

# Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

<b>Provider</b>	Dublin Business School
<b>Programme(s) Reviewed</b>	Certificate in Business and Digital Skills

## Independent Panel Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role on Panel</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Dr. John Bartlett	Chair	ATU
Dr. Joe Fitzgerald	Report Writer	TU Dublin
Dr. Dinusha Weerawardane	Academic Expert	University of West London
Matthias Glowatz	Academic Expert	UCD
Lenka Vrancikova	Learner Rep	Dundalk IT
Elizabeth Sheehan	Industry Rep	Ad Net Zero

All members of the independent panel declared their independence of Dublin Business School and that they have no conflict of interest

## Part 1. Introduction

This programme review will be undertaken in accordance with DBS's internal quality assurance processes, which are informed by QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines (pp 11-12) and Programme Review Manual 2022.

This review of this programme was undertaken by the DBS's School of Business. Many of the current teaching staff have been involved in the delivery of the programme for a number of years, so they had the benefit of clear understanding of the programme description, learning outcomes and understanding of the benefits for students

## Part 2. Evaluation Process

### 2.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

	<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Document Name</b>
1.	Programme Review Report	CertBusinessDigitalSkills_Programme Review Report
2.	Programme Document	CertBusinessDigitalSkills_Programme Doc
3.	Programme Modules	CertBusinessDigitalSkills_Module & Assessment Doc
4.	Programme CVs	CertBusinessDigitalSkills_Programme Team CVs
5.	Teaching & Learning Strategy	CertBusinessDigitalSkills_Teaching and Learning Strategy 2024
6.	Programme Handbook	CertBusinessDigitalSkills_Programme Handbook 2425
7.		
8.		

### 2.2 Provider's Representatives Met

	<b>Person</b>	<b>Role / Job Title</b>
1.	Tim Bicknell	President
2.	Lori Johnston	Academic Dean
3.	Dr. Rita Day	Academic Director
4.	Tanya Zubrzycki	Assistant Academic Director
5.	Shane Mooney	Head of Student Experience
6.	Darragh Breathnach	Registrar & Director of Campus Operations
7.	Emma Balfe	Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production
8.	Grant Goodwin	Assitant Registrar
9.	Various Faculty Members	Lecturer

### 2.3 Description of evaluation process

The programme review process has been multifaceted in its approach. Firstly, the existing Academic Team, including the Academic Director, Assistant Academic Director and Programme Level Manager, are in regular consultation with faculty to discuss the nature of the programme and to question how

the current programme can be modified and updated to reflect the complex and diverse changes in the world of business. With this in mind, programme team meetings form an integral part of this process and are conducted once per semester per intake. These allow lecturers to explain the dynamics which are unfolding in the teaching environment and to question and debate how changes can be made accordingly in all aspects of the design, delivery and assessment of the programme.

Secondly, DBS engages regularly with industry practitioners for many reasons. The importance of developing relationships and links with those within the industry is becoming a significant priority for the learner. The Industry Advisory Board is an active forum which fosters discussion and debate between DBS academic staff and a number of industry professionals. These meetings, which occur 2-3 times per year, are an important forum for discussing how to create links between learners and industry.

Thirdly, the academic management team has ensured that the perspectives of learners are taken into account by designing a qualitative learner survey and conducting smaller focus groups. The results within this document are referenced when making overall decisions with respect to the needs of the contemporary marketing learner.

Finally, the Academic programme team is in continual contact with internal stakeholders to ensure that the programme design aligns with the various functions within the organisation. This includes regular and ongoing discussions with the DBS Teaching and Learning Unit. This unit has become a vital part of decision-making for programme revalidations and curriculum development, assessment trends and responses to issues around generative AI and how best to consider responses to such developments.

### Part 3. Panel Findings on Provider Programme Review Report

The following is the panel's commentary and recommendations on the provider's programme review report. It follows the section structure of the report in headings and in sequence.

