

Dublin Business School

2021

Annual Quality Report (Dublin Business School)
Reporting Period 2019-2020

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Annual Quality Report (Dublin Business School)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR)**; formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#) (as amended)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992](#) (as amended)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

¹ These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 – Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 – Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 – QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 – Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 – Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 – Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 – Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 – Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 – Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 – Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 – Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 – QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Dublin Business School for the reporting period **1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 26 March 2021**.

The AQR has been approved by DBS Academic Board, Senior Leadership Team, and Board of Directors and is submitted by **Lori Johnston, Registrar** and **Grant Goodwin, Validation and Accreditation Manager**.

Introduction to the College

DBS was established in 1975 and over the following 40-plus years has increased its range of programmes and specialisms. Currently, programmes span a broad range of disciplines including accounting, business, film and creative media, finance, humanities and social sciences, law, marketing, and the computer sciences. Typically, DBS has over 8,000 active students every year, over half of which are part-time evening students and the remainder are full-time, day students. This number will have been impacted by the COVID-19 situation in 2020 but is expected to return to previous levels post-COVID.

Approximately three quarters of the student body is enrolled on QQI validated programmes, specifically full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at NFQ Level 6 to Level 9, including Higher Certificate, Higher Diploma, BA, BA Hons, BSc Hons, Postgraduate Diploma, MA, MBA and MSc programmes. The remaining quarter of the students take programmes that are not on the NFQ, some of which are accredited by professional bodies such as the Project Management Institute or ACCA. DBS also offers a small number of programmes that are on the UK Ofqual framework. These are awarded by Kaplan Professional Awards (<https://kaplanpa.co.uk/>).

DBS also offers some English language programmes, though only where the learner is planning to progress to a higher education award programme. DBS has held ACELS accreditation for some years.

The DBS campus is located in Dublin city centre, with premises on Aungier Street, South Great Georges Street and Bow Lane. Facilities include lecture theatres, PC labs and tutorial rooms, a library including study rooms, study areas and PC terminals, canteen facilities and student services, including student welfare and counselling, and careers services. In the current COVID-19 context the capacity of the campus is significantly reduced in order to meet the public health requirements of social distancing. However, it is expected that the College will return to full campus capacity and utilisation post-COVID.

In March 2020, because of the arrival of COVID-19 to Ireland, the College was required to close its premises. At that time we moved all teaching online and subsequently, depending on the government restrictions of the time, moved to a hybrid schedule of teaching where classes are delivered in the classroom while broadcast online at the same time. This facilitates students to have some classroom and on-campus experience. This was important for first years, international and vulnerable students in particular.

DBS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kaplan Inc. (<https://kaplan.com/>), the education division of the Graham Holdings Company (<http://www.ghco.com/company-profile>). Kaplan is a global education company, serving more than one million learners per year in over 400 locations in 30 countries. Kaplan's programmes include higher and professional education, language instruction, test preparation and services to primary/secondary learners and schools. In the area of professional education alone, Kaplan last year provided some 600,000 courses to individuals and firms in financial services and related fields around the globe. Kaplan has turnover of approximately \$1.5 billion and represents about half the overall Graham Holdings company business.

DBS currently (February 2021) employs 392 staff. Of these, 280 are directly involved in teaching delivery while 112 are administration staff.

DBS successfully completed the Re-Engagement process with QQI in 2019, including gaining approval for provision of blended learning. The approved Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) can be found [here](#) and is referred to throughout this document

DBS's Strategic Plan for 2019–2023 can be found [here](#).

Process for Development and Approval of the AQR

DBS welcomes the opportunity to engage with the AQR process for the first time. This has been a chance for the organisation to formally follow up on activities related to the Re-Engagement process in 2019 and a period of significant change and development for the College, including a body of work relating to policy development, and new programme development and review.

In terms of completion of the report, initial preparation was carried out by the Registrar and Executive Dean. Familiarisation briefings were provided by the Registrar at meetings of the Senior Leadership Team, Academic Board and Course Director meetings prior to Christmas 2020.

Documentation was reviewed by the Registrar, and main areas of responsibility identified. Following this, a Steering Group was convened in January 2021 as follows:

- Andrew Conlan-Trant – Executive Dean
- Lori Johnston - Registrar
- Cliona O'Beirne – Head of Marketing and Admissions
- Darragh Breathnach – Head Academic Operations
- Edward Ormonde – Head of IT
- Emma Balfe – Head of Faculty and School Operations
- Grant Goodwin – Quality Assurance Officer
- Julie Sharp – Head of HR
- Kerry McCall Magan – Head of Academic Programmes
- Lee Richardson – Data Analytics and Reporting Manager
- Michael Bruder – Head of Finance
- Shane Mooney – Head of Student Experience
- Tony Murphy – Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Following the first meeting on 15 January 2021, the Quality Assurance Officer generated a detailed reporting and tracking plan for each section of the document against members of the group. The Steering Group then convened weekly to review progress under each area. This was then collated and reviewed for completeness.

A near-final draft of the document was presented to the Academic Board on 23 February 2021 for consultation and approval. The document was left open for review and comment before finalisation ahead of the extended QQI deadline on 26 March. Detailed feedback was received from Donna Bell, an independent member of the DBS Academic Board, a highly experienced quality assurance expert in the Higher Education sector in Ireland and internationally, and this feedback has been incorporated.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Please refer to:

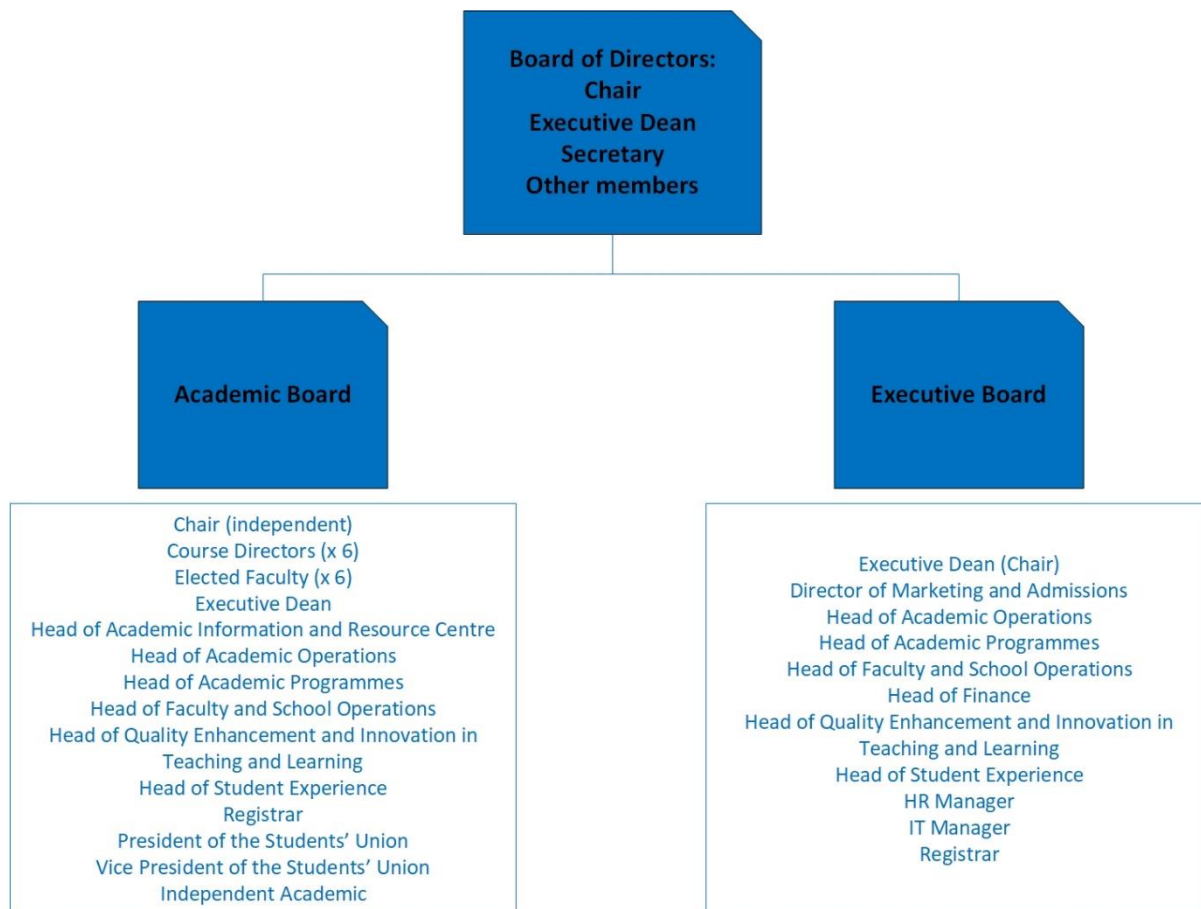
[QAH Part A Section 1 Governance:](#)²

- **1.2 DBS Governance and Organisation**
- **1.3 Terms of Reference for Governance Boards and Committees**
- **1.4 DBS Leadership Structure and Roles**

As per the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016, p.5) 1 DBS is aware of the need for a structure that ensures separation of decision-making powers and approval of decisions made. In designing its structure, DBS has also considered the governance vehicles of other higher education institutions in Ireland and the UK, including other private educational institutions.

See QAH Part A 1.2.2 Senior Governance

The overall governance structure of DBS comprises three related but distinct Boards: the Board of Directors; the Academic Board; and the Executive Board, also known as the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The following graphic shows the composition and relative position of each Board.



The Board of Directors is the most senior authority of Dublin Business School, with responsibility for overseeing all activities and for directing the educational mission of the business. Its remit is to ensure the College functions

² All references to the QAH refer to DBS's [Quality Assurance Handbook](#).

effectively and legally, and in line with the overarching corporate goals. The Board of Directors is currently comprised of

- Chair, Peter Houillon, CEO Kaplan UK, Ireland and Middle East
- DBS Head of Institution, Andrew Conlan-Trant, Executive Dean
- Secretary, Rachael Convery, General Counsel, Kaplan International
- Board Member, Zoe Robinson, Director of Learning, Kaplan UK
- Board Member, Dr Richard Thorn, President Emeritus, IT Sligo (Independent Board Member)

This is a vacant position on the Board for another independent member.

The Board of Directors has the authority to approve decisions made by other College groups or entities.

The Academic Board is the supreme senior academic authority of DBS, and ultimate guardian of the academic integrity and quality of its higher education Awards. The Academic Board has responsibility for overseeing all aspects of academic governance to ensure compliance with external and internal academic regulations, policy and quality assurance standards.

The Academic Board is chaired by an independent external member of high standing within the higher education sector; currently the Chair is Brian Bennett, former Registrar of IT Carlow. The Academic Board also comprises the Executive Dean, Registrar, Head of Academic Programmes, Head of Faculty and School Operations, Head of Academic Operations, Head of Student Experience, Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning, Head Librarian, Course Directors, six elected Faculty representatives, (four from the Accounting, Business, Computing and Law disciplines and two from the Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Media disciplines), the President of the Students' Union, the Vice President of the Students' Union, and an independent academic member, currently Donna Bell, an experienced Higher Education Consultant in Ireland and internationally, with extensive experience as a QQI Chair and external advisor to the HEA.

The Academic Board delegates some matters relating to quality management to subcommittees, such as the Programme Approval Sub-Committee, Board of Studies, Programme Boards and the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee.

The Academic Board has the authority to ratify decisions made by other academic entities within the College.

The Academic Board has ultimate decision-making power and authority on academic matters, with responsibility to advise the Executive Board and Board of Directors accordingly.

The Executive Board, also known as the Senior Leadership Team, comprises all senior managers within the College, and operates in tandem with the Academic Board to ensure the effective operation and quality delivery of academic programmes alongside commercial viability of the College. The Executive Board holds responsibility for the character, mission, values and strategic development of the College. The Executive Board is chaired by the Executive Dean of the College, and comprises the Director of Marketing and Admissions, Registrar, Head of Academic Programmes, Head of Faculty and School Operations, Head of Academic Operations, Head of Student Experience, Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning, Head of Finance, Head of IT and Head of Strategy, Corporate Development & People.

The Executive Board is a decision-making entity.

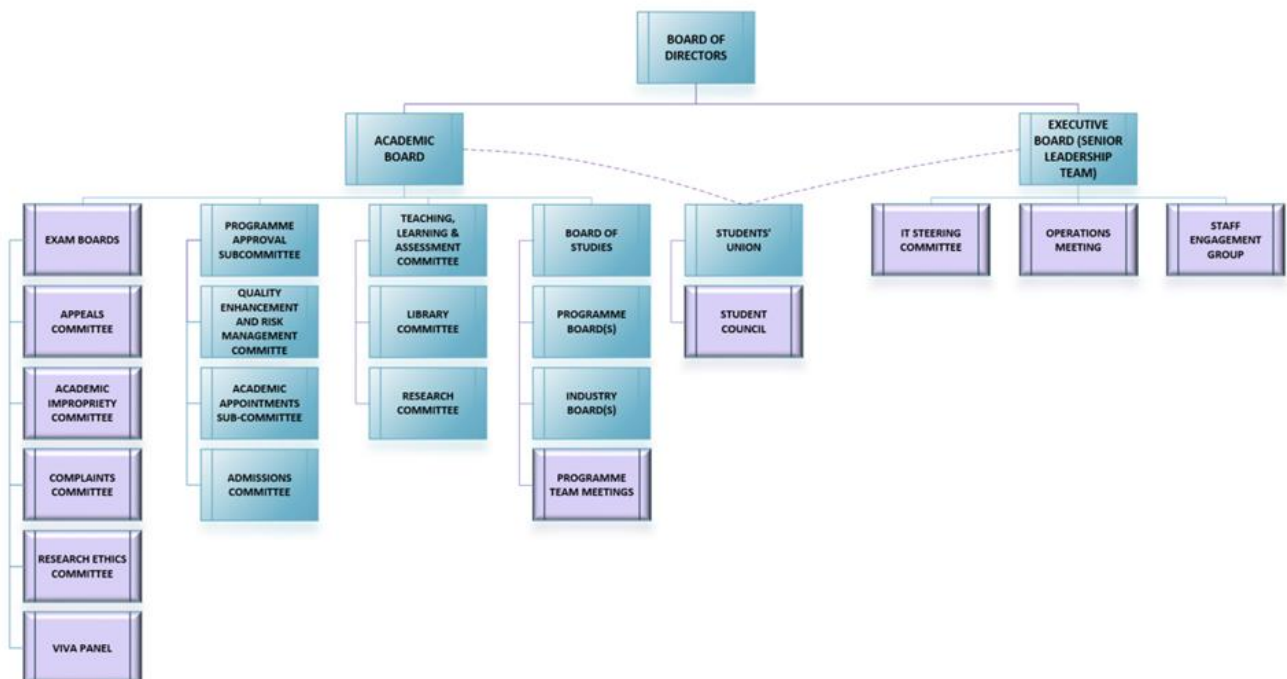
The interaction of these three Boards at the most senior level of the College is fundamental to the success of DBS in maintaining and improving quality and standards. As a private college, the business integrity of DBS is further safeguarded by strong corporate governance from the parent company structure, Kaplan Inc. and Graham Holdings Company. DBS currently operates through Graham Holdings committees such as the:

- Compliance Committee
- IT Security Committee
- Corporate Audit Services Committee
- Compensation Committee

The arrangements with Kaplan and Graham Holdings go even further than this. In addition to regular contact on operational matters, more formal coordination of policies and practice is achieved through the following structured engagements across the Kaplan group.

