Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

Provider	Dublin Business School
Programme(s) Reviewed	Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production

Independent Panel Members

Name	Role	Affiliation
John Bartlett	Chair	Head of Research, ATU Sligo
Prof. Paul Moore	Subject Matter Expert	Ulster University
Dr Claire Fitch	Subject Matter Expert	Dundalk I.T.
Kieran Lynch	Subject Matter Expert	IADT
Ronan Murphy	Industry Representative	Freelance Event Professional
Trudi Barnett	Report Writer	Independent Consultant
Dhanushi Rodrigo	Learner Representative	PhD Researcher, School of Business, ATU - Galway

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

Part 1.   Introduction

The Dublin Business School are retiring the Level 6 Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production. Initially validated in September 2018, in collaboration with Sound Training College, notice was submitted to QQI in November 2022.

A part-time programme across 2 calendar years, offering students 30 ECTS per year, the programme has been challenged with low recruitment/enrolment and as a result, was facilitated independently via the Moodle VLE. The provider will now retire the certificate as it is no longer suited to the market and progress the Higher Certificate Programme for revalidation. In April 2023 the Dublin Business School's Academic Board was formally notified of the intent to close the programme.

This report presents an overview of the programme review findings.

Part 2.   Evaluation Process

2.1   Documents Supplied to the Panel

	Document Type	Document Name
1.	Programme Review Report	Programme Review Report – Higher Certificate in Sound Engineering and Music Production_2024
2.	Programme Review Report	Retired Programme Review Reoprt_CertSoundEngin_PG23891_2024
3.	Programme Document	HCert Sound Engineering & Music Production_2024
4.	Module & Assessment Document	HCert Sound Engineering & Music Production_2024
5.	Appendix 5	Programme Team CVs
6.	Appendix 7	Teaching and Learning Strategy HCert Sound Engineering & Music Production_2024
7.	Appendix 8	Programme Handbook HCert Sound Engineering & Music Production_2024
8.	Terms of Reference	BAH Audio Prod HCert Sound Engineering Terms of Reference
9.	Agenda	Programme Review BAHonsAudioProdHCert Sound Engineering

2.2   Provider's Representatives Met

	Person	Role / Job Title
1.	Tim Bicknell	President
2.	Lori Johnston	Academic Dean
3.	Michael Kielty	Head of Department
4.	David Christophers	Principal, Sound Training College
5.	Thom McDonnell	Programme Leader
6.	Shane Mooney	Head of Student Experience
7.	Darragh Breathnach	Registrar & Director of Campus Operations
8.	Emma Balfe	Head of Teaching Delivery & Content Production
9.	Grant Goodwin	Assistant Registrar
10.	Amy Hayes	Programmes Manager (DBS note-taker)
11.	Janine Jackson	Faculty Manager

12	Sarah Sharkey	Student Engagement Officer
13	Trevor Haugh	Head of Academic Information & Resource Centre/Library
14	Francisca Knight	Head of Academic Operations
15	Tanya Balfe	Admissions Manager
16	Damien Lennon	Lecturer
17	Peter Jones	Lecturer
18	Peter Meighan	Lecturer
19	Sarah Cleary	Lecturer
20	Vasileois Gourgourinis	Lecturer
21	Melinda Huian	Lecturer
22	Others	Students/Graduates

2.3 Description of evaluation process

The panel conducted a thorough review of the range of documents, including the Programme Review Report and additional supporting programme documents, ahead of the panel meeting. Supplementary background documents provided by Dublin Business School also included the Programme Report of the retired Level 6 Certificate (June 2023). Prior to the visit, panel members submitted their initial evaluations to the Chair, who compiled and utilized them to guide discussions with Dublin Business School representatives.

On 19th April 2024, a virtual site visit was conducted via Zoom. During this session, the panel convened with Dublin Business School representatives, comprising the senior management team, the programme team, professional services staff, as well as current students and graduates of the programme.

During the visit, discussions were held regarding the review process and the evaluation of the programme against the 12 criteria outlined by QQI. The findings, commendations, and recommendations from the review process are summarized in this document. No conditions were given.

Following the visit, a draft programme review report and draft independent evaluation report (were prepared and shared with panel members for review. The final reports, reflecting agreed-upon findings, were subsequently sent to Dublin Business School for factual verification and consideration of the panel's recommendations.

