panel was generally satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources available to implement the programme as planned.

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 and to provide students with academic writing requirements.

The library is engaged in publishing the DBS journals for the School of Arts and the School of Business and Law 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.

DBS is commended on the quality of the services provided by the library, particularly support provided to students.

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	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	

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

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

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

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

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 was satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place for the programme overall.

The panel noted that in the proposed programme an important teaching strategy is the use of group projects as is appropriate for a practical applied programme. The teaching staff informed the panel that this method was an effective way to learn digital marketing skills, such as the creation of web sites and populating these with relevant content, and that they had the additional benefits of teaching skills prized by employers such as team work, communications, creative thinking and problem solving.

Overall, group projects provided an experienced of applying learning to real life situations. The panel concluded that the use of group projects was carefully considered, with processes in place to ensure that any problems arising were dealt with speedily at local level, generally by teaching staff. The panel further concluded that there was a shared understanding among staff of the use and management of group projects as a teaching and learning resource. The panel also noted that, in the SWOT analysis that DBS had identified the need for more 'real live' projects to be included in the mix and indicated that there were plans to develop this aspect using its network of industry contacts which are extensive and generally used to good effect.

The panel commends DBS on its use and management of group projects as a teaching and learning strategy.

The panel noted that DBS, through this review, had identified in its SWOT analysis that there was a need to ensure that blended learning (synchronous and asynchronous learning) needed to be in place to enable DBS to meet the changing needs of learners. It was not clear to the panel what strategy DBS proposed would be put in place to deal with this identified threat.

It is recommended that DBS explore blended learning format where 'changing needs of learners' has been identified as a threat.

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.

In its response document, DBS advised the panel that it has reviewed the blended learning balance and has included measures to offer additional synchronous and asynchronous learning resources as they become available. The panel is satisfied with this response.

Criterion 10

There are sound assessment strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>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.

Given the practical nature of the programme, the panel was informed that the assessment strategy was largely based on continuous assessment, with the students producing a project artefact through each module. The panel deemed this to be appropriate and in line with the type of programme proposed.

The panel was informed that the teaching staff had developed a common method of assessing the group and individual components of the project, including overall assessment of the project but including personal reflection by each student so that there was a fair assessment of each learner's effort.

¹⁹ See the section on transitional arrangements.

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

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

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

Criterion 11

Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

- a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.
- b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.
- c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.
- d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.
- e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.
- f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.
- g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.
- h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²³.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*²⁴ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.
- j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).

Satisfactory (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.

Students reported that lecturers and staff were generally responsive to requests for support and information. In conversation with staff, they indicated that this process of support for students was routine and part of the overall culture within the college. The panel noted that students indicated that undertaking group assignments provided a basis for good peer support and that lecturers provided support for these projects.

DBS is commended for the quality of the student experience provided.

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)

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 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 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. There are not programme-specific quality assurance arrangements required for this programme, the panel noted.

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 is satisfied that all criteria have been met.

The panel carried out a comprehensive review of the Certificate in Digital Marketing between April and August 2019.

The programme is due for review under the QQI requirement for periodic monitoring and review, and also requires review to conform with recent policies, including QQI *Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training* (QQI, 2016), *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines* (QQI, 2016), and in accordance with the QQI *Programme Review Manual 2016/2017*. As advised by QQI, the proposed programme has been mapped to the QQI Generic Award.

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 programme to be submitted for revalidation of the programme.
- A site visit on April 29th, involving a series of meeting with academic staff and administrative staff engaged in programme delivery and support, a meeting with recent graduates and current learners on the programmes and a tour of the DBS campus to review facilities
- The preparation of a panel report, outlining the process and evidence pursued and proposing three recommendations.
- A follow-up desk review of revised documentation provided by DBS addressing the panel's recommendations.

The revised documentation consisted of:

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.

- DBS's updated Programme Document
- The Programme Team's response to the Independent Programme Review (referred to as DBS Response Document)

Based on the site visit and the revised documentation received, the panel concluded that the Certificate in Digital Marketing as presented to QQI for revalidation, satisfies the core policies and criteria for revalidation by QQI of programmes of education and training.

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

Specifically, in relation to the panel is satisfied that:

Under Criterion 1: As an established provider of higher education programmes DBS has met the prerequisites (section DBS has provided a copy of the letter to be submitted to QQI with the application for the revalidation of the programmes. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

Under Criterion 2: The panel found that, overall, the aims, objectives and rationale for the programme were expressed clearly and were comprehensive and consistent with a Level 7 Awards on the NQF.

Under Criterion 3: The panel was informed of the consultation process undertaken for this review and it was concluded that this was comprehensive.

The panel found that the SWOT analysis undertaken as part of the review, raised some issues which warranted further consideration by the DBS team.

It is recommended that DBS address weaknesses, threats and opportunities in the SWOT analysis with strategies to address each one identified through the programmatic review.

In its response document, DBS advised the panel how this can be achieved in the programme review cycle. The panel is satisfied with this response.

It is recommended that DBS explore funding opportunities from employers for the programme.

In its response document, DBS informed the panel actively visits companies in Dublin promoting the programme and provided documentary evidence on this approach. The panel is satisfied with this response.