- Quarterly Financial and Business Reviews with Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer of Kaplan Inc.
- Bi-annual IT reviews with Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer of Kaplan Inc.
- Bi-annual Learning Reviews with Kaplan Inc.
- Annual Balance Sheet review with Chief Financial Officer of Kaplan Inc.
- Monthly financial review by Head of Finance, Kaplan UK & Ireland
- IT Steering Group chaired by Head of IT, Kaplan UK & Ireland
- Legal & compliance support from Kaplan Legal Counsel
- HR support and oversight from Director HR, Kaplan UK & Ireland
- Learning and product development support from Director of Learning, Kaplan UK.

Further governance structures operate below the Academic Board and Senior Leadership level. These structures are laid out in the diagram below. Terms of reference for all committees are laid out in the DBS **Quality Assurance Handbook Part A Section 1.3** and each academic-facing committee reports to the Academic Board on a cyclical basis.



DBS Governance Structures

Programme Approval Sub-Committee (PASC)

The remit of the PASC is to evaluate proposals for new programmes for suitability to progress at each stage of the development process, up to submission to QQI. This committee was instituted through the review of policy and procedure for Re-Engagement with QQI. This committee convened in pilot form on a number of occasions in 2019/2020, but a review and rationalisation of membership was carried out in January 2021 to ensure sustainability of the process going forward, with an updating of Terms of Reference to reflect this.

The Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee

The Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee is responsible for monitoring, review and updating of existing Quality Assurance policies and procedures and identification and assessment of risk as it relates to programme development, delivery and review. This committee was a new committee instituted through the review of policy and procedure for pilot-Re-engagement with QQI in 2017 and the subsequent Re-Engagement process completed in 2019.

Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC)

Following the formal recruitment and interview process carried out by Faculty Managers and Course Directors, all new Faculty/teaching staff in DBS are reviewed by the AASC before appointments are made. The AASC reviews qualifications and professional experience of proposed teaching staff, and may make recommendations or conditions of appointment such as specific training or mentoring.

Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee is responsible for the monitoring of admissions data to ensure compliance with standards, process and procedures for access, transfer and progression of learners, and to evaluate new or alternative qualifications for entry.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Committee

The LTA Committee aims to foster best practice in pedagogy by support and development of innovative learning and teaching practices, linked to assessment of programme and module outcomes.

Research Committee

The Research Committee's remit is to promote a research-ethos in the College and support those carrying out research, aligned with the College's research strategy.

Library Committee

The Library Committee oversees the strategic position of the library and its contribution to the College, including supporting and contributing to quality assurance in learning, teaching, assessment and research.

Board of Studies

The function of the Board of Studies is to monitor the oversight of programme delivery to ensure quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment. Programme delivery is monitored through programme team meetings and individual Programme Boards, with Course Directors reporting into Board of Studies on all programmes under their area. Any changes or updates to programmes which are proposed are presented to the Board of Studies for review and approval.

Programme Boards

Programme Boards are the mechanism for detailed review and reporting on individual programmes of study and implementation of learning, teaching and research initiatives at programme level. They are Chaired by Course Directors.

Details of all Academic Board Sub-Committees' including the membership and terms of reference are included in the **QAH Part A Sections 1.2.3–1.3**. Learners are represented on the Academic Board, Programme Boards, LTA Committee, and Library Committee.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Please refer to:

[QAH Part C Section 3 Transnational Collaborative and Joint Awards](#)

The following guiding principles govern all collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards involving DBS:

- DBS will enter into collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards where there is a clear academic or commercial benefit to such arrangements.
- All collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards equate to the core vision of DBS, which is the achievement of excellence through learning.
 - In all collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, DBS will fulfil its statutory obligations and protect its academic standing.
 - All elements of collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards must comply with the policies, standards and procedures set out in the above section of the DBS Quality Assurance Handbook, and which are informed by the policies, standards and procedures outlined in QQI's policy for '*Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards*'.
- DBS delivers programmes of study that lead to QQI awards. These awards are placed on the NFQ at the appropriate level as set out by programme validation. The learning outcomes of the programmes of study are informed by the appropriate QQI award standards.
- All collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards must comply with national and international legislative requirements.
- DBS will only consider collaborative programmes with partners who are found to be of good academic reputation and sound financial standing.
- All collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards, while operating within the framework of formal and legally binding agreements, shall be based on close working relationships with collaborative partners and accrediting bodies, in an environment of openness, transparency, trust and mutual respect.
- The interests of the learner will be paramount in all collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint award activity.
- All agreements will have clearly articulated and binding arrangements to ensure adequate provision for the protection of learners.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

Please refer to:

[QAH Part C Section 2 Programme Development and Review](#)

Overview of DBS Programme Development and Review

Programme Development and Review occurs in DBS through a number of internal mechanisms. For existing programmes, programme monitoring occurs through formal discussion and feedback received through programme team meetings (held every 4–6 weeks approximately), Programme Boards (held once a semester), biannual Board of Studies and Annual Programme Reports (currently being established). If any proposed changes to a programme are identified (within the scope of the validation) these are formally discussed at a programme team level, sanctioned and agreed across the programme team and formally brought to the Board of Studies for review and approval. This process is laid out in more detail below. For new programme development, there is a defined process established which is also detailed below.

Programme Monitoring

Programme team meetings (4–6 weeks approximately)

Course Directors have successfully established regular and ongoing programme team meetings and these occur at both a programme and discipline level. Programme team meetings are an important mechanism for the two-way flow of information, feedback and discussion on programmes at a team and discipline level. They are internal-facing with an invitation extended to all Faculty (full-time and part-time), Programme Coordinators and Faculty Managers. The Head of Academic Programmes and the Head of Quality Enhancement in Innovation and Teaching and Learning may also attend. Agendas are fluid and meetings are minuted.

Programme Boards (once a semester, Terms of Reference QAH Part A Section 1.3.7)

The Programme Board monitors and reports on the constituent aspects of the learner experience and formally captures the progress/development of a programme over time, which in turn feeds into cyclical review. DBS positions these as an important quality assurance and reporting mechanism into the higher academic functions in the College, such as the Board of Studies and Academic Board. They capture the totality of the learner experience on all of the programmes which a discipline offers. Programme Boards occur once a semester, are attended by Faculty, library and learner representatives.

Programme Boards have a standing agenda which requires reporting on qualitative and quantitative data at programme level and also learner, team meeting and external examiner feedback. They also involve a Library report at programme level, and Class Rep input at programme level. The minutes of the Programme Board are then presented to the Board of Studies, with key highlights and issues noted at this board. Once a year the minutes and reports from the Programme Boards and Board of Studies feed into the Head of Academic Programmes' Annual Report to Academic Board.

In winter semester 2020, DBS successfully held Programme Boards across all disciplines.

Board of Studies (twice yearly, Terms of Reference QAH Part A Section 1.3.6)

The function of the Board of Studies is to ensure academic quality across all programmes and appropriate implementation of the five year strategic plan in programme delivery. The membership of the board consists of the Head of Academic Programmes (Chair); the Chair of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee;

the Chair of the Research Committee; the Registrar; all Course Directors; the Head of Faculty and School Operations; the Head of Student Experience; a Library representative; the Schools Executive Administrator and other attendees as required by the agenda. The Board of Studies meets twice a year (November and April/May). The Board of Studies:

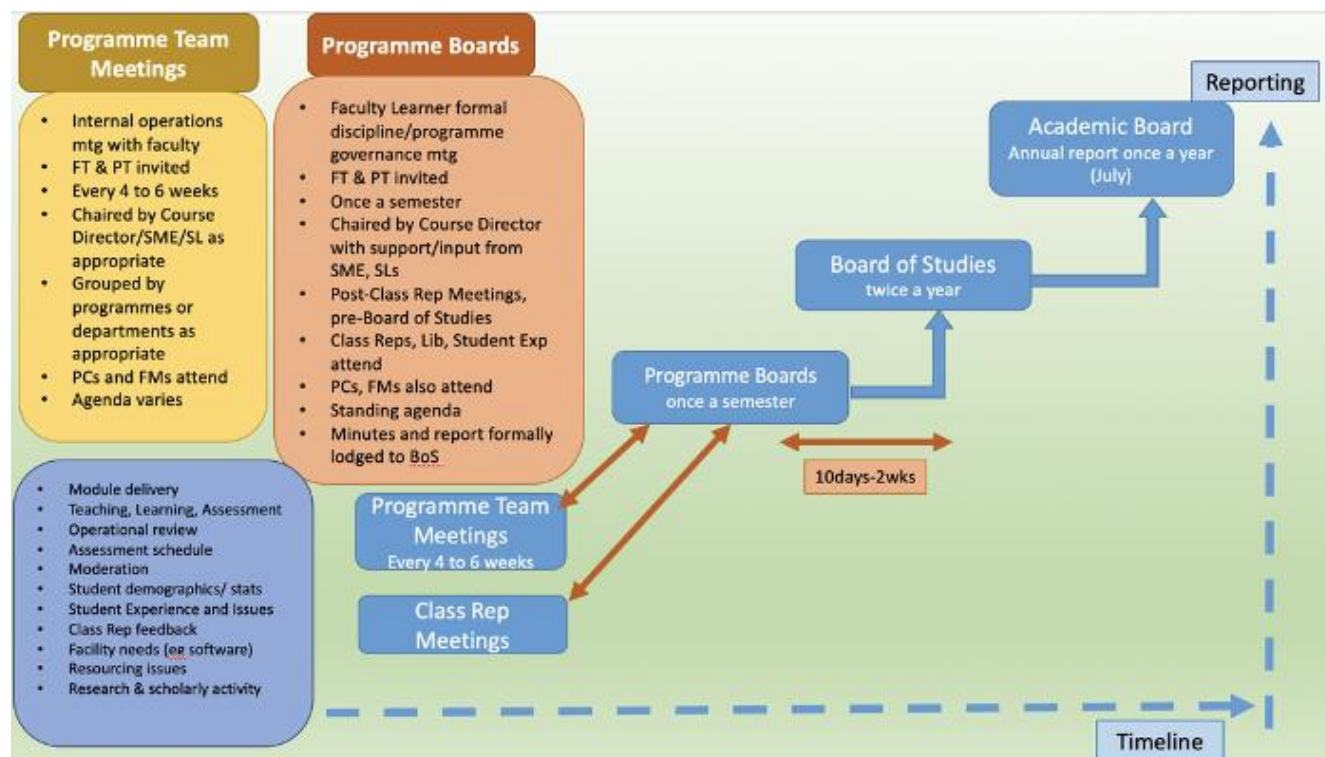
- Monitors programmes and suites of programmes to ensure consistency of approach in teaching, learning and assessment across the schools
- Reviews and approves updates to teaching, learning and assessment for programmes or modules, within its scope, referred from Programme Boards.
- Agrees the implementation of new initiatives in teaching, learning and research identified by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, Research Committee and programme teams, for deployment through Programme Boards.
- And approves programme changes (within scope) and implementation of learning, teaching, assessment and research strategies.

Where required, an extraordinary Board of Studies may be convened. This is most likely to be the case where updates to programme modules are identified arising from feedback during the academic year.

Annual Programme Reports (currently being trialed)

DBS has previously trialed an Annual Programme Report template in one discipline area and has rolled out a refined version of the annual programme report template to all discipline areas in this reporting cycle.

The basis for the refined Annual Programme Reports in DBS is the information collated and reported on at the semesterised Programme Boards. The information from each semester is brought together into a standardised template for the Annual Programme Reports and presented by Course Directors to the April/May Board of Studies. The Head of Academic Programmes will then report on the Annual Programme Reports in the Academic Programmes Annual Report at Academic Board in July each year. This is currently in train for the academic year 2020/21.



Review of Certification of Validation periods

Through an ongoing review of programme reports, retention data, consultation with executive management and market needs, the Head of Academic Programmes keeps under constant review any DBS programmes which may require review and revalidation. Once these are agreed for review, programme teams commence the programme development process. This is further outlined in the next section.

Programme Review

The Head of Academic Programmes is responsible for overseeing the formal review process for all programmes. This is carried out under the academic leadership of Course Directors and in conjunction with programme teams. It is a collaborative and iterative process that involves input from a wide range of stakeholders: employers/industry feedback; Industry Advisory Boards; professional bodies; learners; internal stakeholders, e.g. finance, marketing, etc.; as well as analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (enrolments; retention; module grades; module semester surveys; programme team and programme board minutes). This information informs any refinements or changes to the programme construct, module weighting, syllabi and the teaching, learning and assessment for the programme. All documents are submitted to the Registrar for internal approval before release to the programme review panel.

New programmes

Development of new programmes follows the process laid out in the **QAH Part C Section 2**. This process was developed as part of the review of policies and procedures for Re-Engagement with QQI. The process is a staged process whereby any proposed new programme must be approved at various checkpoints in its development by a Programme Approval Sub-Committee (PASC):

- Programme proposal
- Developed programme approved to proceed to independent evaluation (mock panel)
- Updated programme approved for submission to QQI

The independent evaluation (mock panel) mirrors the QQI panel event with a small panel comprised of an experienced QQI Chair and a minimum of two subject experts (academic and/or industry), and involves a review of documentation and a site visit/meeting.

At the time of writing this report, the PASC had been convened in pilot form on a number of occasions in 2019/2020. The membership of the PASC was reviewed by the Executive Dean and Registrar with input from the Head of Academic Programmes in late 2020/early 2021 to allow for particular considerations around the construct of the committee based on the size of the College and roles therein, to ensure robust and independent review in a timely manner. The construct of the PASC was re-defined to comprise of a Chair appointed from an internal panel drawn from managers and QA/Regulatory functions and two nominated members of Faculty from a different department/area to the programme under consideration. The updated Terms of Reference were presented to Academic Board and approved on 23 February 2021.

