QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Dublin Business School
Date of site visit	25 May 2021 – visit conducted by Zoom because of pandemic
Date of report	3 June 2021

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics
	Award	NFQ level 9
	Credit	90ECTS
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	Satisfactory

Embedded programme 1	Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics
	Award	NFQ Level 9
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	Satisfactory

Section B.   Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Josephine Brown	Chair	Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
Matthias Glowatz	Subject Matter Expert	University College Dublin
Dr Myria Kkali	Subject Matter Expert	The Cyprus Institute of Marketing
Dr Deirdre Nuttall	Report Writer	n/a
Igor Fekete	Learner Representative and Industry Representative	Trinity College Dublin
Joe Moore	Learner Representative	National College of Ireland
Brendan Almack	Industry Representative	Wolfgang Digital

Section C.   Principal Programme

MSc in Digital Marketing and Analytics

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners *(per centre)*	Minimum number of learners
Dublin Business School	250	20

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	January 2022
Maximum number of annual intakes	3
Maximum total number of learners per intake	50
Programme duration *(months from start to completion)*	One year full time (12 months; 3 semesters of 12 weeks each) or two years part time (18 months; 4 semesters of 12 weeks each)

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

The panel is satisfied that Dublin Business School is in a position to offer the programmes in question according to the criteria outlined above.

Target learner groups

The **Masters of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics** is primarily aimed at graduates aspiring to advance their skills by gaining in-depth digital marketing and analytics knowledge with the specific goal of playing an active role in the digital marketing, content marketing, communications, or analytics function in their organisation. Typical candidates include those who wish to upskill or reskill due to changes in employment, those already engaged in traditional marketing who require digital marketing upskill or career expansion, and those who have already found themselves in a digital marketing role in their company and wish to acquire a formal qualification for future sustainability in their career. Individuals will, upon completion of this programme, be able to enter

the marketing sector and hold a general or expanded role in the digital marketing function of their organisation.

This programme is aimed at a wide range of learners with a Level 8 honours bachelor's degree in a cognate area who wish to specialise in the field of digital marketing with a view to entering industry, progressing professionally or gaining a formal qualification for future sustainability. Cognate disciplines are defined as marketing, business, finance, and IT with a component of marketing or a related discipline.

The target group for the **Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics** programme is as above. However, this award is available for those who wish to capture the value of their learning experience in a named award but cannot complete the research component of this programme. Learners who choose this exit award option will not be enrolled separately to the Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics programme.

Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time and part-time

The teaching and learning modalities

Depending on the module at hand, the modalities include:

- Classroom / Face to Face (lectures, workshops, and practical lab-based work)
- Workplace work placements
- Online (tutorials, lectures, delivered live)
- Asynchronous (online content available on demand)

Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)

The Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics programme has been designed to respond to the evolution of an increasingly digital and technology-enabled business environment.

Digital marketing has become critical in recent years in our data driven digital society, where the role and scope of the marketing function has transformed rapidly from the development and management of creative communication to the implementation of data-driven and technology enabled marketing practices. In consequence, there is high demand for qualified digital marketers, where a skills gap of talent is evident throughout the industry.

This programme aims to produce individuals with the specialised skills and attributes necessary to meet the demand of the modern day digital marketing environment and able to make fully informed marketing decisions at leadership level.

Graduates of the Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics will:

- Understand the core principles of digital marketing and analytics.
- Be equipped to utilise data and visualisation tools.
- Apply the appropriate marketing models.
- Inform business decision-making in an ethical context.
- Develop advanced critical thinking, writing, and research skills through the completion of the Research Methods modules along with the completion of a Capstone module (choice of Dissertation or Applied Research Project or Placement).

The taught component of this programme comprises modules in:

- Web Marketing Management and Metrics.

- Digital Design & Development.
- Strategic Digital Marketing.
- Consumer Insights, and Emerging Trends.
- Data and Digital Marketing Analytics.
- Digital Advertising and Online Marketing Communications.
- Business Intelligence and Visualisation.
- Research Methods.

All modules will facilitate the exploration of new ideas and technologies with learning focussed on emerging industry trends as well as best practice, and learners will be supported in applying their knowledge to specific issues within a real-world context.

The Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics offers an integrated delivery from end-to-end covering a wide range of digital marketing topics. The programme aims to develop learners' knowledge of the theory and practice of digital marketing and analytics necessary for them to perform at postgraduate level and secure employment in the areas of digital marketing in a broad range of commercial, industrial, and public sector environments.

Successful graduates will possess an in-depth knowledge of the theoretical and practical aspects of digital marketing and analytics.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
Lecturers delivering this programme will hold a minimum of a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Master degree in Digital Marketing, Marketing, Business, Computing, Information Technology, Data Analytics, or a related area. Holders of Level 8 honours Bachelor's degrees in a relevant discipline, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant senior industry experience, will also be considered.	This programme can be delivered through current faculty (eight part-time lecturers and 1 full-time lecturer).