References to specific parts of the provider report will use the relevant report reference e.g. 2.2.4 Programme Management

#### Section A. Context and Terms of Reference for the Programme Review

##### **Commentary:**

The Independent Evaluation Panel has been convened to evaluate the programmatic review conducted by DBS in respect of the Certificate in Business & Digital Skills, and to make a recommendation on the suitability of the revised programmes for revalidation.

The revised programme will continue to lead to a Certificate at level 6 on the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ). A blended delivery model will be utilised.

The provider's own programmatic review found some proposed modifications were appropriate which the Panel was generally satisfied were appropriate.

##### **Recommendations:**

n/a

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## Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

### **Commentary:**

Comprehensive information provided on the provider and where these programmes resides within the providers operations. Programmes also discussed and situated within their governmental department for which they are designed.

### **Recommendations:**

n/a

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## Section C. Baseline qualitative and quantitative information

### Programme Data Overview

*This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Applications, Enrolment, Attrition Transfer and Progression, Award Classification and Graduate Destinations*

#### **Commentary:**

The programme review report details the applications for the programme, which was 342 in 2021/22, as well as actual enrolments (82 in 2021/22). As this is a Certificate delivered within one academic year, there is no 'progression' within the programme, but rather completion of the programme is the concern. Of those who enrolled, approximately 60% successfully completed the programme in the year they enrolled in 2021/22.

As alluded to, in 2021/22 approximately 40% of students who were enrolled on this programme did not sit for exams and ultimately withdrew from the programme. The provider cited that this was due to the student profile – as it is Springboard students, the provider finds that a lot of learners 'drop out' quite early on the programme. The panel noted that fully informing applicants before they start on the programme could help to improve this as they would be fully informed of what the programme would entail before they commence. DBS assured the panel that this is the case at present.

DBS does not record data for its graduate destinations from this programme.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

### Programme Delivery and Teaching & Learning Strategies

*This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Physical Facilities and Resources, Timetabling, Learner Workload, Attendance, Teacher Learner Ratios, Community of Practice Learning, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Learning Outcomes achieved, Assessment Strategies.*

#### **Commentary:**

As an outcome of this programme review, a programme-level assessment strategy was created, with the view of creating a more balanced approach to assessments across the programme. The intention is that this would allow for a variety of assessments, a mix of

individual and group assessments, and to facilitate feedback. UDL principles have also been taken into account in the development of the assessment strategy.

**Recommendations:**

n/a

## Section D. Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

### Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

#### **Commentary:**

Feedback from learners and graduates found a preference for a blended learning approach, as it affords them the flexibility to undertake this course even if they don't live in the Dublin area. Group work was also cited as an issue. DBS has taken this advice on board and has sought to incorporate more individual assessments and to maintain a blended delivery model.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

### Evaluation of the programme by Staff

#### **Commentary:**

Programme staff provide regular feedback through the formal mechanisms in place (programme boards, exam boards etc.). Given the relatively small size of this programme, with a small programme team as a result, faculty seem to be able to easily feed into the development of the programme through open access to programme management.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

### External Examiner Feedback

#### **Commentary:**

External Examiner feedback has been broadly positive. Any issues that are highlighted, are noted by DBS to address.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

## Section E. Programme Quality Assurance

### Complaints, appeals and commendations

#### **Commentary:**

The provider has robust QA policies in place at an institutional and programme level. These policies are clear, fair and transparent. The report details these and provides links to DBS's QA policies in these areas.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

### Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

#### **Commentary:**

The report is clear in how this programme fits within DBS's overarching QA system, but also the programme specific QA. The key policies relevant for this programme are clearly outlined.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

### Additional Quality Assurance Systems and Processes required (e.g. online delivery / assessment)

#### **Commentary:**

The blended learning model intended for this programme is clearly documented throughout.

#### **Recommendations:**

n/a

## Section F. Summary Analysis of the programme

### **Commentary:**

The programme review summary analysis is coherent with the analysis undertaken as part of the programme review and other sections presented in the report.