Employer Engagement

In addition to the above processes outlined, DBS has increasingly put a focus on industry and employer engagement feeding into development of programmes. DBS has identified 7 strategic objectives for 2019–2023, and the first of these is to ‘Create Work-ready Graduates’. This objective shapes the approach both inside and outside the classroom, with the College dedicated to creating graduates who are able to realise their full potential, are attractive to employers and ready for employment. To achieve this DBS:

- Creates and maintains strong links with employers for programme development
- Leverages associate faculty to bring practical experience to teaching

- Operates an innovative and best-in-class careers support service to students.

Employer Engagement Board

In September 2018 DBS formally launched its Employer Engagement Board. The membership of this board is cross-functional across the College, including Academic Faculty, Course Directors, Careers Coaches, Sales and Marketing and Senior Management.

This board has been set up to develop an integrated plan of action that increases the engagement with employers and contribute to the DBS objective of having employer led programmes. It monitors ongoing performance against this plan and ensures full sharing of information across the College on all engagement with employers. The Terms of Reference of the Employer Engagement Board are to:

- Provide institutional guidance to the work of Industry Boards and other employer related activities
- Provide a platform to share relevant employer related information across the College
- Enable the Industry Boards to work effectively and enabling effective engagement with employers
- Ensure the proper collection and storage of all relevant documentation on employer engagement for institutional purposes.

Industry Boards

Industry Advisory Boards also have an important role to play in DBS achieving its vision and have been set up across functional discipline areas in DBS. They support and feed into programme development and review, learner career development, and access to real life projects/case studies and guest speakers.

The DBS Industry Advisory Boards are chaired by a non-DBS industry representative, and consist of the Course Director in the relevant area, DBS Careers Coaches, and a number of outside industry and academic experts. They meet on a quarterly basis, and support DBS Faculty in staying up-to-date with developments in industry, and ensure that programmes meet the trends and needs of the current environment. They also shape future programme development and evolution. Industry Boards feed into and are governed by the Employee Engagement Board where minutes and outcomes are formally recorded for future reference and use.

DBS currently has three industry boards:

- Marketing and Business, in existence since April 2020 (24 members)
- Computing, in existence since September 2019 (16 members)
- Fintech, in existence since September 2018 and currently being reformulated (18 members).

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

Please refer to:

[QAH Part B Section 1 Learner Admissions:](#)

- [1.1 Information for Applicants Policy](#)

[QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:](#)

- [2.9 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)

[QAH Part B Section 6 Examination Boards and Award Classifications:](#)

- [6.3 Progression and Classification of Awards](#)

Access, Transfer and Progression

Details regarding DBS Policy on Access, Transfer and Progression are found in the Quality Assurance Handbook as linked to above.

The entry criteria are provided on a dedicated webpage for each programme, and a link to the prospectus in pdf form is provided in each case. See <https://www.dbs.ie/courses>

Admissions Office

DBS Admissions Team deals with all admissions to all programmes, including undergraduate, postgraduate and Springboard programmes, direct entry applications into programmes from Year 2 onwards, and domestic and international students.

The application process varies according to the programme of study and the level of the student's prior learning. CAO and Springboard applications are made directly to those bodies, and all other applications are made directly to the College. Ninety-eight percent of applications are completed online.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Applications are accepted from those who may not hold the standard required entry qualifications but who may have demonstrable relevant experience. Information on how to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning is available on the website.

The various application types and information on each is provided on our website as follows:

<https://www.dbs.ie/application-form>

<https://www.dbs.ie/courses/full-time-undergraduate>

<https://www.dbs.ie/ftug-application-procedures>

<https://www.dbs.ie/entry-requirements>

<https://www.dbs.ie/international-students>

<https://www.dbs.ie/courses/springboard>

Open Days

As part of information provision to potential applicants, DBS runs a significant number of Open Days annually. In 2020, eleven open events were held during the year, the majority taking place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Open Days provide prospective students with the opportunity to visit DBS and talk to our lecturers, admissions staff and students, and to discover what is available at DBS and how the student's interests can be met through our range of programmes. Usually Open Days give students an opportunity to explore the campus, visit the buildings and see the facilities as meeting with student services. In the online environment, this has been replicated as much as possible.

Information Sessions

DBS also runs a number of Information Sessions for applicants to specific programmes such as the BA (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy, MBA, MSc in Information and Library Management. Information sessions offer students the opportunity to experience courses first hand by getting more detailed information about the programme, meet the faculty and also meet with current students to hear their experience. Prospective students participate in a range of workshops and meet with lecturers and current students.

Scholarships

DBS offers three scholarships annually to local schools in the community based on hardship cases put forward by the schools themselves. All successful scholarship learners must meet the minimum entry requirements. The scholarship provides an opportunity to a student who in the normal course would not have had the opportunity to avail of Higher Education. The scholarship covers their tuition fees along with a monthly allowance to assist them during their time of study at the College in a full time capacity.

Information to Current Learners

The DBS Student website at <https://students.dbs.ie> is a one-stop shop for any information or resources that learners require during their time studying in the College. Functional and support areas of the College input into this including Academic Operations, Student Experience, Library, Exams, Student Engagement and Success Unit, and Quality Assurance.

Some features to note are:

- **Learner Handbooks**
Learner Handbooks are available on the student website and are updated regularly, allowing students to have easy access to the most up to date information at all times.
- **News Updates**
Regular news updates allow students to keep abreast of what is happening both in and outside the College.
- **Student Help**
The student help section links and advises on areas such as student well-being, accommodation, computer support, International Student Assistance and virtual student information and meet-ups.
- **Timetables**
All timetables (for classes and exams) are available and can be filtered by learner, lecturer, course or building.
- **Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)**
The QAH is broken into sections to allow students to find the right information quickly when they need it.
- **Student Self Service**
Through the single sign-on facility linked from the website, students can access their personal DBS e-mail, library account, timetables and virtual learning environment (Moodle), update their personal details, log tickets and request a number of self-service letters which are automatically sent to the student's e-mail.
- **Induction Material**
All induction material is available via the site in easily accessible units which students can return to for future reference.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

N/A

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Please refer to:

QAH Part C Section 1 Learning and Teaching:

- ***1.1 Staffing of Academic Programmes Policy***
- ***1.2 Learning and Teaching Policy***
- ***1.3 Academic Research Policy***
- ***1.4 Blended Learning Policy***
- ***1.5 Recording Learning Activities Policy***
- ***1.6 Group Work Policy***

QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:

- ***2.9 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy***
- ***2.10 Conflict of Interest Policy for Programme Delivery***

QAH Part B Section 5 Assessment Regulations:

- ***5.1 Assessment Overarching Policy***
- ***5.2 Learner Assessment Procedures***
- ***5.3 Continuous Assessment (CA) Word Count Policy***
- ***5.4 Late Submission Policy***
- ***5.5 Repeating a Failed Module Policy***
- ***5.6 Progression with ECTS Deficit (Trailing) Policy***
- ***5.7 Feedback on Examinations Policy***
- ***5.8 Access, Retention & Destruction of Examination Scripts Policy***
- ***5.9 Verification of an Assessment Result Policy***

- **QAH Part B Section 6 Examinations Boards and Awards Classifications:**

- ***6.1 External Monitoring of Programmes Policy***

DBS Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE)

Monitoring of Quality of Teaching and Learning

At a programme level, regular programme team meetings monitor the ongoing quality of teaching and learning, and an Annual Programme Report highlights reflections on the teaching and learning environment in the previous iteration of the programme.

Quality of the online learning environment is monitored via an audit of the module pages on the VLE, Moodle, which are assessed against a set of criteria. Lecturers are encouraged to engage in a peer-review of their online learning, in a process that is managed by the Course Director, where lecturers assess a peer's online classes and Moodle page against a set of criteria.

Learner feedback on teaching and learning quality is captured via a module survey that is run once a semester, the results of which are examined by the Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning. Learner feedback on teaching and learning quality is also captured via regular Class Rep meetings, details of which are fed back to the Head of Academic Programmes, Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning and the Course Directors. DBS also subscribes to StudentSurvey.ie, which allows for the comparison of learner views of the quality of teaching and learning at DBS against other HEIs and the sector as a whole.

Enhancing Teaching and Learning

Improving the quality of Teaching and Learning at DBS is guided by the institution's Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE). This three-year strategy (2020–23) has three objectives:

1. For DBS to be known as a learning-centred higher education institution;
2. To ensure integration of educators, learners and industry experts in the learning experience; and

3. To increase the flexibility of the learning environment.

The strategy, which contains a number of actions against each of these objectives, is reviewed annually. The Learning Teaching and Assessment sub-committee of the Academic Board is responsible for guiding and advising on the implementation of SLATE, teaching, learning and assessment policy development and academic training and development.

Areas for improvement that are identified by any of the ongoing feedback and monitoring mechanisms noted above are brought to the attention of the Head of Faculty and School Operations, Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning. A bespoke plan is put in place to address the concerns that draws on the training and development resources and processes laid out in Section A.5 below.

Quality Assurance of Assessment

DBS policies and procedures for the monitoring of assessments processes are laid out in the *Quality Assurance Handbook* as per the links above. Of particular importance is independent monitoring through the External Examiner process. DBS seeks to appoint academic experts of high standing into the External Examiner roles for each programme. The Exams Office has increasingly been digitising its processes, and since 2019 External Examiner packs have been provided to Externs in electronic format, which has allowed for greater efficiencies. With COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, DBS moved all Exam Boards online and also hosted a number of meetings with Externs online, in order to keep them apprised of contingencies arising around assessments. Online meetings and Exam Boards facilitated attendance for Externs and it is DBS's intent to continue with these.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

Please refer to:

- [QAH Part B Section 2 Learner Supports:](#)
 - [2.1 Information and Support for Learners](#)
 - [2.2 Premises and Facilities](#)
 - [2.3 IT Facilities](#)
 - [2.4 Online Learning Supports](#)
 - [2.5 Student Experience](#)
 - [2.6 DBS Library](#)

One of DBS's strategic objectives is to support student success and enhance the student experience. The College aims to provide the academic resources, student services, engagement supports and infrastructure to create an outstanding student experience and enable strong academic outcomes.

Academic Operations Team

The Academic Operations Department provides first-line supports and information to students from the point of registration through to final graduation. Programme Coordinators assigned to specific discipline areas manage information provided to students regarding their specific programme of study. Through the Programme Coordinator, students have a readily accessible point of contact they can approach with any queries they may have during their time with us in DBS. Alongside email, phone, instant messaging, and a ticketing system, Programme Coordinators also sit on the Service Desk on a rostered basis to assist students in person while they are on campus.

Student Experience Team

The Student Experience Team ensures that students have the best possible College-life experience and to promote a DBS community and culture that is focused on their wellbeing and success. The team was delighted to win the inaugural Education Award for Best Student Experience in 2017. This was followed by recognition for their efforts winning 'The Spirit of Kaplan – A Great Place Award' in 2018 and 'The Spirit of Kaplan – Student Success Award' in 2020.

Student Engagement & Success Unit

The Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU) is a dedicated Unit to support all new DBS students in transitioning successfully into Higher Education. Support is provided to new students in the following ways:

- Support from staff within the Unit who also bridge to the collective supports provided by the College.
- A central knowledge-base about institutional supports.
- Individual and collective support provision. Where a student's needs are more specific, the Unit can link students into the relevant College support e.g. the learning centres, the counselling service or peer mentors.
- A student engagement and success areas of the website, which provides a toolkit of transition information for new entrants.
- The 'First 100 Days' programme is an initiative at DBS designed to provide strong, enhanced and targeted support to new students during their first weeks as DBS students. Recognising that successful early adjustment is linked to subsequent success, we provide a range of information, target resources, and interact with new students in ways that make them know we care about them and are interested in their successful adjustment. Each week over the First 100 Days has its own theme, designed to focus

students' attention on various issues that we know are important for settling in and thriving as a higher education student.

Peer Mentor Programme

The DBS Peer Mentor Programme is designed to give students across DBS the opportunity to represent and mentor students by sharing their stories and experiences of college life. Mentors act as positive role models throughout the year to their respective groups and are sources of information, from orientation through to the end of the year. The mentors help make coming to DBS a more welcoming, less daunting experience. As well as arranging informal meetings and social events with their mentees, the team assists with any queries or concerns that new students may have. Throughout the year this team of students is supported by the Student Experience Team.

In the academic year 2020/21 DBS has over 100 peer mentors divided across three areas – programme based, regional (by nation) based, and year-based mentors. Each student mentor is given continuous high quality training throughout the academic year to ensure they are fully engaged in the College experience and best prepared to support their mentees. The DBS Peer Mentor Programme has been recognised as best in class, and was presented at the ICOS Annual Conference in May 2018 and The USI National Forum in November 2018.

Student Council

The DBS Student Council welcomes all students appointed or elected to the role of Class Representative, Peer Mentors, Sports Clubs & Society Leaders and members of the Students Union. The Council acts as a platform for two-way communication between the College and the student body. Students who represent the Student Council are made aware that they are responsible for collecting feedback from the student body and notifying the College regarding any specific issues that arise.

Class Reps

DBS was the first private college to engage with USI to train all Class Reps on the NStep Programme. This programme was launched in 2016 by the HEA, QQI and USI, and applies best principles of student engagement to enhance and enrich the College's interactions with its Class Reps.

Blended Learning

As part of its strategic objectives, DBS has been looking towards more flexible learning offerings, and its Blended Learning Policy was approved by QQI in 2019 alongside the application for Re-Engagement. Since this, DBS has been incorporating options for blended delivery into new programmes.

Development

Decisions over blends of learning modes are pedagogically based and are governed by the [ABC Curriculum Design](#) methodology. The creation of content for blended learning programmes is guided by the principles of Universal Design and is in keeping with DBS Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy. Materials and resources will be reviewed annually. DBS has invested in an audio-visual studio and recruited experienced audio-visual and instructional design staff to facilitate development. The blended module development process ensures that the learning resources are sufficient to cover the indicative syllabus in the module descriptor. The documented and validated process for ensuring the lecturer is qualified to teach the subject applies as it does across DBS. Additional training will be provided to ensure that all blended teaching staff are comfortable with the technology and understand the potential issues around moderating online discussions.

Before Learning

Learners are advised in advance of the blended nature of programmes, where applicable, through programme information provided on the DBS website, at open evenings and events, and through information such as the Learner Handbook.

All blended modules start with an orientation for learners, who are advised of the hardware and software requirements well in advance. During induction, learners are informed as to their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their own learning experience and DBS's approach to netiquette for online learning behaviour.

During Learning

The timetable distinguishes for learners the different modes of delivery on a blended learning programme, so learners are aware of in-class, online and on-demand learning from the timetable. All on-demand lessons for blended programmes are released a week in advance of the live tutorial that covers the on-demand content. Each on-demand lessons start and end with a summary of the learning covered in the lesson.