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 panel evaluation of the programme review Terms of Reference reflects a comprehensive assessment of the framework guiding the review process. Through meticulous examination, the panel can confirm that Dublin Business School programme Terms of Reference ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with established quality assurance standards and regulatory requirements. Additionally, the Terms of Reference articulates the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the review process, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, the panel evaluates the adequacy of the Terms of Reference in addressing the unique characteristics and challenges of the programme under review. This involves considering factors such as the programme's level, discipline, and delivery mode, as well as any specific contextual factors that may impact the review process.

Another crucial aspect of the evaluation is assessing the inclusivity of the Terms of Reference, ensuring that the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders, including students, faculty, and industry partners, are considered. This involves reviewing the mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and feedback throughout the review process, as well as the procedures for addressing any concerns raised.

Moreover, the panel evaluates the feasibility and practicality of the Terms of Reference in terms of timelines, resource allocation, and logistical considerations. This involves assessing whether the proposed review process is realistic and achievable within the specified timeframe and resource constraints.

Overall, the panel is satisfied that the programme review and it's Terms of Reference ensured the effectiveness, integrity, and credibility of the review process.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

Section B.   Provider Information and Programme Context

Commentary:

Dublin Business School (DBS) is a private third level educational institution in Ireland, offering a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional programmes across various disciplines. Established in 1975, it has grown to become one of Ireland's largest independent third-level institutions, with an increasing range of programmes and subject specialisms. Currently, programmes span the disciplines of Arts, Business, Humanities, ICT, Law, Film and Media, Management, Marketing, and the Social Sciences.

The institution prides itself on its strong industry links, providing students with valuable opportunities for internships, work placements, and networking with leading professionals in their respective fields. With over 8,000 active students every year, over half of which are part-time evening students and the remainder full-time, day students, approximately three quarters are enrolled on QQI validated programmes. The remainder receive awards from DBS directly or other professional bodies such as the Institute of Commercial Management or ACCA. Over one third of DBS students are international, coming from over 100 different countries. Most of the international students to DBS come from other EU countries while significant numbers also come from India, China, Malaysia, United States and Brazil.

As an independent higher education college, DBS is a member of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA). Along with other peer institutions in the sector, DBS believes it is well positioned to contribute to meeting the current and future needs in the Irish market for higher education programmes.

First validated in August 2018, with a first intake in September 2018, the evaluation of the *Higher Certificate in Sound Engineering and Music Production* (NFQ Level 6, 120 ECTS) is aligned and cross-listed with the *BA (Honours) Audio Production & Music Project Management* (NFQ Level 8).

In submitting the Higher Certificate in Sound Engineering and Music Production, DBS fully considers the potential market for the programme, the size of previous intakes, where applicable, and its specific content, the competitive landscape, its own capacity to deliver such a programme and the fit of this programme with its own strategic intent. The programme being presented will continue to enhance the provider's portfolio of programmes, enabling them to contribute to the increasing demand for higher education along with addressing skills gaps in the sound engineering and music production fields.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

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 analysis of baseline qualitative and quantitative information has served as a detailed foundational framework for assessing the programme's effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.

Qualitative data, such as stakeholder feedback and observations, offer valuable insights into the programme's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of opportunity. This qualitative information provides context and nuance, helping to understand the experiences and perspectives of students, faculty, and other stakeholders. As a direct result, a number of areas have been revised including the Learning to Learn module (Year 1 - employability pillar) which has been refreshed to reflect a stronger contextualised practical approach to learning and has been replaced with Music Writing.

Quantitative data, including student performance metrics, enrolment numbers, and retention rates, offer objective measures of the programme's outcomes and impact. These quantitative measures provide concrete evidence of the programme's effectiveness in achieving its objectives and can help identify trends and patterns over time; recruitment (including gender), enrolment and attrition rates.

The analysis of student enrolment data reveals an imbalanced representation across genders within the programme. During discussions with the provider, attention was drawn to this (including the BA Hons in Audio Production and Music Project Management), with a split of 85% male to 15% female enrolment. The provider expressed awareness of this disparity and discussed ongoing efforts to address it, including targeted recruitment strategies and initiatives to create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment for female students. Additionally, plans were discussed to further analyse the underlying factors contributing to the gender gap and to implement measures aimed at promoting greater gender diversity within and across the programmes.

