

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Dublin Business School
Date of site visit	26 March, 2021 (facilitated by Zoom because of the Covid pandemic)
Date of report	15 April, 2021

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Higher Certificate in Arts
	Award	NFQ Level 6
	Credit	120 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Embedded programme 1	Title	Certificate in Arts
	Award	NFQ Level 6
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Karen Jones	Chair	National University of Ireland
Dr Dinusha Weerawardane	Subject Matter Expert	University of West London
Dr Eric Derr	Subject Matter Expert	Carlow College, St Patrick's
Dr Richard Roche	Subject Matter Expert	Maynooth University
Dr Deirdre Nuttall	Report Writer	n/a
Kai Duong	Learner Representative	First year Learner, Trinity College Dublin

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	250 per intake	7 per intake
Proposed Enrolment		
Date of first intake	September 2021	
Maximum number of annual intakes	2	
Maximum total number of learners per intake	125	
Programme duration (<i>months from start to completion</i>)	Full-time: 2 years (4 semesters of 12 weeks each) Part-time: 3 years (6 semesters of 12 weeks each)	
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:		
<p>While the rationale for the Higher Certificate in Arts and the proposed significant increase in maximum learner numbers was insufficiently presented within the programme documentation, it was articulated to the satisfaction of the panel within the panel meetings by representatives of Dublin Business School. It is recommended that Dublin Business school revise the programme validation document to make the rationale for the programme in terms of demand more explicit.</p> <p>Furthermore, as evidence of the programme over the past five years demonstrates no learners successfully progress to complete Year Two of the programme, consideration is recommended to offering the 60 credit certificate not only as an exit award but rather an embedded award. Allowing learners to enrol onto the one year programme and potentially progressing onto year two if needed. This would allow maximum flexibility to learners who would benefit from engagement with this programme.</p>		
Target learner groups		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving Certificate applicants who have achieved 5 O6/H7s, to include English or another language or a full Level 5 FETAC Award or equivalent. 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 and part-time	
The teaching and learning modalities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom lectures. Case-based learning. Practical skills sessions. Workshops. Tutorials. Individual and group work. Blended delivery and resources (as required). 		
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)		

The Higher Certificate in Arts (Level 6, 120 ECTS) is a multi-purpose award designed to meet the needs of a variety of learners. It offers an inspiring and challenging educational experience, developing a broad range of knowledge and theoretical understanding across a spectrum of academic disciplines, whilst also proving personal and academic skills development and a structured pathway to further educational opportunities. It provides an alternative learning route into and through existing offerings with additional support structures and provides an opportunity for learners to experience an extended and closely supported transition into third-level education with significant subject specialisation at Level 6.

In Stage One academic modules comprise of: Contemporary Humanities; Contemporary Social Sciences; Economic and the World of Business; Film and Creative Media. As well as learning provided in modules on Academic Skills (10 ECTS) and Digital Skills 2 (5 ECTS). The third strand in Stage One is the Career Discovery module which provides learners with the beginnings of a platform for educational and career related investigation, job analysis, CV building, interview practice and work experience identification.

In Stage Two there are two strands: academic underpinning in the module Critical Thinking Skills (10 ECTS) and elective academic pathways (50 ECTS). Specialist pathways include:

- General Arts.
- Psychology.
- Social Science.
- Film and Creative Media.
- Business.
- Marketing.
- Accounting and Finance.
- Law.

The Higher Certificate in Arts aims to produce graduates who are knowledgeable and academically well-rounded, possessed of a wide range of transferrable skills, and well-qualified and prepared to successfully progress to a range of further academic or work-related challenges.

There is an embedded exit award, a Certificate in Arts (Level 6, 60 ECTS), available to learners who do not wish to complete the full award. This has not previously been offered separately, but the panel is recommending Dublin Business School consider this as a stand-alone award also in response to strong evidence of learner demand to date.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 8 Honours Bachelor’s degree in Business or Level 8 Honours Bachelor’s degree in any of the following subjects or equivalent qualification in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economics. ● Humanities. ● Social Science. ● Psychology. ● English Literature/Comparative Literature. ● History. ● Philosophy. ● Media Studies. ● Film and Creative Media. ● Business. ● Marketing. ● Accounting and Finance. 	