The use of the Course Progress Bar in the VLE allows learners and lecturers to see which activities have been completed and which are overdue, if applicable. Knowledge Check quizzes for all online study units will be used to affirm understanding of the topic. Forums will be used to provide asynchronous communication and questions. Online chatrooms can be scheduled for synchronous chat.

Use of the activity completion, progress bar, knowledge check quizzes and other formative assessments enable lecturers to monitor engagement from the start and contact those who are not engaging. All support mechanisms common to traditionally delivered (non-blended) modules will be provided to learners on blended modules, including monitoring and supports through SESU.

Online discussions and comments are monitored, and that any comments that are identified as or reported as disrespectful are managed through the standard Complaints or Disciplinary process. Validation of assessment and moderation of student submissions do not differ from standard documented processes which apply to traditional (non-blended) modules. Use of personal data will be in keeping with [DBS Privacy Policy](#).

Programme Coordinators and IT Support are available to learners as with all programmes, as well as feedback mechanisms through student surveys and class rep meetings. DBS uses its virtual learning environment to host all blended learning content, which is secure and convenient for learners.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Please refer to:

[QAH Part C Section 1 Learning and Teaching:](#)

- [1.3 Academic Research Policy](#)

Research at DBS

Research in DBS is overseen by the Research sub-committee of the Academic Board. The committee is made up of research active faculty from across the College, as nominated by the Course Directors, and staff who support research, including the Research Librarian and a representative of the Ethics Committee. Research in each of the disciplines is guided by informal research groups or industry advisory boards, which report back on research activity to the research sub-committee. DBS awards research scholarships to ten faculty each year. The scholarships finance time off the teaching timetable to conduct research. Applications for research scholarships are independently blind reviewed against a set of criteria by a 3-person panel of external reviewers. Scholarship recipients provide a six month report of their research activity and are required to present at the annual Research Day in DBS in June.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Please refer to:

[QAH Part A Section Governance:](#)

- **1.3.9 Terms of Reference for Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC)**

[QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:](#)

- **2.9 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

[QAH Part C Section 1 Learning and Teaching:](#)

- **Staffing of Academic Programmes Policy**

[DBS Recruitment Policy](#)

[DBS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy \(HR\)](#)

[DBS Policy on Staff Members Attending Internal Courses](#)

Staff development has been a key focus for the College and there have been significant advances since 2018/19.

HR Governance, Policies and Processes

DBS Policies cover a wide range of topics from recruitment and selection to performance management and working from home. These are regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with the employment law legislative changes and political/environmental changes as and when required.

Recruitment, Development and Support of Staff

DBS takes responsibility for the quality of its staff providing staff with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. The accountability of this is through the Senior Leadership Team and the DBS HR function. The HR vision is to be a trusted resource and strategic business partner by engaging in value-added initiatives across all facets of HR that are aligned to the vision, mission and purpose of DBS.

In respect of the recruitment, management and development of DBS staff, DBS HR has focused on seven core areas, namely:

- Recruitment/selection and induction
- Culture and engagement
- Effective talent management and development
- Performance management
- Health and wellbeing
- Reward and recognition
- HR governance, policies and processes

Recruitment and Selection

The fundamentals around the DBS recruitment process is to be fair and transparent. DBS is committed to Inclusion and Diversity, and working towards a better and more inclusive future for everyone. DBS has created a programme of activities to help the new joiner to find their way around the organisation, and understand the culture and DBS ambitions to help equip them with everything they need to create success and be successful.

The guidelines and principles of the [DBS Recruitment Policy](#) and [DBS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) are followed in recruiting staff. The end-to-end recruitment process is managed through the digital platform Workday.

Where appropriate and relevant, jobs are advertised both internally and externally through a variety of media. Applicants apply for the vacancy via the Workday platform. Applicants are screened on the basis of meeting the qualitative and technical criteria of the role through competency-based interviewing. In some instances, where appropriate, applicants are further screened by utilising relevant psychometric tests, for example the Saville Wave personality and aptitude tests and the PRISM neuro linguistic test. Other screening tools include standard reference checking and Garda vetting.

Induction

New hires are required to undertake an induction programme that covers pre-boarding to their first day, their first week and through to their three-month and six-month milestones. The induction and training programme is a combination of online and face-to-face provision, and covers on-boarding to information about DBS, Values and Behaviours, training modules, payroll, benefits etc. Included in this onboarding program is the appointment of a 'buddy' to each new employee prior to their commencement to support them in their introduction to DBS.

The pre-boarding includes:

- Ensuring all contractual details are accurate and the necessary steps in the on-boarding process is complete on Workday to gain access to all relevant DBS systems

The first day includes:

- Introduction to team and colleagues and a tour of DBS
- Introduction to the DBS Values and Behaviours
- An understanding of the role and responsibilities

The first week includes:

- Discussing individual and team goals and KPIs
- Role specific training and development
- Familiarisation with DBS policies and benefits

The first three months includes:

- Understanding team goals and KPIs
- Completion of mandatory compliance training modules e.g. Code of Conduct, Information Security and Privacy, GDPR

At six months – probation

- Successful completion of probation period and ongoing training and development and management.

Culture and Engagement

The DBS vision states that DBS will be the most respected, diverse and progressive higher education institution in Ireland, renowned globally for making a difference and creating successful careers.

The DBS values are:

- * Act with Integrity
- Do everything to the highest ethical standards
 - * Empower and Support
- Share and Solve problems for the greater good of DBS
 - * Create Opportunity
- Encourage new ideas and look for new ways of doing things

- * Grow Knowledge
- Encourage the development of our colleagues
 - * Drive Results Together
- Have a 'can do will do' attitude

As part of enhancing the Vision and Values of DBS, the 'Making a Difference' programme was launched in 2019. This programme was developed with the objective to bring together a number of simple initiatives that would have a positive impact in different ways and on different people, such as DBS staff, students and society. Some of these initiatives include: the Sustainable Environment Initiative, monthly newsletters, charities of choice and a formal staff suggestion mechanism.

Also under the 'Making a Difference' banner was the creation and distribution of a set of DBS behaviours derived from the DBS Vision and Values.

In relation to assessing staff engagement, each year DBS employees are invited to participate in the Global Kaplan Annual Survey. This survey covers the following areas: continuous improvement, diversity and inclusion, manager relationship, growth and development, intention to stay and, teamwork and collaboration. DBS has participated in this programme for four years. Over this period the overall employee engagement has continued to increase incrementally.

Talent Management and Development

DBS is focused on the talent management and development of its staff. A training needs analysis was conducted in December 2019, and in response to this DBS launched a training calendar inviting staff to participate in a range of online courses covering Microsoft Office courses and soft skill courses such as time management, communication skills and workshops in relation to health and wellbeing. DBS also offers staff and their families the opportunity to study Dublin Business School programmes. Details of this are in the [Policy for Staff Members Attending Internal Dublin Business School Courses](#).

Staff are also required to undertake mandatory courses which are included in the online induction programme, including GDPR requirement, Information Security and Privacy and Code of Conduct training.

The Kaplan Group also offers training courses. Most recently managers completed an Inclusion and Diversity course. The 'Great Place' Leadership Programme consisting of three modules was also launched in 2020.

Over the course of the year regular 'Lunch and Learn' sessions include topics such as Cybersecurity, Engagement Boundaries and Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL).

Performance Management

Of particular note is DBS's focus on performance management which is an annual process with appraisals conducted in the last quarter of the year, and goal setting conducted in the first quarter of the year. This involves the management and review of staff against a number of criteria, namely: communication, learner/customer focus, problem solving and execution, result focus, teamwork, behaviour, change agent, leadership, developing people, analysis, student focus, research and professional development, individual development plan and attitude and behaviour.

This process is currently being digitised on the Workday HR platform.

Health and Wellbeing

DBS offers a wide range of support services to its staff members. An Employee Assistance Programme is offered through Laya Healthcare and most recently due to the pandemic and our operations and teaching moving online, the DBS HR department launched a series of packs focused on mental and physical well-being.

Reward and Recognition

Each year, the Kaplan Group celebrates the Kaplan Way Awards. Through the Kaplan Way Awards staff nominate colleagues who have exemplified resilience and brought 'The Kaplan Way' to life. This includes those who have gone above and beyond to further **Student Success**, helped make Kaplan **A Great Place**, introduced improvements to **Continuously Transform** the business, or modelled the **Shared Values**.

Each year DBS also runs an 'Above and Beyond' awards programme to recognise employees whose work and results best exemplify DBS's priorities and values. This is celebrated via a launch event and a recognition award.

In addition to this, to recognise those staff who have made a commitment and valuable contribution to DBS over the years, and to celebrate their important service anniversary of 10, 20 and 25 years, DBS recognises this through an annual event and a 'Long Service' award and gift.

Recruitment and Onboarding of Faculty

Recruitment of faculty commences with the advertisement of the specified discipline vacancy on via the DBS LinkedIn account and on the DBS website. The advertisement must include the requisite academic qualifications, business experience and person specification. Only candidates that satisfy the minimum criteria specified are considered for interview stage. Applications are screened by the Faculty Manager and Course Director and a short-list of qualified candidates is drawn up and invited to present for an interview. An interview panel is constituted which is normally chaired by the Faculty Manager or Course Director or Subject Expert. For all lecturer appointments, candidates are required to give a 10–15 minute presentation on an allocated topic within their subject area.

As detailed in the *Quality Assurance Handbook*, it is DBS policy that all candidates for academic positions are presented to the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC) for review prior to an offer and contract being issued. This committee comprises the Head of Academic Programmes, the Registrar, Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning, and the Quality Assurance Officer is Secretary to this committee. The Committee reviews CVs and interview notes of all candidates and will make recommendations for appointment. Where appropriate, the AASC may set conditions on an approval, such as the appointment of a Teaching Mentor, or an Assessment Mentor, or a specific limitation to a particular role or subject area, depending on the candidate's academic and professional experience, to ensure the quality of the teaching is maintained. Once the candidate is endorsed by the AASC, a certificate is issued. The AASC certificate is sent to the HR department.

In advance of a contract being issued HR ensures:

- Reference checks are completed
- Identification is provided
- Evidence of academic qualifications is provided
- Garda Vetting is completed

All contracts include a probation period of 6 months.

Induction and Orientation of New Faculty

All new members of academic staff undergo an induction process which is the responsibility of the relevant Faculty Manager, Course Director and the Academic Mentor, with input from senior academic management. The induction is to ensure that new starters gain an understanding of the learning environment they are entering and to introduce them to the operational practicalities of delivering programmes at DBS.

During the academic year 2019/2020 the Head of Academic Programmes, the Head of Faculty & School Operations and the Head of Quality, Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning developed a new faculty pathway induction programme which comprises three parts. As part of this process, the new lecturer meets with the Faculty Manager, Course Director and EdTech team to cover key functional and teaching, learning and assessment areas:

1. Faculty Manager:

- Confirms timetable
- Introduces the new starter to the 3 month and 6 month probation meetings
- Arranges a meeting with the relevant Course Director
- Takes the lecturer through the process of how they get paid
- In conjunction with the Course Director, assigns a mentor/buddy
- Provides information on HR policies, such as the lecturer absence policy
- Arranges an operational induction (e.g. an introduction to academic calendars, the central academic noticeboard and timetabling in Celcat)
- Ensures that the IT Department has contacted the lecturer to arrange an IT induction
- Arranges induction with the EdTech team
- Provides a campus tour
- Arranges a staff ID card
- Arranges induction with the Exams Team
- Arranges induction with the Library Team

2. Course Director:

- Introduces the lecturer to the Lecturer Handbook, *Quality Assurance Handbook* and Learner Code of Conduct
- Provides a programme overview, including how the module(s) fit in to the programme(s), number of ECTS and indicative syllabus
- Provides a Module Guide
- Introduces the lecturer to previous Moodle pages from the module
- Provides an introduction to preparing for a class, including what to cover in the first few classes
- Gives an overview of learner-centred practices in DBS
- Outlines the module assessment strategy and associated marking rubrics
- Outlines the moderation process
- Covers expectations and requirements for providing Student feedback
- Details of reporting fora (programme team meetings, Boards of Studies)
- Assigning and introduction of a buddy

3. EdTech Team:

- Shows the lecturer how to use Moodle and teaching tools such as Zoom/Panopto)
- Direct the lecturer to asynchronous teaching and learning content on training and development Moodle page

The Management of Faculty

Faculty Managers have direct line management responsibility for a large number of staff within DBS, ensuring that all programmes are staffed correctly and appropriately. The Faculty Managers work with the Course Directors in staff planning for their relevant programmes. The Course Directors have ownership of a suite of programmes in a specific discipline and are responsible for the overall delivery and development of those programmes. They work with the programme teams to ensure that the modules are taught and assessed according to the Approved Programme Schedules.

Faculty Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff performance is reviewed regularly and perform formal and informal reviews with lecturers throughout the year. Informal student feedback is acted upon as it comes in, whereby the Faculty Manager and Course Director will work with Faculty to resolve any issues. During the formal annual appraisal both the lecturer and the Faculty Manager will review the lecturer's performance against competencies and provide comments to support the ratings assigned. The performance appraisal is informed by data that is collected throughout the academic year:

- Student feedback from the formal student questionnaires
- Class representative feedback
- Feedback from Course Directors
- Attendance at relevant meetings such as programme team meetings, faculty meeting and examination boards
- Moodle audits (to ensure Moodle pages are populated with sufficient information and to the required standard)
- Engagement with training sessions and CPD events
- Timely submission of exam papers/submission of marks to Moodle and submission of the necessary supporting documentation
- Engagement with new technologies and new methods of teaching
- Contribution to curriculum development

Faculty Training & Support for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Introduction

DBS provides a multi-faceted approach to teaching and learning training and support for faculty. Formal and informal training is provided, in multiple modes, covering both technical and pedagogical issues. Some aspects of the training are mandatory, while some is voluntary, although most of the pre-2020/21 training is mandatory

Ongoing Training and CPD

Training and Support Site

All faculty have access to an area on Moodle with asynchronous training content on teaching and learning and 'how-to' practical instruction on using education technology. The site is regularly updated with new content. Currently, its focus is specifically designed to support the transition to online teaching and learning, such as designing and delivery an online class, technical guidance for online teaching, designing online assessments and exams and applied online teaching. This asynchronous content is complemented with synchronous sessions.