DBS is commended for the range and breath of its industry links and engagement with large and smaller companies from different sectors.

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

The panel considered that the opportunities for progression might be more thoroughly outlined for students.

It is recommended that DBS hold focus groups with students on career progression opportunities provided by their studies.

In its response document, DBS outlined a number of initiatives, including an Employer Engagement Board and Career Pathways focus group sessions. The panel is satisfied with this response.

Under Criterion 5: The panel was generally satisfied that the programme curriculum was appropriately structured and fit for purpose.

The panel was concerned that it was not clear that the 10-credit module on Digital Marketing Concepts was different to the module of the same title on the BA (Hons) in Digital Marketing.

It is recommended that DBS re-name 10 credit Digital Marketing Concepts to Digital Marketing or other similar name to distinguish it from the 5-credit module of the same title on the BA (Hons) in Digital Marketing.

It was advised in the DBS response document that the 10-credit module 'Digital Marketing Concepts' has been renamed as 'Digital Marketing Fundamentals'. The panel is satisfied with this response.

The panel concluded that it was not sufficiently clear that the module on Digital Marketing Environment covered the topic of the ever-changing trends in digital marketing tools.

It is recommended that DBS amend the content of the module in Digital Marketing Environment to allow for ever-changing trends in digital marketing tools.

In its response document DBS outlined the revisions and edits that have been made to the module 'Digital Marketing Environment'. The panel is satisfied with this response.

Under Criterion 6: The panel was satisfied that there sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned.

There was evidence that staff were involved in continuous professional development and evidence of good team work and cooperation among staff and a sense of collegiality.

DBS is commended for the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of staff.

DBS is commended for the team work and collegiality evident among staff.

Under Criterion 7: The panel was generally satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources available to implement the programme as planned.

The panel found that the library uses technology effectively to support learners and staff. It was noted that specialist library staff are employed to assist students.

DBS is commended on the quality of the services provided by the library, particularly support provided to students.

The panel considered that the information technology facilities were of a high standard and the technology support services had been integrated with other student services.

Under Criterion 8: The panel was satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of learners. The panel was advised that DBS uses a number of mechanisms to develop and implement supports for students and that the staff with responsibility for support services were proactive in responding to student feedback.

Under Criterion 9: The panel was satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place for the programme overall.

The panel noted that an important teaching strategy is the use of group projects and concluded that the use of group projects was carefully considered.

The panel commends DBS on its use and management of group projects as a teaching and learning strategy.

The panel noted that DBS had identified that there was a need to ensure that blended learning needed to be in place to enable DBS to meet the changing needs of learners.

It is recommended that DBS explore blended learning format where ‘changing needs of learners’ has been identified as a threat.

In its response document, DBS advised the panel that it has included measures to offer additional synchronous and asynchronous learning resources as they become available. The panel is satisfied with this response.

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.

The panel was informed that the assessment strategy was largely based on continuous assessment and deemed this to be appropriate.

Under Criterion 11:

The panel noted that the Student Handbooks and website contained relevant information in relation to the supports and services available to students.

Students reported that lecturers and staff were generally responsive to requests for support and information.

DBS is commended for the quality of the student experience provided

Under Criterion 12: The panel was satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programme under review. It was noted that the QAH and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. It is recommended that DBS address weaknesses, threats and opportunities in the SWOT analysis with strategies to address each one identified through the programmatic review.
2. It is recommended that DBS explore funding opportunities from employers for the programme.
3. It is recommended that DBS hold focus groups with students on career progression opportunities provided by their studies.
4. It is recommended that DBS re-name 10 credit Digital Marketing Concepts to Digital Marketing or other similar name to distinguish it from the 5-credit module of the same title on the BA (Hons) in Digital Marketing.
5. It is recommended that DBS amend the content of the module in Digital Marketing Environment to allow for ever-changing trends in digital marketing tools.
6. It is recommended that DBS explore blended learning format where ‘changing needs of learners’ in a threat.

Summary of commendations to the provider

1. DBS is commended for the range and breath of its industry links and engagement with large and smaller companies from different sectors.
2. DBS is commended for the range and breath of its industry links and engagement with large and smaller companies from different sectors.
3. DBS is commended on its use and management of group projects as a teaching and learning strategy
4. DBS is commended for the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of staff.
5. DBS is commended for the team work and collegiality evident among staff.
6. DBS is commended on the quality of the services provided by the library, particularly support provided to students.
7. DBS is commended for the quality of the student experience provided.

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: Michael Hall

Date: 29th August 2019

Signed:



Disclaimer

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QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Revalidation of the Certificate in Digital Marketing provided by Dublin Business School - 2019

In its original independent evaluation report dated 11th June 2019, the independent panel specified no conditions and 6 recommendations regarding the above programme. Dublin Business School formally responded to the report on 19 August 2019 and has addressed each of the conditions and recommendations to the satisfaction of the independent panel members.

The panel confirmed that it recommended the Certificate in Digital Marketing programme to QQI for revalidation.

QQI is satisfied that each condition made by the independent panel has been met and each recommendation has been taken on board and the recommended action has been taken or is scheduled to be taken.

Signed:

Carmel Kelly - Validation Manager, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Date: 18 November 2019