Collectively, the combination of qualitative and quantitative information gathered informs evidence-based decision-making for programme enhancement and development. By leveraging both types of data, the provider can ensure that the programme is responsive to the needs of students and stakeholders while also aligning with industry standards and best practices.

Recommendations:

The panel has made a recommendation within the programme revalidation report to reflect findings and discussions.

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:

The programme review of teaching and learning strategies in the Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production programme delivery at Dublin Business School provides a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and impact of instructional methods and approaches used.

The programme review findings, further supported by the discussions with the provider provided valuable insights into the programme's strengths and areas for enhancement in terms of physical infrastructure, resources, student workload management, and teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

Section D.   Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

Commentary:

The panel is satisfied with the programme report findings, indicating that the programme has effectively met the needs and expectations of key stakeholders. Learners provided positive feedback, expressing satisfaction with the programme's relevance to real-world applications, the quality of teaching and learning resources, and the supportive learning environment. Additionally, graduates reported positive outcomes, citing the programme's role in equipping them with necessary foundational knowledge, skills, and competencies to further progress their learning and career, along with the value of practical experiences in enhancing employability. A small number of actions and recommendations have since been implemented successfully.

In conclusion, the panel affirms that the providers have successfully evaluated the programme based on stakeholder feedback, particularly from learners and graduates, reinforcing its quality and effectiveness in achieving its objectives and preparing learners for the future.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

Evaluation of the programme by Staff

Commentary:

The programme evaluation revealed a positive assessment of its success from the perspective of staff members. Staff, including teaching staff, expressed confidence in the programme's alignment with educational standards and objectives. They emphasized the curriculum's effectiveness in catering to diverse learner needs and fostering their academic and personal growth. In summary, the panel concluded that the providers have effectively evaluated the programme, as indicated by the high level of satisfaction and confidence expressed by staff members in its effectiveness.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

External Examiner Feedback

Commentary:

The professional and experienced feedback provided by External Examiners on the Higher Certificate programme offered valuable insights into the programme's strengths, with only minor areas for improvement advised. With their wider expertise and perspectives, the External Examiners brough a fresh and objective viewpoint to the programme review process. Their feedback has served as a crucial quality assurance mechanism, helping to ensure that the programme meets established standards and best practices. The provider has leveraged the feedback provided by the External Examiners, making informed decisions to enhance the overall quality, ultimately benefiting both students and stakeholders.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

Section E.   Programme Quality Assurance

Complaints, appeals and commendations

Commentary:

The panel is satisfied that there are appropriately devised policies and procedures in place to address complains, appeals and commendations.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

Commentary:

The panel recognizes the strength of the provider's quality assurance mechanisms, which encompass a wide range of policies, procedures, and practices designed to uphold the delivery of high-quality education. These mechanisms are well-aligned with established standards and best practices, instilling confidence in the overall review and quality of the programme.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

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

Commentary:

The panel acknowledges the provider's dedication to fostering an inclusive, accessible, and authentic teaching, learning, and assessment environment. Through a variety of strategies and supports, the provider endeavours to address diverse learner needs, promote fair access to resources, and ensure that assessment tasks reflect real-world contexts, thereby enhancing the authenticity and relevance of the learning experience.

Recommendations:

The panel has made a recommendation within the programme revalidation report to reflect findings and discussions.

Section F.   Summary Analysis of the programme

Commentary:

In preparation for the validation of the next iteration of the Level 6 Higher Certificate in Sound Engineering and Music Production, the provider has shown commendable dedication to ensuring the quality and relevance of their programme through a rigorous review process. This analysis encompassed a comprehensive assessment of various programme aspects, including curriculum content, teaching and assessment methods, and support structures.

A crucial component of this review process involved evaluating stakeholder feedback, including input from learners, staff, and external examiners. This feedback has offered valuable insights into both the strengths and weaknesses of the current programme, guiding decision-making for enhancements and improvements, in preparation for revalidation.

Collectively, this proactive approach has contributed significantly to the programme's ongoing relevance and effectiveness in preparation for revalidation and, for preparing students for the dynamic field of sound engineering and music production.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations.

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:

The panel responds positively to the provider's programme review and proposal of changes made to the Level 6 Higher Certificate in Sound Engineering and Music Production. The provider demonstrates a commendable commitment to ensuring the quality and relevance of the programme.

The proposed changes arising from the review process have been incorporated into the programme validation application and well-received by the panel, as they addressed identified areas for improvement and enhancement. These changes aim to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme, ensuring that it remains relevant and responsive to the needs of students and the industry.