Topics on the Training and Support Site:

- Design and Delivery
 - Multimodal Delivery
 - Hybrid Delivery
 - Module and Lesson Planning
 - Engaging Delivery
- Technical Guidance
 - DBS Moodle Essentials
 - Practical Guidance for Hybrid Teaching
 - Using Zoom for online classes
 - Creating groups in Moodle
 - Using Mentimeter in the Digital Classroom
- Applied Teaching Online
 - Teaching practical skills online
 - Using remote PC control in Zoom
 - Using Zoom's Remote Control Feature
 - Sharing Multiple Screens in Zoom
- Assessment
 - Guide to Online Exams
 - Lecturer Guide to Revision
 - Guide to Post-Exam
 - Guide to Online Assessment and Writing Online Exams
 - Continuous Assessment - Preparing an online in-class test
 - Using Moodle Quiz for an In Class (Summative)
 - A Guide to Marking and Grading in Moodle

Drop-in Sessions

The EdTech Team and QA Officer host a drop-in session (currently online) every Wednesday from 5–6.30pm. All faculty are welcome to attend ask any questions or raise concerns at these sessions, which are often followed up by one-to-one training at a later date.

Training by request

The EdTech team is available to meet Faculty by appointment to discuss any and all aspects of teaching and learning, including the use of educational technology, such as using the VLE or other tools.

Faculty Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

DBS offers CPD on three levels:

- Informal 'Lunch and Learn' sessions and workshops dedicated to a particular theme. Last year, the theme was assessment and feedback; this year the theme is engaging learners. DBS aims to host eight Lunch and Learn sessions and three workshops per year. The Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee (LT&A) approved a programme of LT&A podcasts featuring internal and external faculty, in March 2021.

- Formal short courses designed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. The first short course facilitated in 2020 was on Getting Started with Online Teaching. The next short course will likely be on Assessment.
- Access to AdvanceHE fellowships through institutional access membership.

DBS is also in the early stages of designing its own accredited suite of level nine courses on higher education teaching and learning.

Programme-Based Training and Support

DBS is developing a programme-based approach to enhancing the quality of the learning environment. There are two aspects to this enhancement: bespoke targeted training to address identified quality issues in the delivery of a programme and a peer-based teaching observation and feedback scheme under the guidance of the Course Director. The peer-based teaching observation invites participants to consider the quality of each other's learning environment against criteria and devise actions to enhance the learning environment. Both these initiatives are at the nascent stage of development.

6.0 Information and Data Management

Please refer to:

QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:

- **2.5 Student Records and Data Retention Policy**
- **2.8 Learning Analytics Policy**

Student Guide to Learning Analytics

Student Engagement Dashboard User Guide

Information about learners enrolled with DBS is held on the internal Student Information System, Agresso. This includes all records around module enrolment, outcomes at each stage, final award and any additional supports needed. In addition, DBS uses the Virtual Learning Environment Moodle for programme delivery, Celcat timetabling software, Koha the library management system, and, since January 2021, the Mercer Mettl online exams proctoring platform has been piloted.

Collection and use of data complies with GDPR and privacy legislation at all times. DBS Privacy Policy is available on the website here: <https://www.dbs.ie/privacy-policy>

DBS uses learning analytics to provide accurate and actionable insights into the learning process through the exploration, modelling and aggregation of relevant data sources and to provide an evidence base for optimising the conditions in which learning can flourish.

Students are informed of the Learning Analytics Policy at induction, and a copy of the policy is made available in the *Quality Assurance Handbook* as above. In addition, a [Student Guide to Learning Analytics](#) is made available on the home page in Moodle.

At the student level, DBS puts the data that is drawn from the information sources outlined above into a ‘dashboard’ which allows the student or their lecturer to view student data and identify any anomalies, risks, or concerns. If issues are identified, interventions may be put in place for individual learners. The Student Engagement Dashboard is available via Moodle or the student portal. A [Student Engagement Dashboard User Guide](#) is also made available via Moodle.

At the institution level, DBS puts the data that is drawn from the information sources outlined above into an ‘early alert report’ which allows the Data Analytics and Reporting Manager and the Student Engagement Officer to view student data and identify any anomalies, risks, or concerns. The data which comprises the early alert report is at a more granular level than that of the student engagement dashboard.

Data is used throughout the student life cycle, but a particular focus is placed on a number of key ‘touch points’:

- Week 1 – Has the student logged into Moodle and are they attending lectures?
- Week 3 – Has the student has taken out a book from the library?
- Week 6 – Has the student submitted their first Continuous Assessment?
- Week 9 – Has the student has logged into Moodle, attended lectures, submitted their CAs to date, and paid fees?

Interventions then may be put in place which take the form of the following series of contacts:

- E-mail
- Phone call
- Face-to-face talk
- Tea & talk
- Walk & talk

The aim of the interventions is to help students find a solution to their problems in a sustainable manner. An executive summary of 'engagement' data is provided to the Head of Academic Programmes and Course Directors, which in turn feeds into Programme Boards and other fora as necessary.

Retention

DBS defines retention as the percentage of students who successfully complete all modules on which they are enrolled within an academic year. Each year, a Retention Summary Report is compiled and published, which summarises retention across programmes in Arts, Business and Law delivered by DBS:

- All full-time Levels 6–9 programmes
- All part-time Levels 6, 8 and 9 programmes
- Labour market activation programmes (Springboard, ICT, and HCI)
- Non-framework programmes (Study Abroad and Professional Diplomas).

This data allows a comparison, where appropriate, with retention data published by the HEA in 'A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education' (2010) or 'A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education' (2018). Note: The 2018 publication does not provide a breakdown of progression for years 2 and 3 at Level 6, 7 and 8 in the same way as the 2010 publication. The reporting is intended to underpin a constructive and collective engagement with the challenges presented in retaining not only our traditional undergraduate and postgraduate students, but also our non-framework students and students on labour market activation programmes. The report is provided to the Head of Academic Programmes, Course Directors, Faculty, Academic Board, and Board of Studies, which in turn feeds into Programme Boards and other fora as necessary.

Completion

DBS defines completion as the percentage of students who successfully complete a programme on time or plus one year. To date, DBS have not reported on programme completion. However, following feedback from the Re-Engagement process with QQI, a completion report has been developed and is currently in user testing. It is the intention to begin reporting (and benchmarking) on completion at the end of the academic year 2020/21.

Student Feedback at DBS

Students have a major contribution to make in ensuring the quality of higher education and training provided in DBS. Regular and structured student feedback on their engagement with their studies and with broader College life, and on the quality and relevance of teaching, learning and other services, is important in contributing to this process. Students can also play an important role in influencing the design of curricula, and in reviewing and providing feedback on the use of these curricula.

Student representatives sit on various committees in DBS, including the Academic Board and Programme Boards.

Student feedback is gathered through a variety of mechanisms:

- Class Representative Meetings
- First Destination Survey
- Module Survey
- StudentSurvey.IE
- INDEX Survey – National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
- Focus Groups
- Compliments and Complaints.

Once student feedback has been gathered, a report is produced and circulated to the Head of Academic Programmes, Faculty Managers, Course Directors, Faculty, Academic Board, Student Council and Board of Studies (as appropriate), which in turn feed into Programme Boards and other fora as necessary. Note: Not all feedback may find its way into a report but may be discussed and actioned at a local level.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

Public Information and Communication

The College recognises it is responsible for the accuracy of the information that it puts into the public domain. Therefore, it must ensure the validity of such information to ensure transparency with its stakeholders. The main platform that the College uses for such communication is its website www.dbs.ie

The website is the primary vehicle for the provision of information about the programmes and services of the College to potential students and other interested stakeholders. The website presents detailed information about the background to the College, its staff, mission, aims and values.

The site also includes information on all programmes, detailing modules, duration of programmes, NFQ level, entry requirements, fees and application procedures.

Provision of Information for Prospective Learners

Published information on programmes for learners includes:

- Programme and Award Title
- Accrediting Body
- Level and type of the award on NFQ
- Programme content
- Application process and entry requirements
- Fees
- Details of the arrangement for PEL in accordance with Section 65(4) of the 2012 Act

Examples of the College's main publications include:

- [DBS Strategic Plan](#)
- [DBS Quality Assurance Handbook](#)
- [Programme Review and Validation Reports](#)
- [DBS Student Handbooks](#)
- [DBS Undergraduate Prospectus](#)
- [DBS Postgraduate Prospectus](#)

Other platforms DBS use to disseminate information and updates:

Social Networking Sites

DBS communicates with the public across a number of social media platforms. The current social media channels that used on a regular basis include: Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Other channels including YouTube are used intermittently. A social media calendar is planned out by the Marketing and Admissions Department, detailing which channel will feature each communication and when it will be scheduled.

Social media is used for information such as notification of open evenings, information evenings and other events such as partner events. Any new courses or imminent application deadlines are communicated and relevant educational news from DBS or other educational bodies is also shared. Social media inboxes are monitored regularly so that queries connected to any communications are promptly followed up.

College e-Newsletter

Newsletters are e-mailed to all College contacts available through the database on a regular basis. This includes current and past students and staff, agents, contacts in employer agencies and relevant professional bodies and associations. The purpose of this e-newsletter is to maintain contact with all stakeholders and provide updates on College activities and achievements and developments in relation to programmes and services.

College Prospectuses and Marketing Materials

A number of prospectuses and publications are produced by the Marketing Department, containing all marketing materials relevant to the recruitment of new students into programmes. These are also hosted on the website as well as been distributed to prospective students at fairs, schools, open evenings, reception areas and by post, if requested.

College Open Days and Information Sessions

The College runs open days and information sessions at which potential students and other interested parties can meet with College staff and receive information about the programmes and services available and opportunities available through the College.

Participation in Conferences, and Educational Recruitment Fairs

The College participates in conferences and educational recruitment fairs locally and internationally to provide information to potential students and other interested parties about the programmes available and to promote the College.

School Visits

DBS has a dedicated School Liaison Officer who works closely with Career Guidance Teachers and schools in ensuring provision of correct information about the programmes on offer through the CAO system. A number of school visits are carried out annually around Ireland.

Corporate Development Manager

DBS has a dedicated Corporate Development manager who works with employers, the corporate sector and other stakeholders. They have responsibility for coordinating tenders through e-tenders.ie for programme development.

In respect of other information, the [DBS website](#) provides details on upcoming events, job vacancies, exam timetables (when applicable), policies and procedures related to quality assurance, staff and students and a wide variety of other information.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Please refer to:

QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:

- **2.2 Quality Assurance Policy**
- **2.3 Self-Evaluation and Monitoring Policy**
- **2.4 Risk Management Policy**
- **2.5 Student Records and Data Retention Policy**
- **2.8 Learning Analytics Policy**

QAH Part B Section 6 Examination Boards and Awards Classifications:

- **6.1 External Monitoring of Programmes Policy**

QAH Part C Section 2 Programme Development and Review

Dublin Business School's Self-Evaluation Principles

DBS's approach to Quality Assurance is informed by QQI's *Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines* (QQI, 2016). In accordance with Section 4.4.1, *The Provider-Owner QA Principle*, DBS takes primary responsibility for the quality provision of educational programmes and assurance of quality therein. DBS also supports *The Externality Principle* (Section 4.4.6) that 'A provider-owned quality assurance system makes appropriate use of external persons who are independent of the provider and who are expertly qualified to make national and international comparisons'. This principle is reflected in day-to-day operations through the contribution of External Examiners in the assessment of learners, and in governance through an external independent Chair of the Academic Board. External independent input is also a key part of the process for new programme validation, programme revalidation and institutional review.

- All programme validation activity is currently managed and overseen by QQI, with new programmes assessed by an independent panel of experts.
 - DBS has additional internal processes relating to programme validation prior to submission of a proposed programme to QQI, which includes approval of a proposed programme through the Programme Approval Sub-Committee and an independent panel review (i.e. mock panel event).
- DBS is responsible for the management of the processes for Programme Review, including the management of external evaluation and reporting, subject to agreed Terms of Reference with QQI, prior to application for Revalidation to QQI.
- External evaluation of QA processes and procedures is undertaken by QQI through Institutional Review.

Changes to QA policies and procedures, where those changes can be made by DBS, are made via the Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee, and ratified by the Academic Board. Minor changes to programmes, where those changes do not impact on the Approved Programme Schedule, Programme Learning Outcomes, special regulations or entry requirements, may be proposed and approved at meetings of the Board of Studies. All other changes require the approval via formal processes, such as Differential Validation or Programme Review, agreed with QQI.

Self-Evaluation and Monitoring

DBS's programmes are routinely monitored throughout the academic year and at the end of the academic year to ensure that:

- Programmes are progressing satisfactorily both operationally and academically.
- Teaching schemes are appropriate to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the module and programme.
- Assessment methods are appropriate to determine the achievement of the learning outcomes for the different modules and are distributed appropriately throughout the academic year.
- Academic staff remain current and relevant and engaged in scholarly activity and/or research as appropriate.
- Academic procedures are being followed.
- The suitability of existing programmes to meet the current and future needs of learners is assessed.
- The programmes remain current and relevant to employers.
- Future requirements for programmes, and hence future programme development, to allow the institution to continue to meet the needs of the learner, to encourage learner progression and to appeal to prospective learners in the future are identified.

Feedback is collected through a variety of mechanisms, to feed into Programme Boards, held three times per academic year. In addition to Programme Boards, Boards of Studies are held twice annually to review proposed changes to assessment and delivery, raised by the Programme Boards.

Reporting from these and other review mechanisms feed annually into the Academic Board, and subsequently into Programme Review events with QQI, and Institutional Reviews.

External Independent Experts

As described in Section A1.1 above, the DBS Board of Directors includes an external member from high office in the education sector, and the Academic Board membership includes an independent Chair and independent academic, both with significant experience in higher education.

Proposed External Examiners are nominated by the Course Director and such nominations are endorsed by the relevant Head of Faculty and School Operations based on the criteria as indicated in this policy. The nominating Course Director completes the form 'Application for Appointment of New External Examiner', which is accompanied by the candidate's Curriculum Vitae. This nomination is then reviewed/approved by the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee on behalf of the Academic Board. Conditions imposed by professional bodies, such as The Honourable Society of King's Inns, must also be met.

Criteria for the appointment of an External Examiner are set out in the *Quality Assurance Handbook*, Part B, Section 6.1.3.

The External Examiner reporting process entails four main review stages and checks:

- Exam Paper approval (in advance of exam sittings, a review of exam papers to ensure appropriate setting and standard for the academic level, and that they assess the module's Learning Outcomes)
- Assessment Sample review (following final assessments, a review of a sample of assessed material, both coursework and examination scripts, to determine whether the grading awarded is appropriate and valid, and the Learning Outcomes are being appropriately demonstrated in the assessment strategy)

- Exam Boards (attending the ratification process to observe and contribute to consideration of borderline awards, and have sight of the overall performance of modules and individuals in the larger context of their programmes and cohorts)
- Annual Reporting (following the final Exam Board of the academic year, a summary reflection and commentary on all assessments and material viewed, in addition to College processes and performance of facilitating external review and ratifying grades).