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lecture classroom-based sessions	1:50
Workshops	1:25
Practical lab sessions	1:35
Online class (broadcast live)	1:50
Online tutorial (interactive)	1:25
Asynchronous	n/a
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing: The panel is satisfied that that the programme outline and staffing arrangements are appropriate for both the principal programme and the embedded exit award under discussion.	

Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners *(per centre)*	Minimum number of learners
Dublin Business School	250	20

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	January 2022
Maximum number of annual intakes	3
Maximum total number of learners per intake	50
Programme duration *(months from start to completion)*	One year full time (12 months; 3 semesters of 12 weeks each) or two years part time (18 months; 4 semesters of 12 weeks each)

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:
As for MSc in Digital Marketing and Analytics above.

Target learner groups
The target group for the Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics programme is as above in the principal programme. However, this award is available for those who wish to capture the value of their learning experience in a named award but cannot complete the research component of this programme. Learners who choose this exit award option will not be enrolled separately to the Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics programme.

Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time and part-time

The teaching and learning modalities
Depending on the module at hand, the modalities include: • Classroom / Face to Face (lectures, workshops, and practical lab-based work) • Workplace work placements • Online (tutorials, lectures, delivered live) • Asynchronous (online content available on demand)

Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)
The Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics is an embedded exit award in the Master of Science in Digital Marketing and Analytics. The Postgraduate Diploma is offered as a separate exit award and will be of interest to those who wish to complete the taught component only of this programme. The programme aims to accommodate a wide audience of learners whose specific interests lie in the area of digital marketing (either business, or technically focused). Semester one (FT) lays the groundwork for the programme and encompasses mostly foundational modules that focus on providing a solid and comprehensive understanding of the relevant concepts

of Web Marketing Management and Metrics; Digital Design & Development; Strategic Thinking in the Digital Age; and Research Methods 1.

Semester two (FT) builds on this by covering advanced modules in which the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in the first semester can be employed. Semester two modules offer Data and Digital Marketing Analytics; Digital Advertising & Online Marketing Communications; Business Intelligence & Visualisation; and Research Methods 2. Learners will not complete the 30 ECTS capstone module (Dissertation or Applied Research Project or Placement).

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
Lecturers delivering this programme will hold a minimum of a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Master degree in Digital Marketing, Marketing, Business, Computing, Information Technology, Data Analytics, or a related area. Holders of Level 8 honours Bachelor's degrees in a relevant discipline, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant senior industry experience, will also be considered.	This programme can be delivered through current faculty (eight part-time lecturers and 1 full-time lecturer).

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
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Asynchronous	n/a
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing: The panel is satisfied that that the programme outline and staffing arrangements are appropriate for both the principal programme and the embedded exit award under discussion.	

Section D.   Other noteworthy features of the application

This programme is being put forward for Review and Re-Validation early as, due to the technical nature of the programme, and based on ongoing internal monitoring and review and stakeholder feedback, it is felt that the programme would benefit from updates that extend beyond the scope of changes that can be approved through current internal processes.

Blended/multimodal learning incorporating online learning will be used where appropriate to ensure a rich and diverse learning environment and to allow for flexible approaches. It is Dublin Business School's intention to provide these programmes via blended learning (and fully online during Covid-19 restrictions or any future restrictions as required). Within this programme proposal, Dublin Business School now intends to revalidate this programme with this online delivery option as a permanent feature; this revalidation will be dealt with under a separate application.

Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable). Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

Going forward, Dublin Business School will be in a strong position to benefit from the practical lessons learned at this difficult time. It will be able to build on expertise and experience acquired during the pandemic to continue to combine an online delivery with its in-class learning, and it is recommended that it do so. It was not part of the External Validation review panel to evaluate this course for 100% online delivery. According to DBS President this will be considered under a separate validation process at some time in the future.

Part 2.   Evaluation against the validation criteria

The panel should complete this section with commentary against each criterion to support the recommendation given in the 'Satisfactory?' column i.e. Yes, No, or Partially.

If 'Yes', there should be a comment citing the evidence for this finding. Likewise, there should be an explanation as to why the panel have concluded that the criterion has either not been met or only partially so.

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.[1]

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all of the requisite requirements
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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[1] 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.[2]
   (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.[3]

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all of the requisite requirements
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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[2] Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.
[3] 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.[4]

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 evidence[5] of learner demand for the programme.
   (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant[6].
   (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.[7]

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
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all of the requisite requirements
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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[4] 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.

[5] This might be predictive or indirect.

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

[7] 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.

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 satisfied[8].

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 (CEFRL[9]) 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
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all of the requisite requirements
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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[8] 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

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

Criterion 5. **The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose**

a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.

b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.

c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.

d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.

e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles[10].