In summary, the panel commends the provider for their proactive approach to the programme review and their commitment to continuous improvement. The proposed changes are seen as positive steps towards maintaining relevance in preparing students for success in the field of sound engineering and music production.

Recommendations:

Based on the thorough review and revisions made to the programme, the panel recommend the validation approval for the provider's revised programme. The revisions ensure that the programme remains relevant, effective, and of high quality, positioning it for validation approval with confidence.

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 provider's review of the existing programme reflects a dedication to ongoing improvement in education. Through stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and prioritization of continuous enhancement, the provider ensures that their programme remains adaptive to students' needs and the dynamic requirements of the educational and music production fields.

Section B.   Recommendations on review process:

There are no recommendations.

Section C.   Commentary on programme revisions:

The panel is satisfied that the provider has applied the findings of the review process appropriately and is, as a result, well-positioned to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the programme in preparation for its next iteration.

Section D.   Recommendations on programme revisions:

The panel recommends that the revised programme be revalidated, without conditions. In summary the panel has made 5 recommendations for revalidation. The detail of these are contained within the Independent Report for Revalidation.

Signed: _____
             Panel Chairperson:

Date: _17/0/2024_____

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	Friday 19th April 2024
Date of report	Friday 17th May 2024

Section A.   Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production
	Award	Level 6
	Credit	120
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	Satisfactory

Embedded programme 1	Title	N/A
	Award	N/A
	Credit	N/A
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	N/A
Embedded programme 2	Title	N/A
	Award	N/A
	Credit	N/A

	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	N/A

Section B.   Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
John Bartlett	Chair	Head of Research, ATU Sligo
Prof. Paul Moore	Subject Matter Expert	Ulster University
Dr Claire Fitch	Subject Matter Expert	Dundalk I.T.
Kieran Lynch	Subject Matter Expert	IADT
Ronan Murphy	Industry Representative	Freelance Event Professional
Trudi Barnett	Report Writer	Independent Consultant
Dhanushi Rodrigo	Learner Representative	PhD Researcher, School of Business, ATU - Galway

Section C.   Principal Programme

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/Sound Training College (STC)	100	7

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	September 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	2
Maximum total number of learners per intake	50
Programme duration *(months from start to completion)*	2 years: 4 semesters

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

The panel acknowledges the presence of market demand for the proposed programme and finds that the curriculum aligns well with the needs of the audio and music sector. The planned number of intakes seems suitable to meet the anticipated market demand.

Target learner groups

The programme is aimed at school leavers, mature learners and international learners. It is therefore intended for learners from a variety of backgrounds who have a keen interest in music and audio and related technologies, musicians who have experimented in music production and relative novices who may not have attained sufficient evidence of prior-learning who wish to avail of a pathway to an honours degree in the discipline.

It has also been designed for those who are interested in exploring and studying audio engineering, or for those who wish to gain additional skills, knowledge and competencies in audio engineering practices. They may be school leavers or those who are employees working within the music sector who wish to upskill and gain an undergraduate qualification. The programme is aimed at learners with the following entry qualifications:

- Under the new Common Points Scale for Leaving Certificate 2019 applicants must obtain a minimum of 5O6/H7, including a language. Some degree programmes will also require a minimum of O6/H7 in Maths.

- Using the old pre 2017 grading scheme, applicants must have obtained a minimum of Grade D3 in five ordinary level subjects, including a language and Maths.

- Minimum entry requirements for graduates of FETAC/QQI Level 5 awards is a full FETAC/QQI award. A full FETAC/QQI award normally contains 8 modules.

- For EU or Non EU applicants whose first language is not English an additional requirement is to have achieved a minimum CEFRL B2+ or equivalent to qualify for admission to Higher Certificates (Level 6 programmes).

- Mature Learners who do not meet the minimum entry requirements will be assessed on the basis of age, work experience, general education standard, motivation and commitment to the programme for which they are applying. Mature learners are those who are 23 years of age by January 1st of the year of admission.