### **Recommendations:**

n/a

## Section G. Revision of the programme

*In this section the panel will respond to any proposals made by the provider in respect of changes to the programme arising from the review. The revised programme's readiness for validation will be reported on in more detail in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.*

### **Commentary:**

Section 7 outlines the main changes suggested for the programme. The panel is supportive of these changes.

### **Recommendations:**

n/a

## Part 4. Overall Findings

In this section the panel will give its overall feedback on the conduct of the review and the findings therein. This feedback will inform future provider review processes and will also contribute to the refinement of any programmes being proposed for revalidation following this review process.

### Section A. Commentary on review process:

The review process undertaken by the provider was extensive, comprehensive and completed with the clear goal of improving the programme.

### Section B. Recommendations on review process:

The volume of material produced by the provider is commendable, and clearly indicative of the thoroughness of the review process undertaken. However, the scale of the material provided might have been structured to differentiate between core material and supplemental evidence to enable the Panel's effective engagement within the short time timeframe of the review/revalidation event. Though the process is clearly robust and inclusive, the workload it presents to panels is significant.

The focus should be on retaining the robustness of the system, but reducing the administrative burden on both the provider and panels.

### Section C. Commentary on programme revisions:

The panel is supportive of the revisions identified during the programme review process.

### Section D. Recommendations on programme revisions:

The panel supports the proposed programme revisions outlined and proposes no conditions of validation.

Signed: John Bartlett  
Panel Chairperson:

Date: 16/05/2024

**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

<b>Provider name</b>	Dublin Business School
<b>Date of site visit</b>	18/04/2024
<b>Date of report</b>	15/05/2024

## Section A. Overall recommendations

<b>Principal programme</b>	<b>Title</b>	Certificate in Business and Digital Skills
	<b>Award</b>	Special Purpose
	<b>Credit</b>	30 ECTS
	<b>Recommendation</b> <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

## Section B. Expert Panel

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Dr. John Bartlett	Chair	ATU
Dr. Joe Fitzgerald	Report Writer	TU Dublin
Dr. Dinusha Weerawardane	Academic Expert	University of West London
Matthias Glowatz	Academic Expert	UCD
Lenka Vrancikova	Learner Rep	Dundalk IT
Elizabeth Sheehan	Industry Rep	Ad Net Zero

## Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners ( <i>per centre</i> )	Minimum number of learners
Dublin Business School	600	10

Proposed Enrolment	
<b>Date of first intake</b>	September 2024
<b>Maximum number of annual intakes</b>	2 full-time; 2 part-time
<b>Maximum total number of learners per intake</b>	150 full-time; 150 part-time
<b>Programme duration</b> ( <i>months from start to completion</i> )	1 year
<b>Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:</b>	
<p>The numbers provided are standard for DBS. However, during the panel visit, they noted that they do not expect to have numbers near the maximum of this range. They anticipate enrolments in line, and perhaps slightly above, previous years.</p>	
<b>Target learner groups</b>	
<p>The Certificate in Business and Digital Skills (Level 6, 30 ECTS) micro-credential programme has been designed for those who are self-employed with limited business and digital literacy knowledge and skills, unemployed from a related role, or in employment and who require cross-skilling or up-skilling in this area. It is primarily aimed at those who wish to advance their careers by gaining skills and knowledge in business and digital skills in order to play an active role in their organisation. Upon successful completion of this programme, learners will be able to apply these skills effectively and understand how to integrate them into decision-making in a company or self-employed role. They will be well positioned to pursue roles within organisations that require business and digital skills- related tasks. Each module aims to stimulate curiosity and inquiry through delivery in a theoretical and experiential context through knowledge and skills to ensure learners acquire a systematic understanding of these core concepts and practical application of business administration. Furthermore, the programme encourages self-awareness and academic independence by allowing the learner to identify and build on their own individual attributes and competencies.</p>	
<b>Approved countries for provision</b>	Ireland
<b>Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time</b>	Full-time and Part-time
<b>The teaching and learning modalities</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to Face</li> <li>• Online</li> <li>• Blended</li> </ul>	
<b>Brief synopsis of the programme</b> (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	

The Certificate in Business and Digital Skills (Level 6, 30 ECTS) will equip learners with practical skills and knowledge in core areas of business. Through the unique combination of modules, learners will explore organisational behaviour (theory and skills applied to a variety of industry settings), acquire digital skills (necessary to a modern business environment) and develop an understanding of the importance of marketing communications in the promotion and future sustainability of a business. Through this programme, learners will acquire work-aligned skills that will prepare them for the challenges posed by the dynamic nature of the modern business environment, enabling them to make an effective contribution to the resolution of business problems.