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.[11]

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	Overall, the panel was satisfied with the curriculum, but it does have some suggestions with respect to a number of specific modules: • The panel feels that the module Web Marketing Management and Metrics places an excessive emphasis on website development and design and that this course should be reweighted to give a more strategic approach with a greater focus on how to manage digital applications in the context of working with a web developer or designer. • With respect to the module currently entitled Strategic Digital Marketing, Consumer Insights, and Emerging Trends, the panel suggests revising the name and potentially fine-tuning the course to give it a clearer focus, while also ensuring that the topics it is currently supposed to cover are dealt with in other modules, as at present this course appears to offer more than it can deliver.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

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[10] 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.

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

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 staff[12] (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 development[13] opportunities[14].	
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
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School's arrangements are satisfactory in this area, but the panel notes that a relatively low number of lecturing staff are PhD holders, and recommends that Dublin Business School encourage and facilitate staff in pursuing further academic studies to upgrade their qualifications and skills.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

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[12] 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.

[13] 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.

[14] 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.

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**
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all the requirements in this area
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School offers a pleasant, comfortable, and stimulating physical environment in which to learn. While it is clearly also going to considerable efforts to engage learners in online classes, and has performed outstandingly during the pandemic, the panel would encourage the School to continue to engage creatively with learners and subject experts to find ways in which to fine-tune the online learning environment to avoid issues of student exhaustion and burnout.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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, support15 and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	In general, the panel is satisfied with the programmes and their learning outcomes, but it suggests that the students' learning would be enhanced by more opportunities to gain real-world experience, or at least learning experiences that are directly applicable in the workplace, especially in light of the fact that many overseas students are restricted in terms of how much they can work because of the limitations of their student visas. While the School already engages actively with industry, potentially even more could be done in this area.
Embedded Programme 1		As above

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[15] 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*[16]

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.[17]

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.[18]

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.[19]

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all requirements in this area
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above

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[16] See the section on transitional arrangements.

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

[18] 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.

[19] 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 disabilities[20].

i)   If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*[21] 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
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all requirements in this area. However, the panel feels that more might be done to help learners to become interview-ready by giving them assignments that have direct applications in the workplace. This is especially important in light of the fact that many overseas students are restricted in terms of how much they can work because of their student visa requirements.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

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[20] 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).

[21] 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-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.

c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.

d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.

e) Quality assurance[22] 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
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all requirements in this area
Embedded Programme 1		As above.

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[22] See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 3.   Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1   Principal programme:

Select one	
✔	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);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

Having considered the documentation and oral evidence provided during meetings with the Dublin Business School team, the panel is happy to recommend that the Master of Science in Digital Marketing (Level 9, 90 ECTS) and exit award Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing (Level 9, 60 ECTS) be revalidated.

Commendations

Dublin Business School is commended for its thorough approach for documentation and for its open and positive engagement with the panel, sometimes in the context of robust discussion.

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

None

Embedded programme 1:

Select one	
✔	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);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

As above

Commendations

 As above

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

None

Summary of recommendations to the provider

It was not part of the External Validation review panel to evaluate this course for 100% online delivery. According to DBS President this will be considered under a separate validation process at some time in the future.

With respect to the course as it stands, having thoroughly reviewed the documentation provided by Dublin Business School, and having engaged in detailed discussion with them about the programmes and all of the modules involved, the panel has a number of recommendations, as follows:

- The panel feels that the module Web Marketing Management and Metrics places an excessive emphasis on website development and design and that this course should be reweighted to give a more strategic approach with a greater focus on how to manage digital applications in the context of working with a web developer or designer.
- While it is clear that Dublin Business School has gone to great effort, often in rather challenging circumstances during the pandemic, to enhance its online teaching and provision, the panel feels that it can continue to engage creatively to find diverse ways to ensure that online leaners are fully engaged to avoid problems with fatigue and burnout.
- The panel notes that relatively few lecturing staff hold PhDs. While it is clear that Dublin Business School does support career development among its staff, it would like to see a more systematic approach in this area, with a commitment to ensuring that a greater number of staff acquire PhDs in the years to come.
- The panel feels that the students' learning would be enhanced by more opportunities to gain real-world experience, or at least learning experiences that are directly applicable in the workplace, especially in light of the fact that many overseas students are restricted in terms of how much they can work because of the limitations of their student visas. While the School already engages actively with industry, potentially even more could be done in this area.
- With respect to the module currently entitled Strategic Digital Marketing, Consumer Insights, and Emerging Trends, the panel suggests revising the name and potentially fine-tuning the course to give it a clearer focus, while also ensuring that the topics it is currently supposed to cover are dealt with in other modules, as at present this course appears to offer more than it can deliver.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Josephine Browne   Date: 8 June 2021

Signed: 8th June 2021

3.2   Disclaimer

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