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

The teaching and learning modalities
1. Classroom/Face to Face – 95% (onsite) approximately 2. Workplace – N/A 3. Online – 5% (synchronous) approximately 4. Other – N/A

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

This *Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production* has been developed with the aim of providing students with the essential knowledge, industry experience, contacts and opportunities required to succeed in the music industry. This two-year programme will lead to a *Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production* award.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
Lecturer Lecturers will be qualified to a minimum of Level 8 Honours Degree in the areas of music, music technology, audio engineering, audio production, business, innovation, project and event management. In modules where industry experience is desirable, holders of Level 8 honours degrees in the above disciplines, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant senior industry or technical experience may also be considered.	3
Administration and Support Staff Such as Library, Admissions, Student Experience, Finance etc. Experience and qualifications relevant to the role.	0.64
Head of Department The Head of Department for this programme will have a minimum of a NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters qualification in addition to programme management/ academic leadership experience.	0.1
Subject Matter Expert The Subject Matter expert for this programme will have a minimum of a NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters qualification in a relevant film or media discipline with relevant and significant industry experience and/or PhD. Holders of level 8 honours degrees in a relevant discipline, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant industry experience will also be considered.	0.1
Programme Manager The Programme Manager for this programme will have a minimum of a NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters qualification in addition to programme management/ academic leadership experience.	0.5

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lecture classroom-based sessions	1:50

Workshops	1:25
Studio	1:25
Practical lab sessions	1:25
Online class (broadcast live)	1:50
Online tutorial (interactive)	1:25
Asynchronous	N/A
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing: Overall, the panel is satisfied with the programme outline and staffing arrangements.	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	**Title**	**Last enrolment date**
PG238900	Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production	August 2024

Section D.   Other noteworthy features of the application

The panel is satisfied that the overall programme concept is sound and has been appropriately researched and presented. The SER for revalidation has been professionally coordinated and executed. The curriculum is extensive with the diversity of subject matter directed towards ensuring learners are provided with necessary opportunities to achieve the relevant knowledge, know-how and competence. The panel is satisfied that the proposed programme meets the requirements of the NFQ at Level 6.

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)

N/A

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	The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme based on the criteria and confirms that QQI can confidently affirm that the programme meets Criterion 1 and its sub-criteria (a-c). The panel is satisfied that Dublin Business School, as the provider, is eligible for revalidation for the specified programme. Based on all documentation provided, it is evident that the criteria have been met, guaranteeing the programme's alignment with statutory and regulatory requirements and deeming them appropriate for the revalidation of the programme in question. The application for validation has been signed by the relevant person, confirming that the information provided is truthful and that the applicable criteria has been addressed.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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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	The panel's evaluation of the programme has resulted in a positive outcome, recognizing that the programme meets Criterion 2, sub-criterion (a-i). The panel is satisfied with the award title, deeming it sufficiently informative for all stakeholders and adhering to QQI's policies and criteria for qualification awards. Dublin Business School has provided comprehensive documentation for programme revalidation, including the mapping of Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs) to Award Standards at NFQ level 6. The specified programme learning outcomes and module learning outcomes are clearly articulated and effectively integrated into the overall curriculum framework.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A

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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.

Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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	The panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm that the programme meets Criterion 3 along with its sub-criteria (a-e). It is observed that the programme development process has been very well coordinated, integrating stakeholder engagement to guide both the process and the programme content itself. The programme team consists of practitioners and educators from the music production industry, offering a wealth of expertise. The panel recognizes that the programme is well-informed and addresses a legitimate educational and industry demand within the

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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.

		music production sector. Additionally, it positions Dublin Business School's award offerings for future relevance and sustainability.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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	After thorough evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the program's compliance with Criterion 4 and its sub-criteria (a-g). The panel conducted a thorough review and discussion of the procedures delineated in the programme descriptor and supplementary documentation, with a specific focus on access, transfer, and progression. This documentation provides comprehensive information on entry and selection procedures, emphasizing the presence of formal strategies for access, transfer, progression and RPL. These strategies facilitate entry into the programme for candidates who lack formal prerequisite qualifications but possess relevant industry experience. Additionally the Higher Certificate programme serves as a seamless pathway for students to transition into the BA Hons Audio Production

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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)

| | | and Music Production Management programme. Through aligned curriculum structures and well-articulated learning outcomes, students can build upon their foundational knowledge and skills acquired in the Higher Certificate, ensuring a smooth transition into the more advanced BA Hons programme. Robust support mechanisms and recognition of prior learning opportunities further facilitate this transition, empowering students to pursue their educational and career aspirations in music production.