Programme Validation and Review

The process and underlying principles of Programme Validation and Review are set out in the *Quality Assurance Handbook* (Part C, Section 2.1 and 2.2 respectively).

The stages of a New Programme being proposed, reviewed, and submitted for validation are set out in the following diagram:



Programme Review similarly proceeds through a series of stages:

- Phase 1 – Self-Evaluation Process (a self-evaluation of the existing delivery, and consideration of developing sectoral and industry factors and best practice and learnings from the earlier iteration(s) of the programme)
- Phase 2 – External Evaluation and Reporting (review of the programme’s reporting, and proposed delivery, by an Independent Review panel)
- Phase 3 – Applying for Revalidation (submitting the earlier reporting and review findings to QQI).

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	5
Awarding bodies	5
QA bodies	1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	PRSB
Name of body:	IAHIP (Irish Association of Humanistic & Integrative Psychotherapy)
Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Arts in Psychotherapy , Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling & Psychotherapy
Date of accreditation or last review	2017
Date of next review	There is currently no system of regular review

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	PRSB
Name of body:	APPI (Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland)
Programme titles and links to publications	Master in Arts in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	PRSB
Name of body:	PSI (Psychological Society of Ireland)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology , Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychology
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	PRSB
Name of body:	IACP (Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	PRSB
Name of body:	Law Society, King's Inns
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Date of accreditation or last review	2009
Date of next review	There is currently no system of regular review

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	PRSB
Name of body:	LAI
Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Science in Information and Library Management
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2021

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	QA body
Name of body:	ACELS (Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services), QQI
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Business & English Language
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2021

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	Awarding body
Name of body:	ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Accounting & Finance
Date of accreditation or last review	January 2020
Date of next review	After the next revalidation of the programme

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	Awarding body
Name of body:	PMI (Project Management Institute)
Programme titles and links to publications	Advanced Diploma in Project Management
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2020 (application in process)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body) 	Awarding body
Name of body:	KPA (Kaplan Professional Awards)
Programme titles and links to publications	Diploma in Accounting & Finance
Date of accreditation or last review	2020
Date of next review	2021

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:

QOI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines **collaborative provision** as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines '**joint award**' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines '**linked provider**' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	0
Collaborative programmes	3
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	N/A

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision) 	Transnational Provision
Name of body (/bodies):	KPTM
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance
Date of last review	2019
Date of next review	2024

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision) 	Collaborative Provision
Name of body (/bodies):	Sound Training College
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Audio Production and Music Project Management
Date of last review	2018
Date of next review	2023

• Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Provision
Name of body (/bodies):	Sound Training College
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering and Music Production
Date of last review	2018
Date of next review	2023

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an **articulation agreement** may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	23
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulation agreement: 	
Name of body (/bodies):	FH Aachen, Germany
Programme titles and links to publications	BSc in International Business Studies
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	14 May 2019
Date of next review	14 May 2024
Detail of the agreement	<p>FH Aachen is a public university in Germany. This RPL agreement allows students from this university to come to DBS with 120 ECTS credits and gain direct entry onto the final year of the level 8 BA (Hons) in Accounting & Finance degree. Their programme is three years duration and they will come to DBS after year two at their home university.</p> <p>The mapping between both programmes was prepared, outlining where the University's modules and credits map to DBS's modules and credits.</p> <p>The programme mapped sufficiently with no gaps in prior learning upon entry to year 3 at DBS.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulation agreement: 	
Name of body (/bodies):	Daqing Normal University, China
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Economic & Finance
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	3 May 2019
Date of next review	3 May 2024
Detail of the agreement	<p>Established in 1965, Daqing Normal University is a Higher-Education Institution located in the metropolis of Daqing, Heilongjiang. Officially recognized by the Department of Education of the Heilongjiang Province, Daqing Normal University is a medium-sized (uniRank enrollment range: 8,000-8,999 students) coeducational Chinese Higher Education Institution. Daqing Normal University offers courses and programmes leading to officially recognised higher education degrees such as bachelor degrees in several areas of study.</p>

	<p>This RPL agreement allows students from this university to join DBS with an equivalent of 60 ECTS credits and gain direct entry into year 2 of the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA (Hons) in Accounting & Finance • BA (Hons) in Financial Services <p>The mapping between both programmes was prepared by the Course Director outlining where the University's modules and credits map to DBS's modules and credits.</p>
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• Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	FAE Centro Universitie, Brazil
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor in International Business
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	16 April 2020
Date of next review	16 April 2025
Detail of the agreement	<p>The FAE University Centre is a Higher Education Institution which is part of the Educational Group Bom Jesus. It offers more than 20 undergraduate courses across about 30 specialization courses, five MBA programmes together with Executive Education and Distance Education. It is one of the most reputable Higher Education Institutions in Paraná, Brazil</p> <p>The mapping between both programmes was prepared, outlining where the University's modules and credits map to DBS's modules and credits. Students are permitted to join DBS in year 3 of the BA (Hons) in Business general and are only permitted to choose the following electives</p>

• Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Euroaula
Programme titles and links to publications	Diploma in Marketing
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	1 May 2019
Date of next review	1 May 2024
Detail of the agreement	<p>Established in 1987, it specialises in training for the Travel & Tourism Industry. It is affiliated with the University of Girona, with a recognised Bachelor's Degree in Tourism. It is recognised by the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya to teach higher education vocational training cycles.</p>

	<p>This RPL agreement allows students from Euroaula to join DBS with 120 ECTS and they are permitted to enter year 2 of the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Business in Marketing, Level 7 – Year 3 • BA (Hons) in Marketing, Level 8 – Year 2 <p>The mapping between both programmes was prepared outlining where the college’s modules and credits map to DBS’s modules and credits.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation agreement: 	
Name of body (/bodies):	Universidad Europea Del Atlantico
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Psychology
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	21 November 2019
Date of next review	21 November 2024
Detail of the agreement	<p>The European University of the Atlantic (UNEATLANTICO) is a higher learning institution that offers students a well-rounded education based on academic excellence and personal commitment. The University is an integral part of the Spanish university system and as such offers official degrees. The educational model is classroom based and places particular emphasis on information technology and communication along with a practical orientation. This learning model encourages student autonomy as well as skill acquisition associated with professional fields.</p> <p>This RPL agreement allows students from this university to join DBS with 120 credits and they are permitted to entry year 3 of the following programme: BA (Hons) in Psychology, Year 3</p> <p>The mapping between both programmes was prepared by the Course Director outlining where the University’s modules and credits map to DBS’s modules and credits. As there is no psychoanalysis within the Spanish degree, students in year 3 and not permitted to choose psychoanalysis electives. They will also be required to get additional coverage in Lab Report writing and Quantitative Statistics. It could be suggested that they take a level 7 Experiential Psychology which takes place in Semester 1.</p>

Dublin Business School

2021

Annual Quality Report (Dublin Business School)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

During 2020 the Board of DBS commissioned a review of its own governance and effectiveness. BH Associates (<https://www.bhassociates.eu/>), an education consultancy, undertook this review. The review formed a positive view of the Board though it did make some recommendations for improvement. One such recommendation was to appoint an independent Director to the Board. Ideally that new Board member would have strong higher education experience and knowledge. The Board accepted this recommendation and at its meeting in November 2020 formally appointed Dr Richard Thorn as a Non-Executive Director of the Board. At its meeting in December the Board further agreed to appoint a second independent Non-Executive Director, this time with industry experience. This will be actioned early in 2021.

During the reporting period the following governance actions were completed and reported upon:

- Risk review for the College overall
- Health & Safety
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Mid-term review of strategy.

All of these were reviewed by the Board at its December meeting.

During the reporting period the tenure of the former Chair of Academic Board expired. He was replaced with a new Independent Chair, Brian Bennett, former Registrar and Acting President of IT Carlow. Earlier in the year the Academic Board also appointed a second independent member, Donna Bell, who is a higher education consultant with many years of experience in higher education in Ireland and internationally.

Devolved Responsibility for Programme Validation Application

DBS initiated an application to QQI for Devolved Responsibility in December 2020 and submitted the initial process documentation for QQI's review in February 2021. This is seen as an important strategic milestone towards readiness for Delegated Authority.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

As DBS has not previously completed an AQR, the actions arising from Re-Engagement in 2019 have been listed here.

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Articulate a rationale for the proposed committee structure.	Completed at time of Re-Engagement Response. However this will be continuously kept under review to ensure committee structures remain fit-for-purpose.
2	Consider the appointment of Programme Board Chairs who would report to the Course Directors	Senior Lecturers have been appointed working with Course Directors.
3	Ensure that the changes made to governance documentation to address the Panel's proposed mandatory change are consistently represented throughout the College's QA documentation.	Completed at time of the Re-Engagement Response.
4	Review quality assurance documentation for any references to legacy language	Completed at time of the Re-Engagement Response.
5	Continue to plan towards formal accreditation of all offerings, prioritising programmes of one year's duration.	In 2020 DBS validated 3 awards as Kaplan Professional Awards and in January 2021 successfully completed the process for Centre Approval with Kaplan to manage and deliver assessments for these programmes. A review of Professional Diplomas was carried out in 2020 using an external consultant from another HEI. Validation of two microcredentials was successfully carried out with QQI in Q4 of 2020 and three more were submitted to QQI in February 2021.
6	Ensure that qualifications recognised for advanced entry – accredited or otherwise – and including in articulation contexts, are subject or rigorous approval and continuous review.	Admissions review commencing March 2021 (postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19).
7	Further consider how the College's use of completion rates can increase the effectiveness and strategic capability of its quality assurance system	In progress in 2020/2021 academic year through the introduction of annual programme reports.
8	Include further information for learners, in the College's offer letter and in its Learner Handbook, on the implications of the lack of recognition on the NFQ of its unaccredited programmes, including the extent of exemptions available for learners wishing to subsequently pursue accredited degrees at DBS	Completed at time of the Re-Engagement Response.
9	Ensure that agreements with other parties reflect the grievance, appeals, and disciplinary procedures that apply to these arrangements.	Collaborative provision is subject to DBS Quality Assurance policies and procedures.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Board of Directors	30 October 2019 13 May 2020 4 November 2020 17 December 2020 Plus regular meetings between Chair and Head of Institution during 2020 during COVID-19 emergency
Academic Board	24 September 2019 5 December 2019 16 March 2020 6 April 2020 (extraordinary board) 7 May 2020 (extraordinary board) 26 June 2020 23 July (extraordinary board) 2 October 2020 1 December 2020 23 February 2021
Board of Studies	29 November 2019 24 April 2020 11 September 2020 27 November 2020
Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee (replaced by Exams Contingency and COVID-19 Contingency meetings from March 2020)	22 August 2019 26 September 2019 17 February 2020 30 November 2020 22 January 2021 11 March 2021
Exam Boards	28 August, 4 September 2019 (Springboard/ ICT) 20 August, 5 September 2019 (Arts, UG Business) 3 September, 9 September 2019 (PG Proceed to Dissertation) 11 September, 13 September 2019 (PG Business Graduates) 13 November, 20 November 2019 (Springboard/ ICT) 31 January 2020, 7 February 2020 (UG&PG Internal and External) 18 May 2020, 22 May 2020 (PG Proceed to dissertation) 11/12 June, 18/19 June (UG&PG Internal and External) 11 August 2020 (January intake UG Internal) 28 August 2020, 3 September 2020 (UG Internal and External) 11 September 2020, 17 September 2020 (PG Internal and External) 3 November, 10 November 2020 (Springboard/ ICT) 3 February 2021, 10 February 2021 (PT& Continuing Internal and External) 17 February, 24 February 2021 (FT UG year 1&PG FT Internal and External) Springboard programmes undergo internal review 1 month after each sitting, with external boards aligned to the next scheduled major exam boards.

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

During the reporting period a number of developments took place across the governance, leadership and management of the College, as follows.

Board of Directors

An independent Non-Executive Director was appointed to the Board, following a review of the Board's effectiveness. That person is Dr Richard Thorn, President Emeritus of IT Sligo. The Board also agreed to appoint a second independent Non-Executive Director, which will happen during 2021.

Academic Board

The term of the previous Independent Chair of the Academic Board came to an end in 2020. He was replaced by another Independent Chair, Brian Bennett, former Registrar at IT Carlow. The Academic Board also appointed a second independent member, Donna Bell, a highly experienced quality assurance expert in the Higher Education sector in Ireland and internationally, with extensive experience working both with QQI and as an external advisor to the HEA. Faculty representation from the transnational relationship with a college in Malaysia, KPTM, was also brought onto the Academic Board during the reporting period.

Executive Board (Senior Leadership Team)

A Director of Strategy, Corporate Development and People was appointed during 2020. The requirement for the post became evident during the COVID-19 emergency when the impact of the virus on the future of the operations of the College and the viability of the College became clearer. The College previously had a more junior role, HR Manager, which was assumed into the more senior role.

Faculty

The role of senior lecturer was created to support Course Directors in the management of a large volume of academic programmes. The Senior Lecturer role includes some teaching as well as management and administration of programmes, including pastoral support for students.