● Law.	
Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lecture classroom-based sessions	1:50
Workshops	1:25
Practical lab sessions	1:35
Online class (live)	1:50
Online tutorial (interactive)	1:25
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:	
The panel is satisfied with the outline for the programme and staffing ratios.	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG22789	Higher Certificate in Arts	1 September 2020
PG22790	Certificate in Arts	

Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

The panel's main recommendation to Dublin Business School is to review the embedded programme and consider amending the documentation for the Certificate to be validated as a stand-alone programme, and not just as an exit programme.

This recommendation is based on the fact that, since 2015, no learners on the Higher Certificate in Arts have progressed to Stage Two of the programme. Qualitative and quantitative evidence, in addition to feedback from current learners support the case for the Certificate being validated as an embedded award, allowing students to enrol on a one year and two year programme providing maximum flexibility to learners.

For clarity, the panel recommends the revalidation of the certificate as a stand-alone award or an exit award. This should be decided by Dublin Business School within the response to the panel report.

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

Criterion 1. The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programmes

<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.¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	Dublin Business School meets all the criteria listed above as evidenced in the materials presented and reviewed by the Panel
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

¹This 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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly. b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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 <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>. 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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. <p>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</p>

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	While the Panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets most of the criteria listed above, it was noted that some module descriptors, particular for Stage Two of the programme, needed to explicitly confirm which MIPLOs the MIMLOs contributed towards. It is recommended the programme descriptor be updated to reflect this.
Embedded Programme 1	Partially	As a special condition, Dublin Business School is required to prepare and present distinct MIPLOs for the 60 Credit Certificate, as opposed to the 120 Credit Higher Certificate. The MIPLOs for the 60 Credit Certificate should show a clear difference between the two programmes.

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

³ Not all modules will warrant minor awards. Minor awards feature strongly in the QQI common awards system however further education and training awards may be made outside this system.

Criterion 3. The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

- a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁴
- b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
 - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
 - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
 - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory, or statutory bodies).
 - (iv) There is evidence⁵ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁶.
 - (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	Partially	The documentation considered by the panel did not present a strong argument for the revalidation of the Higher Certificate in Arts as there was little evidence of demand and insufficient evidence that the programme meets a genuine education and training need. While the rationale for the revalidation of the programme, linked to the removal of competitor programmes within Dublin Business Schools, was clearly articulated within panel meetings it is recommended that the programme descriptor be amended to reflect this.
Embedded Programme 1	Partially	There was clear evidence that the Certificate was a valued exit award from the Principal Programme. As an exit award, the documentation did not expand upon the value of the Certificate to learners nor its MIPLOs as outlined in Criterion 2 above. It is recommended that the programme descriptor be amended to reflect the value and demand of the Certificate from the experiences articulated by learners.

⁴ Awards standards, however detailed, rely on various communities for their interpretation. This consultation is necessary if the programme is to enable learners to achieve the standard in its fullest sense.

⁵ This might be predictive or indirect.

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

⁷ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

Criterion 4. **The programme’s access, transfer, and progression arrangements are satisfactory**

<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 satisfied⁸.</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 (CEFR⁹) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the 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). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel were satisfied from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets all of the criteria listed above.
Embedded Programme 1	Partially	<p>The documentation as presented does not provide details on progression and transfer opportunities for learners that chose to exit with the 60 Credit Certificate despite this being the main route selected by learners to date. It is recommended that this be amended in the final documentation so learners are clear as to their options for progression within or beyond Dublin Business School upon completion of the 60 Credit Certificate.</p> <p>Furthermore, the panel feels that, while the programme is fit for purpose in its current incarnation as an exit award, it should also be considered for validation as a stand-alone programme in its own right. The panel would support the adjustment of the validation document to reflect this if Dublin Business School chose to offer the Certificate as a stand-alone programme that learners could enrol upon. The documentation should be amended to confirm that learners could progress onto Stage Two of the Higher</p>

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)

		Certificate or directly into Stage One of one of the listed BA Arts programmes if they met the entry criteria – as appropriate.
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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 principles¹⁰.</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 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</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets most the criteria listed above. As mentioned previously there are some Stage Two modules whose MIMLOs are not explicitly mapped against the MIPLOs of the programme. It is a special condition that this be completed.</p> <p>Furthermore, as the Stage Two General Arts pathway is the only pathway that does not result in progression to Stage Two of an existing BA Programme, this should be made more explicit in the documentation as a key point of difference for learners.</p>
Embedded Programme 1	Partially	<p>While the panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Certificate in Arts meets most of the criteria listed above, the documentation needs to be revised to explicitly present the MIPLOs of the Certificate whether this remains an exit award or is presented as a stand-alone programme.</p>

¹⁰ This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.