However, the panel has identified a gender imbalance in recruitment to similar programmes. Identifying and rectifying gender imbalances in student recruitment to the music programmes is essential for creating a more representative and inclusive industry. By addressing disparities in enrolment, Dublin Business School can contribute to a more diverse talent pool entering the industry. This, in turn, fosters greater creativity, innovation, and equity within the industry, reflecting broader societal values and enhancing its cultural richness.

Therefore, as a proactive measure, the panel makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 1:
The panel suggests that the provider develops a comprehensive policy to address gender balance in programme recruitment. This should involve collaboration with internal stakeholders, external partners, and community organizations to promote gender equality initiatives and share best practices. Such proactive measures will contribute to fostering a diverse and talented graduate workforce. |
|---|---|---|
| **Embedded Programme 1** | N/A | N/A |
| **Embedded Programme 2** | N/A | N/A |

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	After thorough evaluation, the panel confirms the programme's compliance with Criterion 5, sub-criteria (a-j). The panel held discussions with both Dublin Business School and Sound Training College staff regarding the overall scope and depth of the programme, as well as its individual modules. Representatives from the provider, including management, teaching staff, and Quality Assurance personnel involved in programme development and implementation, actively participated in these discussions. The panel explored crucial curriculum-related aspects, including teaching and learning strategies, module content, and learner pathways. While noting the breadth of content covered, the panel identified a potential weakness in the depth of theoretical foundational knowledge content. The integration of theoretical knowledge in any Level 6 (Higher) Certificate programme is vital as it provides students with a solid conceptual framework to understand and contextualize practical skills. This theoretical foundation not only enhances critical thinking and problem-solving abilities but also prepares students for further academic pursuits and professional advancement in their chosen field. Furthermore, the integration of

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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

		theoretical knowledge in the Level 6 Higher Certificate programme is crucial for students progressing to a BA Hons programme as it lays the groundwork for deeper exploration and understanding of advanced concepts. Thus, not only supporting students in comprehending complex subject matter but also enabling them to engage more critically with research, analysis, and creative processes, which are required for the BA Hons programme. Finally, it supports the students to foster a seamless transition by ensuring continuity in learning objectives and facilitating the synthesis of practical skills with theoretical insights, thus enriching the overall academic experience and readiness for higher-level studies. Therefore, as a proactive measure, the panel makes the following recommendation: **Recommendation 2** The panel recommends that the provider embraces a deeper theoretical and philosophical basis to the programme curriculum. By grounding curricula in robust theoretical frameworks and philosophical perspectives, the provider can cultivate a deeper understanding of subject matter and promote holistic education and critical thinking.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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	After careful evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the programme's compliance with Criterion 6 and its sub-criteria (a-f). The qualifications and expertise of the staff are considered suitable for delivering the programme, with the panel recognizing the extensive professional expertise and vocational competence of its teaching staff and the programme team in the music production industry. Therefore, the panel is confident that Dublin Business School has well-qualified and capable staff members to successfully implement the proposed programme.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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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	After thorough evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the programme's compliance with Criterion 7 and its sub-criteria (a-e).
		The programme will take place at both Dublin Business School and Sound Training College premises. The programme team detailed the facilities, including a dedicated and well-equipped audio, music, and recording studio, equipped with a variety of up-to-date equipment and infrastructure.
		Discussions with the provider were held regarding the range of physical and technical resources available. Assurance was provided that mechanisms are in place to handle any additional resource needs resulting from increased enrolments.
		However, the panel considers improved Moodle accessibility may be warranted. Ensuring accessibility and operability with Moodle is essential for providing an inclusive learning environment. By monitoring accessibility standards and optimizing operability features within Moodle, Dublin Business School can effectively accommodate diverse

| | | learners, including those with disabilities, and enhance their overall learning experience.

Therefore, as a proactive measure, the panel makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 3
The panel recommends that the provider implements measures to enhance the accessibility and operability of Moodle, as the learning management system (LMS), to ensure an inclusive and user-friendly experience for all students. Addressing accessibility challenges and optimizing Moodle's functionality will promote equitable access to educational resources and facilitate effective teaching and learning and assessment submission. |
|---|---|---|
| **Embedded Programme 1** | N/A | N/A |
| **Embedded Programme 2** | N/A | N/A |

Criterion 8. **The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners**

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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.