The role of Subject Expert was also created and appointed in some areas where discipline expertise was required to support the Course Director and Senior Lecturer. An example of this is in the Department of Human and Social Sciences, which spans psychology, counselling and psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, addiction studies, where specialist academic expertise is required in some specific areas.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Re-Engagement		
Re-Engagement	5/12/2019	Re-Engagement Panel Report (pp. 12–41)
Blended Learning Policy Approval	5/12/2019	Re-Engagement Panel Report (pp. 1–11)
Programme Review		
MA in Addiction Studies & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	11/4/2019	https://students.dbs.ie/quality-assurance/programme-review-validation#PR1819
MA in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy	11/4/2019	
BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance (Dublin and Malaysia transnational)	12/9/2019	
Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychology	12/9/2019	
BA (Hons) in Psychology	12/9/2019	
Certificate in Business and English Language	12/9/2019	
Higher Diploma in Business	12/9/2019	
BA in Legal Studies	12/9/2019	
BA (Hons) Laws	12/9/2019	
BA (Hons) in Financial Services	12/9/2019	
MSc in International Accounting and Finance & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy	12/9/2019	
BA (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy	12/9/2019	
MA Psychotherapy & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
Certificate in Digital Marketing	12/9/2019	

BA (Hons) in Marketing	12/9/2019	
MSc in Marketing & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
MSc in Information and Library Management & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
MSc in Information Systems with Computing & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing & Certificate exit award	12/9/2019	
MSc in Management Practice & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
Master of Business Administration & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	12/9/2019	
BA (Hons) in Business	12/9/2019	
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Science	10/09/2020	https://students.dbs.ie/quality-assurance/programme-review-validation#PR1920
Bachelor of Business & Higher Certificate exit award	09/09/2020	
Higher Diploma in Science in Data Analytics & Certificate exit award	3/12/2020	
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing & BSc exit award	3/12/2020	
Bachelor of Arts in Film and Creative Media	09/09/2020	
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Film and Creative Media	10/09/2020	
Programme Validations		
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Care (ab initio award)	07/02/2019	https://students.dbs.ie/quality-assurance/programme-review-validation#PV1920
Master of Science in Business Analytics & Postgraduate Diploma exit award	11/4/2019	
Higher Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing	10/9/2020	https://students.dbs.ie/quality-assurance/programme-review-validation#PV2021
Certificate in Marketing Technology	15/10/2020	
Master of Arts in Financial Analytics & Postgraduate Diploma	15/10/2020	
Master of Science in Cybersecurity & Postgraduate Diploma	15/10/2020	
Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence & Postgraduate Diploma	15/10/2020	
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	15/10/2020	
Higher Diploma in Business in Project Management	03/12/2020	
MSc in HRM & Postgraduate Diploma and Cert exit award	4/02/2021	

Certificate in Marketing Essentials (microcredential)	4/02/2021	
Certificate in Data Analytics (microcredential)	4/02/2021	
Certificate in Business and Digital Skills (microcredential) (pending)	N/A	
Certificate in Social Care Skills (microcredential) (pending)	N/A	
Certificate in Data Visualisation (microcredential) (pending)	N/A	
Higher Diploma in Science in UX Design (pending)	N/A	

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels³ involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/ Support Unit	Approval/ Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/evaluation processes	32				9	21	2 (Re-Engagement and Blended Learning Policy)
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes					2	17	
Desk reviews					2		
Virtual processes					5	4	
Average panel size for each process type*					5	5	5

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

³ QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	16	10	6		16				2	14	
Secretary	7	2	5		7				1	6	
Academic/Discipline Specific	48	27	21		42	5	1	1	3	45	
Student Representative	22	12	10		21			1	5	17	
QA											
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission	23	14	9		21		1	1		23	

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

In Sections 1.1 and 1.3.2 information was provided on changes to corporate governance structures and other management developments. Some of these changes were made quite recently and have not yet had the opportunity to demonstrate an impact. However, some impacts can already be seen.

The appointment of a new Non-Executive Director to the Board has already introduced a new type of thinking around how the objectives of DBS are not conflicted by the objectives of Kaplan, the parent company. And while academic governance was also present at the Board, the expertise of the newly-appointed NED has raised the profile of academic governance even further. Recent discussion on the QA systems of the College at the December 2020 Board meeting have contributed well to operational thinking and actions in terms of resourcing and actions. For example, the recent decision to recruit a Validation and Accreditation Manager was inputted significantly by discussions at the Board.

The appointment of a new Independent Chair of Academic Board, and the appointment of a second independent member have also brought a new dimension to quality management. The previous experience of Brian Bennet, Chair of Academic Board, in the delegated authority process for IT Carlow has brought some insights to DBS's preparations already. The presence of a strong Academic Board was very helpful to the College during 2020 in particular, because of the COVID-19 emergency. Many of the changes required to teaching and assessment were radical, and the availability of the independent members, in particular, of the Academic Board was very valuable in providing reassurance on the actions the College was taking.

Policy Updates

New and updated Policies added to the Quality Assurance Handbook are outlined below. All are approved through Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team. Changes to the Handbook are recorded in the [QAH Change Tracker](#).

New:

- [Blended Learning Policy](#) – new 2019 ([QAH C.1.4](#))
- [Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) – new 2020 ([QAH A.2.9](#))
- [Learning Analytics Policy](#) – new 2020 ([QAH A.2.8](#))
- [Digital Well-Being Policy](#) – new 2019 ([QAH B.2.7](#))
- [Group Work Policy](#) – new 2020 ([QAH C.1.6](#))
- [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) – new 2021 ([QAH A.2.10](#))
- Marking Policy – in progress 2021
- [Online Exams Policy](#) – new 2021 ([QAH B.5.10](#))

Update Summary (material changes only listed):

- **Part A Section 2 Policy on Policy** – updated 2020:
 - 2.1.4 Removed line that all QA procedures have to be approved by AB every year.
 - 2.1.6 Clarification that this policy relates to academic QA policies (HR and other policies are not in the QAH)
 - 2.3.6 Deleted that assessment weightings cannot be changed for programmes; this can be done with reference to QQI.
- **Part B Section 3 Learner Conduct, Appeals and Complaints**
 - 3.2.7 Addition of Online Code of Conduct to Code of Conduct section
 - 3.2.5 Addition of text : Learners should note legislation in Ireland introduced through an amendment to the Education Act in 2019 which prohibits the provision of cheating services.
Written harassment added as a major offence and statement strengthened.
Addition of text: Conduct which disrupts the normal functioning of the College or poses a risk to the institution in delivering services to other learners.

3.3 Image of types of AI added.

Text updated: It should be noted that Ireland has introduced a law to make the advertising and provision of cheating services illegal. Complaints section edited to include staff as well as learners throughout.

- **Part B Section 4 Programme Participation**

4.3.2 Added reference to kin (Re Kinship Care) along with other example PMCs, also noted holidays cannot be taken as PMC grounds.

- **Part B Section 5 Assessment Regulations**

General updates for clarity and to accurately reflect practice/processes.

Clarification around late submissions added: max 14 days late or get 0% as otherwise students could submit whenever and expect the grade as a first attempt. Also added reiteration that failing Award Stage as a result of these penalties results in capped Award.

- **Part C Section 1 Policy on Dissertation Supervision**

Clarity on number of supervisees a supervisor may take on based on teaching workload.

Details of enhancements and areas of development in DBS since 2019 are detailed in tabular form below.

Enhancement/Development	Details	Impact
Board of Studies	Board of Studies is the mechanism for high-level monitoring of programmes, and for approval of any updates to programmes arising. The processes around this have been reviewed and enhanced to ensure prior reporting and discussion with Programme Teams and Course Directors, advanced submission of documentation for review by the Chair and other members of the senior team, and improved processes for subsequent updating stakeholders of any approved changes arising.	More robust mechanisms for making changes, with more clarity, visibility and communications regarding the module change process.
Student-facing collateral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Handbook – updated • Programme Handbooks – new • Module and Assessment Guides – updated • Module and Assessment Guide with Study Abroad template – updated • VLE (Moodle) content – audit and update 	<p>Previously the Learner Handbook had information generally on DBS with a small amount of programme-specific information. Module and assessment information in Moodle took the form of a version of the QQI module descriptor.</p> <p>The updated information includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One overall institutional handbook, the DBS College Handbook which applies to all learners and is a general institutional guide to DBS. • Programme Handbooks specific to the programme teaching and assessment. • Module and Assessment Guides on each Moodle module page provide detailed information, including a week-by-week guide on the syllabus, reading lists and detailed assessment briefs and assessment criteria/marketing rubrics. A specific template for Study Abroad students is incorporated into this and a second version of the Module and Assessment Guide with Study Abroad template for use is applied where needed. <p>Alongside this an audit of all Moodle content is being carried out, in particular regarding resources required in the current online teaching environment such as lecture recording and asynchronous materials, to ensure consistency of approach and that lecturers are supported in optimising content.</p>	The documents work in conjunction with each other and capture all the information a DBS learner will need from an overall institutional perspective right through to details on an individual CA.
Postgraduate academic learner supports – academic writing	<p>Concerns regarding learner outcomes in particular areas, such as academic writing, prompted a review of academic supports by the Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Quality Enhancement in Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>Stakeholders consulted included class reps; teaching faculty; library staff; module leaders; senior leaders, and faculty delivering extant academic writing classes. Recommendations arising highlighted the need for:</p>	Evaluation will be conducted in 2021.

	<p>These recommendations highlighted the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic writing and technical skills support • diagnostic assessment of learner needs at the point of entry (both domestic and international) • targeted small group provision to address these needs • centralised institutional provision (as distinct from department provision) <p>Arising from this a new model of support for Postgraduate Academic Writing is being piloted for postgraduate intakes for September 2020, January 2021 and April 2021. The provision of this support is led by the Academic Information and Support Centre (Library) and involves a structured programme delivered by library and academic staff. DBS is now exploring a similar approach to the provision of academic support for postgraduate computing.</p>	
Programme retention	<p>A review of the Retention Reports for 2017/18; 2018/19; 2019/20 has been carried out by the Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Quality Enhancement in Teaching and Learning in order to identify priority programmes with under 70% retention in a single year and across multiple years for review and targeted intervention. The process included a review of information such as External Examiner reports, focus groups with learners, consultation with class reps and the Level Manager as well as Programme Teams and Subject Matter Experts.</p> <p>Actions arising include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three programmes brought forward for early review to address content or structural issues. • Review of learner workload and assessment schedule at module and stage level. • Identified need to carry out further review of Study Aboard provision. • Two programmes identified for 'watch and monitor priority list'. 	Retention rates for 2020/21 and 2021/2022 will provide indicators of success.
Annual programme reporting	<p>As noted in Section 2, DBS is currently rolling out an updated annual programme report template for all discipline areas in this reporting cycle (Q1&2, 2021). The template captures quantitative as well as qualitative feedback on all validated programmes in DBS and highlights the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for programmes in each area.</p>	Enhancement of current programme monitoring process. Early identification of strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvements. Feeds into cyclical Programme Reviews. Allows evidence-based decisions around programme effectiveness.
New programme development and programme review: process and documentation	<p>Since 2017, DBS has undertaken a substantive body of work developing new programs and the required cyclical Programme Review and Re-validation process for existing programmes. A considerable focus has been placed on due diligence and primary research to support</p>	Improved outcomes for validations and programme reviews (i.e. numbers of programmes approved for (re)validation).

	programme development, and documentation of this and all elements of programmes. There is now a centralised, systematic and collaborative process around this.	Fewer conditions arising from programme (re)validations. Quality of documentation noted by review and validation panels. Increased numbers of commendations arising from programme (re)validations.
New programme development: Independent Programme Review Panel	The programme development process approved through Re-Engagement with QQI put in place a requirement for all new programmes in development to be reviewed by an external independent panel appointed by DBS, prior to submission to QQI for validation. All new programmes in 2020 were subject to this review of by a panel comprised of an experienced Chair, academic and industry expert. Feedback from the panel is incorporated into programme prior to submission to QQI.	As above, improved outcomes.
Inclusion of embedded and exit awards in programme validations	Postgraduate Diploma exit awards are now embedded as standard in all Masters programmes. In some cases Certificate exit awards are also provided for at Level 9. At undergraduate level, consideration has been given to increased inclusion of exit awards, with a Higher Certificate exit from the Bachelor of Business and an ordinary Bachelor of Science exit from the Honours Bachelor of Science in Computing Programme. In addition, three Postgraduate Diploma awards were validated as embedded (not exit) awards in 2020, a PGDip in Financial Analytics, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence, embedded in the principal Masters programme counterparts.	Increased flexibility and improved access, transfer and progression opportunities. Award recognition for students who cannot complete full Masters awards.
Programme teaching and learning strategies	As part of the above, a programme-specific teaching and learning strategy for any programme under development or review. This is developed by the Course Director and Programme Team in association with the Head of Quality Enhancement in Innovation and Teaching and Learning and the Head of Academic Programmes and captures the teaching and learning modes and assessment mechanism, including learner workload, learner experience and graduate skills, competencies and outcomes.	Improved (re)validation outcomes as above. Student outcomes arising will be monitored on an on-going basis.
Multimodal programme delivery	In 2020, DBS developed and successfully validated two Higher Diplomas that contained a novel tripartite arrangement whereby class contact/on-site time was reserved for small groups and focussed peer networking and collaboration, while the traditional large classroom lecture approach of information dissemination and a more didactic form of teaching is now achieved through asynchronous materials in the form of Reusable Learning Objects. The blended/multimodal offer facilitates greater peer-networking and knowledge-sharing through smaller on-site and live	Feedback on the Higher Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing which has been in operation since September 2020 has so far been very positive. The outcomes will be monitored on an on-going basis. The experience provides opportunities for further student-centred innovation in programme delivery.

	online class groups, and the use of flipped classroom and learner-led reflection.	
Employer Engagement Board	<p>In September 2018 DBS formally launched its Employer Engagement Board. The membership of this board is cross-functional across the College, including representation from Academic Faculty, Course Directors, Careers Coaches, Sales and Marketing and Senior Management.</p> <p>The board has been set up to develop an integrated plan of action that increases the engagement with employers and contribute to the DBS objective of having employer-led programmes. It monitors ongoing performance against this plan and ensures full sharing of information across the College on all engagement with employers. In order to enhance and clearly define the role of the EEB the terms of reference have been reviewed in 2021 to give greater clarity and firmly embed the EEB as an oversight group for the Industry Boards at discipline level.</p>	<p>Oversight of Industry Boards and increased focus and input on development of employer-led programmes.</p> <p>Strengthened relationships and opportunities for collaboration with industry.</p>
Industry Advisory Boards	<p>Industry Boards have been established in discipline areas as follows since 2018:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marketing and Business in existence since April 2020 (24 members) ● Computing in existence since September 2019 (16 members) ● Fintech in existence since September 2018 and currently being reformulated (18 members) <p>These Boards support and feed into programme development and review, learner career development, and access to real life projects / case studies and guest speakers.</p>	<p>As above, strengthened relationships and opportunities for collaboration with industry.</p>
Online exams and online proctoring	<p>From April 2020 the College put all exams online in response to the COVID-Further details are provided in the case study presented in Section 4 below. Ultimately the process worked well. With the continued situation, it was agreed to keep exams for the 2020/21 academic year online. In order to preserve integrity of exams, the College is now trialing online proctoring software from January 2021 with specific high-stakes exams such as Level 9 and professional exams. Based on learning from the proctoring trial, the plan is to roll this out further for summer exams.</p>	<p>Increased flexibility in exams, while maintaining integrity of assessment.</p>
Faculty training – teaching, learning and assessment	<p>The staff training portal on Moodle was revamped in 2020, with the addition of a number of reusable objects on such topics as assessment, group work, online teaching, applied teaching online and teaching to large groups. The reusable learning objects cover both technical how-to support and pedagogical guidance.</p> <p>A new Faculty Pathway was introduced in 2020 to guide the orientation and induction of new faculty to ensure they were as prepared as possible</p>	<p>Improved teaching and learning practices.</p> <p>Outcomes will be monitored over time.</p>