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

Criterion 6. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

<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 staff¹² (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 development¹³ opportunities¹⁴.</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>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets all of the criteria listed above.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

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

<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"> (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 <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"> (i) Planned intake (first five years) and (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake. <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets all of the criteria listed above.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

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>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets all of the criteria listed above</p>
<p>Embedded Programme 1</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>As above.</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 and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Partially</p>	<p>The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets most of the criteria listed above. The panel were particularly impressed with the monitoring and support provided to learners. This was reaffirmed as a significant benefit of learners remaining on Stage Two of the programme rather than exiting and joining a BA programme without the additional support structures.</p> <p>While it was noted that attendance can sometimes be low on the programme, Dublin Business School gave the panel confidence that it has a robust system in place to identify and support learners who can be considered vulnerable. Lectures are available online as well as in person, and it also notes that learners are not always very diligent about “tapping” in with their device, so formal attendance numbers may in fact under-estimate the numbers actually in attendance. The panel were satisfied attendance was well monitored and learners were well supported throughout the learning experience.</p> <p>In response to the comments made by learners and graduates, the panel is recommending that further consideration be given to ensuring that increasing the amount and frequency of feedback to aid learner progression through the programme. Consideration may also be given to enabling learners to track their progress and attainment in Moodle or an alternative platform/student record system.</p>
<p>Embedded Programme 1</p>	<p>Partially</p>	<p>As above.</p>

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>¹⁵</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.¹⁶</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>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.¹⁷</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.¹⁸</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>While the panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets most of the criteria listed above, as mentioned previously, some modules lacked explicit connections between MIMLOs and MIPLOs which need to be addressed.</p> <p>In conversation with a number of current and former learners (listed above in Section 3:D), all of whom are either enrolled on the Higher Certificate with a view to leaving after one year, or who are graduates of the Certificate, their feedback confirmed that, at times, there had been issues around a large number of assignments being due at the same time.</p> <p>The panel were reassured in discussion with representatives of Dublin Business School that positive adjustments would be made in the revalidated programme accordingly. The learners that met the panel also stated that the college was very receptive to them when they sought help with this matter. This was pleasing to hear and is commended.</p> <p>The panel expressed concern that group assessments were not a good way to assess students early in the programme but accepted Dublin Business School’s argument that, early in the programme, it is also an excellent way for the learners to get to know one another and to develop essential teamwork skills. The panel also noted that the timing of assessments was planned by the programme team to avoid overburdening learners.</p>

¹⁵ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁶ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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).

		Furthermore, in response to feedback from learners and discussions with the programme team, it is recommended that the FT assessment schedule presented in the programme document should be made available to learners. A PT assessment schedule should also be produced and made accessible to learners.
Embedded Programme 1	Partially	The programme team are asked to ensure that the MIMOs presented are explicitly linked to MIPLOs for the 60 Credit Certificate programme.

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 disabilities¹⁹.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international learners it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Learners</i>²⁰ 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>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered, particularly the student handbook, that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets all of the criteria listed above.
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	As above.

¹⁹ 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).

²⁰ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Learners (QQI, 2015)

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 assurance²¹ 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>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>While the Panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Higher Certificate in Arts meets most of the criteria listed above, a special condition is proposed around the revalidation of Stage Two modules. The panel discussed with the programme team that a transition QA structure was needed to confirm how the Stage Two modules validated for this programme, will be impacted when the Stage One modules of the principal BA programmes are revalidated in 2024/25. A decision will need to be made on how the revalidation timelines are aligned, noting that the principal BA programme revalidations will need to proceed or coincide with the revalidation of the Stage Two Higher Certificate in Arts. An outline of how this transition at revalidation will be achieved without impacting negatively on learners or deviating from the validated programme needs to be prepared and presented.</p> <p>It is also recommended that the Quality Assurance processes deployed to regularly monitor the currency and quality of the Higher Certificate in Arts programme be more explicitly documented in terms of key Quality Assurance processes such as programme committee minutes, external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports in the future. The evidence set attached to the Programme Review document needs to be expanded over the course of the next validation period.</p>
Embedded Programme 1	Yes	The panel were satisfied overall from the evidence considered that the Certificate in Arts meets all of the criteria listed above.