There are three taught modules, each of 10 ECTS, which lead to a Certificate in Business and Digital Skills, Level 6 Special Purpose Award. They are: Organisational Behaviour; Digital Skills and Literacy for Business; and Contemporary Marketing Communications. 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. This one year programme will be delivered on a part-time basis with a full-time option enabled within a normal college day (9am-5pm), but will be delivered with the same composition in terms of hours, modes of delivery and independent learning.

<b>Summary of specifications for teaching staff</b>	<b>WTE</b>
Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 8 Honours Bachelor’s degree in Business or equivalent qualification in the following areas:  Organisational Behaviour, Human Resource Management, Information Technology, Marketing and related disciplines.  Where Industry experience is desirable, holders of Level 6 qualification in Business who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant business experience at senior level may also be considered.	3
The Academic Director for this programme will have a minimum of a NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters qualification in Business or related areas along with programme management/ academic leadership experience.	1
The Academic Director for this programme will have a minimum of a NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters qualification in Business or related areas along with programme management/ academic leadership experience.	1
Administration and Support Staff, such as Library, Admissions, Student Experience, Finance etc. Experience and qualifications relevant to the role.	1

<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Ratio of learners to teaching staff</b>
Classroom sessions	1:50
Workshops	1:25
Practical sessions	1:25
Online Class (live)	1:50
Online Tutorial (interactive)	1:25
<b>Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:</b>	

DBS has the necessary staff for this programme already in its employment.

**Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)**

Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG24522	Certificate in Business and Digital Skills	August 2024

**Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application**

n/a

**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)

The formalising of the delivery model as a blended delivery is appropriate and the provider has established QA processes in place to ensure the successful delivery of the programme.

## 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

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.<sup>1</sup></p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	DBS will deliver this programme under its approved Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures. DBS meets the pre-requisites under Section 44 (7) of the 2012 Act to apply for validation of the programme. This was confirmed to the panel during the site visit.

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<sup>1</sup>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.<sup>2</sup>
  - (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.<sup>3</sup>

	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	The panel discussed the programmes' aims, objectives, and title with DBS and deemed them to be an accurate representation of the intended programmes and to be informative to potential learners.

<sup>2</sup> Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>
- 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<sup>5</sup> of learner demand for the programme.
  - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant<sup>6</sup>.
  - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.<sup>7</sup>
- 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.

	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	<p>The panel asked DBS to outline the review process undertaken, and how this has impacted on the programme structure. DBS detailed the programme review process, with details given of the stakeholder engagement and involvement in the review process. They engaged with internal stakeholders, such as its faculty and students, and external stakeholders such as employers of students on the programme. The panel was satisfied that this process was thorough and allowed for sufficiently broad input to be considered.</p> <p>The provider detailed continued learner demand, particularly those that are funded through the Springboard initiative.</p>

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> This might be predictive or indirect.

<sup>6</sup> It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

<sup>7</sup> 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**

<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 satisfied<sup>8</sup>.</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 (CEFR<sup>9</sup>) 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 <b>target learners</b> 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 <b>recognition of prior learning</b> 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"> <li>(i) Reflects the core <i>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).</li> <li>(ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;</li> <li>(iii) Has long-lasting significance.</li> </ul> <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	<p>Access Transfer and Progression criteria and arrangements for progression are outlined in Section 4 of the programme documentation and these procedures are consistent with QQI’s policy and criteria.</p> <p>Admission to this programme is through the Springboard initiative.</p> <p>No formal progression routes are available for this programme. The provider did confirm that they would consider students with exemptions of ‘some modules’ on larger programmes, should that they wish to continue their studies (e.g. exemptions of ‘some modules’ from the provider’s major programmes). There would appear to be opportunities for the provider to formalise these progression options/pathways.</p> <p>The programme document notes that there is no progression tracking.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> <b>The panel recommends that the provider formalises the progression options available from this programme. This could take the form of</b></p>