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	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	YES	After careful evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the program's compliance with Criterion 8 and its sub-criteria (a-c) The proposed programme embraces a classroom and laboratory-based approach, promoting ongoing engagement among students, faculty, and peers within an immersive educational setting. Comprehensive learner support systems, including counselling and pastoral care, are integral to the programme. Additionally, a variety of robust student support and feedback mechanisms are in place to empower learners, including mature students, to communicate any concerns to faculty and staff as necessary. The panel is confident in the accessibility of staff members to provide assistance to learners whenever needed. However, the panel considers an increased sense of student belonging would be beneficial. Therefore, as a proactive measure, the panel makes the following recommendation: **Recommendation 4** The panel recommends that the provider adopts proactive measures to inform and enhance the sense of identity and belonging among students participating on the programme, particularly where a second provider is involved. Facilitating transparent communication will strengthen the student connection with Dublin Business School directly, and contribute to a positive learning experience, fostering a supportive academic community and cohesion across student bodies, particularly student union memberships.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A

Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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	After thorough evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the programme's compliance with Criterion 9 and its sub-criteria (a-e). The module content has been appropriately designed to encompass practical and up-to-date learning opportunities. Dublin Business School outlined various teaching approaches tailored to deliver the curriculum content both during discussions and in the application document. These strategies are communicated to learners during the programme's induction stage, ensuring transparency and alignment of expectations. Continuous formative feedback is embedded throughout the programme to support learner advancement. By leveraging the high-quality learning environment, the programme's teaching and learning strategies aim to optimize the overall learning experience. Dublin Business School staff members facilitate both structured and autonomous learning processes. The panel observed comprehensive examples of teaching and learning strategies, noting also, creative methods for tracking student progress
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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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	After thorough evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the programme's compliance with Criterion 10 and its sub-criteria (a-h).
		The panel is satisfied with the provider's strong assessment practices, supported by Dublin Business School's quality assurance framework, and compliance with QQI policies. Students are well-informed about assessment procedures, with measures in place to uphold the integrity and security of the assessment process.
		The panel discussion with Dublin Business School staff regarding the use and promotion of A.I. highlighted an opportunity to strengthen their ability to leverage A.I. powered tools as an educational resource.
		Therefore, as a proactive measure, the panel makes the following recommendation:
		Recommendation 5 The panel recommends that the provider updates the (programme) plagiarism policy to ensure integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to strengthen academic integrity and streamline plagiarism detection processes. By leveraging AI technology the provider can proactively

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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).

		address plagiarism while promoting a culture of originality and scholarship based on Academic Integrity among students.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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	Upon evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the programme's compliance with Criterion 11 and its sub-criteria (a-j). Learners receive ample and clear information from the outset of the programme through induction and beyond. The programme documentation is presented in a straightforward manner, ensuring accessibility and comprehension. Clear procedures for Reasonable Accommodation are outlined and documented, indicating appropriate support for learners facing learning challenges. These coherent procedures reflect the provider's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. The provider has established policies and procedures to ensure comprehensive support, guidance, and care for enrolled learners. Discussions with provider staff further affirmed the strength of the programme documentation, underscoring Dublin Business School's commitment to learner support. Overall, the attention to support

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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)

		mechanisms for all learners was particularly insightful and valued by the panel.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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	After thorough evaluation, the panel recommends that QQI can confidently affirm the programme's compliance with Criterion 12 and its sub-criteria (a-h). The programme is within the provider's scope of provision, adhering to their quality assurance (QA) and governance procedures. The providers QA and governance mechanisms effectively aid in programme development and implementation, supported by documented management roles, responsibilities, and structures. Productive discussions between the panel and the provider further validated these findings. Moreover, the Dublin Business School and Sound Training College Campus offer purpose-built physical infrastructure suitable for the programme's needs. The programme's teaching staff possess the requisite industry expertise, ensuring the delivery of high-quality education.
Embedded Programme 1	N/A	N/A
Embedded Programme 2	N/A	N/A

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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

1. The providers programme aligns closely with established educational standards and guidelines. The curriculum demonstrates a clear focus on learning outcomes, academic rigor, and relevance to industry needs.

2. The programme exhibits a well-structured design that integrates effective practices in pedagogy and assessment. The delivery methods are varied and engaging, catering to diverse learning styles and preferences.

3. The provider actively engages with stakeholders, including employers and industry professionals, to ensure programme relevance and currency.