²¹ 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. Having considered the documentation and oral evidence provided during meetings with the Dublin Business School team, the panel is happy to recommend that the Higher Certificate in Arts be considered satisfactory, subject to the conditions and recommendations outlined below:

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

The panel has a number of Special Conditions of Validation, which are to be completed to enable the panel to confirm satisfaction to proceed as follows:

1. That Dublin Business School decide whether the 60 credit certificate is to remain as presented - an exit award only - or whether the documentation should be amended to seek validation for the Certificate as an embedded standalone award, offering maximum flexibility to learners. The panel would be happy to recommend validation for the Certificate as a stand-alone or exit award. Once a decision is made, minor adjustments should be made to the documentation as appropriate.
2. That all module descriptors explicitly confirm the MIPLOs that the MIMLOs contribute towards.
3. That the documentation clarify how the programme will remain consistent with the programme submitted for validation when the revalidation of the principal programmes that form the core of Stage Two of the Higher Certificate in Arts are revalidated in 2024/2025.
4. That greater clarity be given in the documentation to the Stage Two General Arts Pathway progression routes and its rationale given all other pathways available to learners progress them directly onto Year Two of a Dublin Business School BA Principal Programme.

Embedded programme 1:

Select one	
	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
✓	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

Having considered the documentation and oral evidence provided during meetings with the Dublin Business School team, the panel is happy to recommend that the Certificate in Arts (Exit Award) be considered satisfactory, subject to the conditions and recommendations outlined below:

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

The panel has a number of Special Conditions of Validation, which are to be completed to enable the panel to confirm satisfaction to proceed as follows:

1. That Dublin Business School decide whether the certificate is to remain as presented - an exit award only - or whether the documentation should be amended to seek validation for the Certificate as an embedded standalone award, offering maximum flexibility to learners. The panel would be happy to recommend validation for the Certificate as a standalone or exit award. Once a decision is made, minor adjustments should be made to the documentation as appropriate.
2. That the documentation present distinct MIPOs for the Certificate ensuring there is a differentiation between the 60 credits of the Certificate and the 120 credits in the Higher Certificate programme.
3. That all module descriptors explicitly confirm the MIPOs that the MIMLOs contribute towards.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

The panel also has a number of recommendations, which are as follows:

1. That the Assessment Schedules be accessible to learners to manage their expectations and clarify how the programme team will ensure that assessments are staggered to avoid overburdening learners.
2. That learners be given more extensive feedback on their progress to help them manage and monitor their achievements.
3. That the programme team increase the qualitative and quantitative data gathered and used in QA structures and processes to demonstrate how the performance of the programme and its learners is regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure continued relevance and currency of the programme.
4. The programme team should continue to build upon its experiences during the COVID-19 alternative arrangements.
5. Minor editorial adjustments should be made to the final documentation prior to submission to QQI as listed below:
 - 1.2.1 – Minimum and Maximum numbers: the documents should be explicit and consistent on the minimum and maximum learner numbers per intake and per annum. It should be very clear whether these numbers refer to the number of learners per annum or per mode of delivery (full-time and which part-time etc).
 - 1.2.2 – Embedded Programme: this should be completed fully if the embedded programme warrants a stand-alone award. If the programme is exit-only, detail on entrants is not required.
 - 5.4 – Timetables: only full-time indicative timetables are presented; part-time timetables should also be present.

- 5.10 – Assessments: the assessment heat map was a useful addition to the documentation, but referred only to full time learners. The variant relevant to part-time learners should also be present.
- APPENDIX 2: The document is missing a CV for Maryrose Molloy, who is listed in the current document as one of the lecturing staff.
- APPENDIX 5: Modules do not need to reference the 60-credit Certificate in Arts among the Stage Two modules.
- APPENDIX 6: Programme Handbook. A minor amendment is required here, as towards the end the programme is erroneously referenced as level 9 rather than correctly as level 6.
- APPENDIX 7: Sample feedback. The individual learners’ names should be removed here.

Declarations of Evaluators’ Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Karen Jones

Date: 15 April, 2021

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.

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Part 4. Proposed programme schedules *(post panel feedback and consequent amendments, if any)*