<sup>8</sup> 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

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf) (accessed 26/09/2015)

		<b>formal progression options internally, with clear pathways detailed for programme graduates.</b>
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Criterion 5. **The programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose**

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles<sup>10</sup>.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme <b>duration</b> (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its <b>fulltime equivalent contact time</b> (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.<sup>11</sup></p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	The panel queried where and how finance elements are incorporated into the programme, given the centrality of finance to ‘business’ broadly. The provider confirmed that given the limited scope for module inclusion in a 30-credit programme, this was an area that was not going to be a central focus of the programme. The panel accepted this limitation on programme size but noted that the title of the programme may suggest some familiarity with finance (particularly the ‘Certificate in Business’ component of the title).

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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**

<p>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).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff<sup>12</sup> (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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<sup>13</sup> opportunities<sup>14</sup>.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>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.</p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	<p>The lecturers for this programme are all currently in place within the Provider’s faculty. The panel met with a number of the faculty during the site visit all of whom presented as professional and highly competent within their disciplinary areas. The programme director has a clear command of all aspects of the programme, and many of the lecturing team have significant teaching experience.</p> <p>The provider has a thorough process in place, which they detailed, around staff recruitment and induction, which is to ensure that staff are supported to implement the programme as intended.</p>

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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**

<p>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).</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(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)</li> <li>(ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)</li> <li>(iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment</li> <li>(iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable</li> <li>(v) technical support</li> <li>(vi) administrative support</li> <li>(vii) company placements/internships – if applicable</li> </ul> <p>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).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Planned intake (first five years) and</li> <li>(ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.</li> </ul> <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	<p>The panel queried if the College provides devices to facilitate attending online sessions. The provider confirmed that computers &amp; laptops are available within the College, but most learners will use their own devices as they typically login to online sessions remotely (i.e. outside the College’s campus).</p> <p>The programme document details the resources that the provider has in place, which the panel were satisfied were sufficient for the successful delivery of this programme.</p>

**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>		
	<p><b>Satisfactory?</b> (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p><b>Comment</b></p>
<p><b>Principal Programme</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>DBS already has sufficient classroom capacity for this programme, and it uses Moodle as its Virtual Learning Environment. The panel are content that the learning environment (both physical and virtual) that DBS has in place are sufficient for learners on this programme.</p>

Criterion 9. **There are sound teaching and learning strategies**

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support<sup>15</sup> and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	<p><b>Satisfactory?</b> (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p><b>Comment</b></p>
<p><b>Principal Programme</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The panel noted that the use of guest lecturers, and it suggested that the provider could consider using alumni as these guest lecturers, as they could also add an additional element to the programme delivery as it would allow alumni speakers to detail how the programme helped them in their careers.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p><b>The panel recommends that the provider considers incorporating alumni into its guest lecturer roster.</b></p>

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<sup>15</sup> 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**

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i><sup>16</sup></p> <p>b) The programme’s assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>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.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written <b>programme assessment strategy</b> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>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.<sup>19</sup></p>		
	<p><b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b></p>	<p><b>Comment</b></p>
<p><b>Principal Programme</b></p>		<p>The panel noted some disparity between the average marks between some modules – some in the range of mid-50s and in the range of mid-70s, and queried in particular the modules that attain the higher average mark. The provider noted that this may be a product of success and based on the student profile.</p> <p>The panel queried how AI will/may impact on the assessment strategy of the programme. The provider has confirmed that there are high level policies now in place that consider AI and Assessment. The programme lecturers did confirm a move away from essays as a result of AI and towards other assessment instruments, such as presentations.</p> <p>The assessment strategy has assessment weighed heavily towards the end of semester 2, with very few assessments in semester 1, and queried the rationale of this. The provider did accept that it would be preferable to have some greater spread of assessments (in terms of submission weeks and across semesters) and will look at this.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p><b>The panel recommends that the provider review the assessment schedule with a view of spreading the assessment workload out across the 2 semesters.</b></p>

<sup>16</sup> See the section on transitional arrangements.