Commendations

1. The panel commends Dublin Business School on the level of planning and preparation that has been coherently applied to the presentation of all programme validation application documentation.

2. The panel commends Dublin Business School on their professionalism and collegiality during the meeting. Active participation from all attendees was encouraged, ensuring that diverse perspectives were heard and valued.

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

N/A

Embedded programme 1:

Select one	
N/A	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
N/A

Commendations
N/A

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

Embedded programme 2:

Select one	
N/A	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

N/A

Commendations

N/A

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

N/A

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

N/A

Summary of recommendations to the provider

Recommendation 1:
The panel suggests that the provider develops a comprehensive policy to address gender balance in programme recruitment. This should involve collaboration with internal stakeholders, external partners, and community organizations to promote gender equality initiatives and share best practices. Such proactive measures will contribute to fostering a diverse and talented graduate workforce.

Recommendation 2

The panel recommends that the provider embraces a deeper theoretical and philosophical basis to the programme curriculum. By grounding curricula in robust theoretical frameworks and philosophical perspectives, the provider can cultivate a deeper understanding of subject matter and promote holistic education and critical thinking.

Recommendation 3
The panel recommends that the provider implements measures to enhance the accessibility and operability of Moodle, as the learning management system (LMS), to ensure an inclusive and user-friendly experience for all students. Addressing accessibility challenges and optimizing Moodle's functionality will promote equitable access to educational resources and facilitate effective teaching and learning and assessment submission.

Recommendation 4
The panel recommends that the provider adopts proactive measures to inform and enhance the sense of identity and belonging among students participating on the programme, particularly where a second provider is involved. Facilitating transparent communication will strengthen the student connection with Dublin Business School directly, and contribute to a positive learning experience, fostering a supportive academic community and cohesion across student bodies, particularly student union memberships.

Recommendation 5
The panel recommends that the provider updates the (programme) plagiarism policy to ensure integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to strengthen academic integrity and streamline plagiarism detection processes. By leveraging AI technology the provider can proactively address plagiarism while promoting a culture of originality and scholarship based on Academic Integrity among students.

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: 17/05/2024

Signed: *John Bartlett*

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

Name of Provider:	STC & DBS
Programme Title	**Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production**
Award Title	Higher Certificate in Arts
Stage Exit Award Title	1
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):	F/T
Teaching and learning modalities	As per module descriptors

Award Class	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, …, or Award Stage):	Stage NFQ Level	Stage EQF Level	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	6	5	1	6	5	60	September 2024	0215

Module Title (Up to 70 characters including spaces)	Semester no where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester2)	Status	NFQ Level where specified	Credit Units / HET Credits	Total Hours	Class (or equiv) Contact Hours	Directed e-learning	Hours of Independent	Work-based learning effort	C.A. %	Supervised Project %	Proctored practical demonstration	Proctored written exam %
Analysing Audio	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Pre-production and Studio Engineering	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Instrument Set up	1	M	N/A	5	125	54	21	50		100			
Intro to Sound	1	M	N/A	5	125	36	29	60		100			
Developing DAW Skills	2	M	N/A	5	125	36	29	60		100			
Composing in the DAW	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Business for Music Professionals	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Music Writings	1	M	N/A	5	125	36	29	60		100			

Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)

N/A

Name of Provider:	STC & DBS
Programme Title	**Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production**
Award Title	Higher Certificate in Arts
Stage Exit Award Title	Award
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):	F/T
Teaching and learning modalities	As per module descriptors

Award Class	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, …, or Award Stage):	Stage NFQ Level	Stage EQF Level	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	6	5	AWARD	6	5	60	September 2024	0215

Module Title (Up to 70 characters including spaces)	Semester no where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester2)	Module Status	NFQ Level where specified	Credit Number Credit Units / HET Credits	Total Hours	Class (or equiv) Contact Hours	Directed e-learning	Hours of Independent Learning	Work-based learning effort	C.A. %	Supervised Project %	Proctored practical demonstration %	Proctored written exam %
Studio Production	2	M	N/A	5	125	36	29	60		100			
Studio Recording	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Acoustics and Psychoacoustics for Production	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Critical Listening and DAW Skills	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Electronic Music Composition	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			
Research Project	1	M	N/A	5	125	36	29	60		100			
Marketing Essentials and Business Planning	1+2	M	N/A	10	250	72	58	120		100			

Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)

N/A