<sup>17</sup> This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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**

<p>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.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities<sup>20</sup>.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i><sup>21</sup> 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.</p> <p>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).</p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	<p>The provider detailed its current learner support provision, which ensures that its learners are well informed, guided, and cared for. The provider offers a breadth of supports - both academic and non-academic. This includes areas like library supports, career guidance, social activities and assessment supports. The panel was satisfied with the level of learner support currently offered by the provider.</p> <p>On this programme, it was noted that the prior knowledge of students varied considerably – with some students having extensive IT experience and others having little prior knowledge.</p> <p>DBS has targeted workshops and a learning analytics initiative, which looks at learner interaction data between students and the College to facilitate early interventions with students who may be struggling, and to ensure targeted supports are provided.</p> <p>The provider detailed its 'graduate work readiness programme', which is an optional, additional initiative that students can avail of. This is available to all students. The panel noted the opportunity for this to be</p>

<sup>20</sup> For more information on making reasonable accommodations see [www.AHEAD.ie](http://www.AHEAD.ie) and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

<sup>21</sup> See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

		<p>an optional, credit-bearing component of programmes offered by the provider.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p><b>The panel recommends that DBS explores the opportunity for their graduate work readiness programme to be an optional, credit-bearing component of programmes offered by the provider.</b></p>
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**Criterion 12. The programme is well managed**

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance<sup>22</sup> is intrinsic to the programme’s maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>		
	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Principal Programme</b>	Yes	The panel asked DBS to detail its programme management structure and how it relates to this programme. DBS detailed its overarching QA structure and how this allows for strong management of its programmes (this is detailed in the programme document). DBS also explained that each programme has an Academic Director, an Assistant Academic Director, and a dedicated programme coordinator, who can provide assistance with many ‘day-to-day’ queries of students. The panel were satisfied with the programme management arrangements in place and that these allow for quality management of this programme.

<sup>22</sup> 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 ( <b>minor</b> ) 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

DBS presented a thorough rationale for the revalidation of this programme. The documentation is thorough, comprehensive and detailed. During the provider meetings, DBS presented as highly functional, organised and committed to providing a quality programme. Its QA structure was comprehensive and demonstrates an ability to successfully operate this programme. The panel had no conditions of validation as it was happy that the programme as presented fulfilled the validation criteria.

### Commendations

1. Demonstrated impact, relevance and applied nature of the programme.
2. Dynamic and passionate team delivering and supporting the programme
3. Strong pedagogical and assessment design underpinning the programme.

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

1. none

### Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

none

### Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. The panel recommends that the provider formalises the progression options available from this programme. This could take the form of formal progression options internally, with clear pathways detailed for programme graduates.
2. The panel recommends that the provider considers incorporating alumni into its guest lecturer roster.

3. The panel recommends that the provider review the assessment schedule with a view of spreading the assessment workload out across the 2 semesters.
4. The panel recommends that DBS explores the opportunity for their graduate work readiness programme to be an optional, credit-bearing component of programmes offered by the provider.

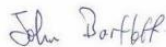
## Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: John Bartlett

Date: 16/05/2024

Signed:



### 3.2 Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While QQI has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk, and in no event will QQI be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from, or in connection with, the use of the information contained in the Report of the External Evaluation Panel.

**Part 4. Proposed programme schedules**

4.1 1B.2 Proposed Programme Schedule Full-Time																
<b>Name of Provider:</b>		Dublin Business School														
<b>Programme Title (Principal)</b>		Certificate in Business and Digital Skills				<b>QQI Award Title</b>		Certificate in Business and Digital Skills				<b>ECTS</b>		30		
<b>Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)</b>		Award	<b>Exit Award Title (if relevant)</b>			NA						<b>Stage ECTS</b>		30		
<b>Programme Delivery Mode - ✓one as appropriate.</b>		<b>Onsite Face to Face</b>			<b>Blended</b>				<b>Online</b>			<b>Workplace Learning</b>				
					✓											
<b>Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓one or more as appropriate.</b>		<b>In-person face-to-face</b>			<b>Synchronous Hybrid</b>		<b>Synchronous Online</b>		<b>Asynchronous</b>				<b>Work Based</b>			
		✓					✓									
<b>Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓one or more as appropriate.</b>		<b>Continuous Assessment</b>		<b>Proctored Exam – in person</b>		<b>Proctored Exam – online</b>			<b>Project</b>		<b>Practical Skills Demonstration</b>		<b>Work based</b>			
		✓														
<b>Modules in this stage (add rows as required)</b>																
<b>Total Student Effort Module (hours)</b>										<b>Assessment – Allocation of Marks</b>						
<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Semester</b>	<b>Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)</b>	<b>Credits (ECTS)</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>In-Person</b>	<b>Synchronous - Online*</b>	<b>Asynchronous</b>	<b>Self-Directed Learning</b>	<b>Work Based</b>	<b>Continuous Assessment %</b>	<b>Proctored Exam – in person %</b>	<b>Proctored Exam – online %</b>	<b>Project %</b>	<b>Practical Skills Demonstration %</b>	<b>Work Based %</b>	
Organisational Behaviour	1+2	M	10	250	18	18	0	214	0	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Contemporary Marketing Communications	1+2	M	10	250	18	18	0	214	0	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Digital Skills and Literacy for Business	1+2	M	10	250	18	18	0	214	0	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

\*The hours for synchronous delivery should be read as “up to” with the proviso that full contact hours will be delivered. Any hours not covered by synchronous sessions will be covered by in person face-to-face contact hours.

4.2 1B.3 Proposed Programme Schedule Part-Time																
<b>Name of Provider:</b>		Dublin Business School														
<b>Programme Title (Principal)</b>		Certificate in Business and Digital Skills				<b>QQI Award Title</b>		Certificate in Business and Digital Skills				<b>ECTS</b>		30		
<b>Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)</b>		Award	<b>Exit Award Title (if relevant)</b>			NA						<b>Stage ECTS</b>		30		
<b>Programme Delivery Mode - ✓one as appropriate.</b>		<b>Face to Face</b>			<b>Blended</b>			<b>Hybrid</b>			<b>Online</b>		<b>Workplace Learning</b>			
								✓								
<b>Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓one or more as appropriate.</b>		<b>In-person face-to-face</b>			<b>Synchronous Hybrid</b>			<b>Synchronous Online</b>			<b>Asynchronous</b>				<b>Work Based</b>	
		✓						✓								
<b>Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓one or more as appropriate.</b>		<b>Continuous Assessment</b>			<b>Proctored Exam – in person</b>			<b>Proctored Exam – online</b>			<b>Project</b>		<b>Practical Skills Demonstration</b>		<b>Work based</b>	
		✓														
<b>Modules in this stage (add rows as required)</b>																
<b>Total Student Effort Module (hours)</b>										<b>Assessment – Allocation of Marks</b>						
Module Title	Semester	Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)	Credits (ECTS)	Total Hours	In-Person	Synchronous - Online*	Asynchronous	Self-Directed Learning	Work Based	Continuous Assessment %	-in person %	Proctored Exam %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project %	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %
Organisational Behaviour	1+2	M	10	250	18	18	0	214	0	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Contemporary Marketing Communications	1+2	M	10	250	18	18	0	214	0	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Digital Skills and Literacy for Business	1+2	M	10	250	18	18	0	214	0	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

\*The hours for synchronous delivery should be read as “up to” with the proviso that full contact hours will be delivered. Any hours not covered by synchronous sessions will be covered by in person face-to-face contact hours.