	<p>before embarking on teaching at DBS and that they had sufficient academic and technical support in the first six months of teaching. DBS has become Access members of AdvanceHE in order to avail of its resources on teaching and learning as well as facilitate faculty to embark on AdvanceHE's fellowship track.</p> <p>DBS started facilitating access to National Forum short courses, with the staging of the short course on Getting Started in Online Teaching and Learning that resulted in a Digital Badge for those who completed the course.</p> <p>Guidance for programme development and revalidation teams on formulating teaching, learning and assessment strategies at module and programme level has been formalised. DBS facilitates ABC Curriculum Design sessions for module leaders developing blended learning programmes.</p>	
Educational Technology Team & infrastructure	<p>Since 2018, DBS has set about assembling an Educational Technology (EdTech) Team.</p> <p>A multi-modal development team comprised of an AV technician, two instructional designers, an education developer and an educational technologist has since been established to facilitate the construction and delivery of multi-modal courses that mix live in-the-classroom, live online and asynchronous delivery. An AV pod for the recording of professional audio and person-to-camera content has also been constructed on-site in the Castle House building. Webcams and microphones have been installed in all classrooms for hybrid delivery, and wide-screen TVs with multiple mics and tracking cameras to facilitate enhanced hybrid delivery have been installed in approximately a third of all teaching spaces.</p>	<p>Improved supports for learning, teaching and assessment, and in particular online and blended learning initiatives.</p> <p>Increased flexibility for students.</p>
Participation in StudentSurvey.ie	<p>DBS participated in StudentSurvey.ie for the first time in 2020. The response rate for DBS was 25% which compares favourably, given that it was the first time DBS had participated in the survey, to a national response rate of 31%. DBS compared very well across all indicator scores in comparison to other HEIs, particularly for higher-order learning, quantitative reasoning, learning strategies, collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, effective teaching practices and quality of interactions. Even though DBS scores well compared to other HEIs, there are some indicators where scores do seem quite low in general, particularly student-faculty interaction, suggesting that even though DBS scores well, there are some areas where DBS could improve.</p>	<p>Analysis of results will be carried out in 2021. DBS will participate in the survey again in 2021 and the information will be further used to build an action plan.</p>

Student Experience and Success – COVID-19 Student Services Response	See case study in Section 4.	Opportunity for enhanced student experience overall.
Internationalisation	The DBS Head of Student Experience was elected as Chair of the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) in 2020. ICOS works to ensure that international education policy and practice in Ireland is quality-driven and remains firmly focused on the educational and social needs of all students.	Increased visibility and traction for the support of International Students in Ireland.
Online learner inductions	In 2020 a Learner Support Committee (LSC) comprised of representatives across the College and Chaired by the Head of Academic Information and Resource Centre was formed to coordinate and streamline the range of activities in the College relating to supporting students. The first major initiative was project management and deployment of an online induction for all learners coming into the College. The syllabus for this was developed by the LSC.	Improved learner information. Outcomes will be monitored in 2021. Areas of interest would be impact on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student outcomes • Numbers of Appeals and Complaints • Academic Integrity

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

DBS is part of QQI's National Academic Integrity Network.

As per the case study presented in Section 4 below, DBS is in the process of implementing online proctoring for exams to mitigate against academic impropriety. While this is in its early stages, a substantive sample (1100+ individual student sittings of exams) has been extremely positive indicated that there is huge potential in this area. Additionally, the College hopes to look at using the system for a viva/testing system arising out of suspected cases of academic Impropriety.

In early 2020 the Registrar and QA Officer presented to the DBS Student Council regarding the new legislation against contractual cheating. Further work directly with students is planned.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation. If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1	Devolved Responsibility application	In progress February 2020. Registrar's Office.
2	Readiness for DA/institutional review	Q4 2021. Board of Directors, SLT, Academic Board, Registrar, Validation and Accreditation Manager.
3	T&L staff training and development	In progress. Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and learning, EdTech Team.
4	Online proctoring	In progress Q1 2021. Exams Office & Registrar.
5	RPL Review	Stage 1 commencement – review of Admissions articulation agreements. Registrar, Director of Marketing and Admissions.
6	Review of strategic plan	In progress with Kaplan, SLT workshop April 2021.
7	Appointment of a second independent director to the governing Board	By Q4 2021. Board of Directors.
8	Academic Programmes Annual Programme Reporting evaluation	June 2021 Academic Board. Head of Academic Programmes and Course Directors.
9	Postgraduate academic writing support – future enhancement based on findings and review of pilot	In progress – to be reviewed Q2 2021. Academic Heads.
12	Pilot of postgraduate academic learner support in computing	By Q4 2021. Academic Heads.
11	DBS review professional body possibilities for relationships and exemptions	All new validations and re-validations 2021 consider professional accreditation – and RPL review also. Head of Academic Programmes, Course Directors.
12	Academic Programmes Development to include Graduate Skills Map/Matrices – i.e. what does a DBS graduate look like?	All new validations and re-validations 2021. Head of Academic Programmes, Course Directors.
13	Academic Programmes Assessment Review	Q3 2021. Head of Academic Programmes, Course Directors.
14	Industry Advisory Boards established in Arts and in Health Sciences/reconstituted in A&F and Computing	Q3 2021. Head of Academic Programmes, Course Directors.
15	Study Abroad and partner review	Decisions for students September 2021. Head of Academic Programmes, Course Directors.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Higher Certificate in Arts (PG22789)(6M20349)	Apr/May 2021	Date of validation 15 July 2015 First intake Sept 2015
MSc in Applied Psychology (PG21015)(9M16836)	Mar/Apr 2021	Date of validation 11 July 2014 First intake Sept 2014
Certs in Intl Business (PG22432)(S620271)	Apr/May 2021	Date of validation 16 June 2016 First intake Sept 2016
Cert in Sales	Not proceeding to review.	Date of validation 16 June 2016 First intake Sept 2016
Cert in Tourism Marketing	Not proceeding to review.	Date of validation 16 June 2016 First intake Sept 2016
MSc in Digital Marketing (PG23218)(HETMAJ9)	Apr 2021	Date of validation 8 Dec 2017 First intake Sept 2017
MSc in Data Analytics (PG23171)	Apr/May 2021	Date of validation? First intake Sept 2017
MSc in Financial Technology (PG23852)(9M20662)	Sept 2021	Date of validation 25 Sept 2018 First intake Sept 2018
Higher Diploma in Science in Financial Technology (PG23577)	Sept 2021	Date of validation 8 Dec 2017 First intake Sept 2017
European Business School – Transnational Delivery accreditation of MBA and BA (Hons) in Business	Sept 2021	
There may be further transnational or other collaborations in the coming year as discussions are taking place with other potential partners.		

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

BA in Applied Social Care	(PG23256)(7M20624)	Sept 2018 Sept 2022
BA (Hons) in Applied Social Care	(PG23251)(8M20623)	Sept 2018 Sept 2022
BA (Hons) in Audio Production & Music Project Management	(PG23892)(8M20666)	Sept 2018 Sept 2022
Higher Cert in Arts in Sound Engineering & Music Production	(PG23890)(6M20664)	Sept 2018 Sept 2022
Certificate in Arts in Sound Engineering & Music Production	(PG23891)(6S20665)	Sept 2018 Sept 2022
Cert in Fund Accounting	(PG23231)	Sept 2017 Sept 2021
Diploma in Big Data for Business	(PG23239)	Sept 2017 Sept 2021
Cert in Risk & Financial Analysis	(PG23236)	Sept 2017 Sept 2021
Cert in Cloud Platform Development	(PG23229)	Sept 2017 Sept 2021
MBA	(PG24237)(9M20833)	Sept 2019 Aug 2024

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

CASE STUDY Student Well-Being

There is no national framework for student welfare in the Irish Third Level Education Sector. Therefore, DBS has aligned with the UK Universities Mental Health Charter. This covers five key pillars: Work, Learn, Support, Live and Whole of University approach. DBS is the first Irish Higher Education Institution to sign up to this charter, and it has benchmarked its services against its peers in the sector.

All Student Experience and front-line staff have completed the National Office for Suicide Prevention 'Safetalk' programme, with a number of key staff also completing the advanced 'Assist' suicide prevention programme. There is also a comprehensive mental health awareness training programme in place for staff, in conjunction with our counselling partners, Mindme.ie.

The student calendar has been realigned to focus on health and welfare early in the academic year, with themed weeks on mental well-being, disability awareness, and consent, within the first five week of College. These weeks specifically make incoming students aware of the support that they have, both at an institutional and peer level. DBS facilitates regular student well-being and mental health workshops in conjunction with Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health. These are compulsory for all student officers, club and society officers, and are open to all other students. We also run regular dyslexia workshops which are always excellently attended.

DBS offers a free confidential counselling service for all students. This is provided through our counselling partners, Mindme.ie, ensuring confidentiality and a guaranteed appointment with a counsellor within 72 hours. Since COVID-19 these are all provided via on-line and video link services.

A number of mental well-being initiatives have been implemented:

- Mental Health Posters have been put into all toilets and key areas, including staff toilets.
- DBS have signed up to <https://niteline.ie/> a student out-of-hours helpline.
- The Digital Well-Being Policy was developed and approved, followed by training for all staff. This policy has been incorporated into all full-time student inductions
- Student scenario planning and staff immediate actions have been completed.

Student Scenarios Planning

Student Scenarios have been classified into three categories, with clear directions and actions for each:

- High risk: immediate action needed – emergency situation
Examples include: imminent threat of suicide, violence in class, threats made by student to teacher, injury or death
- Medium risk: no immediate risk, direction to correct support required
Examples include: student anxiety, student depression, student dealing with bereavement
- Low risk: can be dealt with within regular College structures
Examples include: learning disability, student complaint, medical note

This allows College staff to take the appropriate action if a scenario arises and be safe in the knowledge that the student will be looked after in the correct and appropriate way.

CASE STUDY COVID-19 Student Services Response

Student Services has migrated many tasks online over the past 3 years, and thus was well prepared to switch to online when COVID-19 hit Ireland. The real challenge has been to maintain a friendly, inviting and accessible service, without the physical environments in which we usually operate.

- The College set up a dedicated e-mail address for any students who were worried or had concerns with regards to Covid-19. The Welfare Team made direct contact with all students who e-mailed, with daily contact maintained to check on his/her status.
- The Student Services Team moved all services online with the closing of the College Buildings on 16/3/20. Student Services, Student Welfare, and the International Office already had an online presence, making the transition to fully online services relatively easy.
- Student Services supported many students who elected to return home or were advised to do so by their parent College. The team reassured the students through this difficult and uncertain period and did our best to ensure they had a safe passage home.
- It was important to create a friendly face for Student Experience, a place where students could go to discuss issues or concerns with a member of the team 'face to face' via videolink. Thus the Student Experience Virtual Office was created and is open 9 to 5 daily via Zoom. This is manned by the team ensuring there is always a friendly member of staff to help at the end of the line. It allows students to contact the Student Experience Team via video link during office hours with any queries.
- Specific supports were targeted at different international student groups:
 - Chinese students who went into self-isolation were contacted daily to ensure their physical and mental well-being.
 - A video conference was held with Indian student Class Reps to better understand concerns and worries allowing for a targeted response.
 - For nationalities with large numbers of students in DBS, fact sheets were developed and circulated to embassies, which in turn communicated these across their social media platforms.
- All services and supports of the College were already online, and reminders of these services and how to avail of them were communicated regularly through social media channels to the student body.
- The Common Room is the nucleus of the Student Experience in DBS. It was important to continue this link with students virtually, thus the 'Virtual Common Room' was established. This is housed within the student area of the website, and has three distinct sections, the main Common Room Landing page with social news and updates, The Student Well-Being Corner, managed by the DBS Welfare Officer with content from the Student Welfare Team, and the Education Corner, with areas such as studying and working from home and preparing for on-line exams covered.
- The Student Union Officers and Student Mentors quickly became key in engaging our student body, creating videos and content and providing peer to peer advice and support.
- Welfare workshops were rolled out with good student attendance.
- Feedback sessions were facilitated by Student Experience where the College got valuable insights into the students' experience on on-line learning and on-line exams.
- A number of virtual events have been held for students, such as quizzes, competitions, singalongs, coffee mornings, and virtual tours.

CASE STUDY Online Exams –COVID response from March 2020

Background

From April 2020, DBS, of necessity arising from campus closure in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, moved all exams online. This was not a strategic endeavor at the time, but a necessary response to a unique situation. However it required massive mobilisation and commitment across the College, by both staff and students, many of whom were naturally extremely anxious about the situation.

Objectives

In carrying out online assessment and examinations from March 2020, DBS applied following core principles in online exams:

1. The integrity of assessment and learning outcomes must be preserved.
2. Students should not be disadvantaged.
3. So far as possible, 'business-as-usual' should be maintained with respect to type of assessment, timing, and workload for Faculty.

In this context, before putting exams online, the DBS Registrar carried out an initial mapping exercise against QQI's *GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS, 26 MARCH 2020*.

Summary of online exams March–September 2020

Online exams oversight

An Exams Contingency Group was formed comprised of:

Andrew Conlan-Trant (Executive Dean), Lori Johnston (Registrar), Justine Brunton (then-Assessment and Regulations Manager), Lee Richardson (Data Analytics and Reporting Manager, SESU Team Lead), Sarah Sharkey (Student Retention Officer, SESU), Darragh Breathnach (Head of Academic Operations), Emma Balfe (Head of Faculty and School Operations), Eddie Ormonde (Head of IT), Isabel Ashburner (Learning Technologist), Grant Goodwin (Quality Assurance Officer).

This group met several times per week from 9 March 2020 through to May 2020 and then convened as necessary thereafter. The group identified processes for deployment of exams online through Moodle, and created a workplan, including communications to students.

Exam paper review and classification

All exam papers were reviewed by the Registrar and classified according to type for considerations for deployment online. Considerations included the type of paper and rendering of answers (MCQs, essay, short answers, mathematical or arithmetic content, coding/programming content, diagrams) and security considerations (possibility of collusion and cheating). Classifications were sent to all lecturers for review and discussion and any changes made to assessments as required. Changes included building MCQs-type questions as Moodle quizzes to allow for randomisation of questions and answers, and deployment of multiple papers to mitigate for cheating.

Exam deployment, support and marking

A process was defined with the Exams Office for building exams in Moodle, with advance instructions and practice areas for students.

Papers were deployed mainly as PDFs with a separate file upload link. Online exams were deployed as timed exams and the Urkund plug-in in Moodle was activated to ensure all submissions were subject to text-matching analysis; however, full online proctoring was not possible or desirable at that point.

Live support was provided online throughout each exam, with a phone number on each module Moodle page, a LiveChat option in Moodle and any issues captured and tracked in a shared invigilator report.

Marking was carried out online by lecturers with otherwise the normal processes for QA, moderation, External Examinership carried out.

External Examiners

External Examiners were kept informed of plans via online meetings, which were well attended.

Academic Board

As per its Terms of Reference, the DBS Academic Board is normally scheduled to meet 4 times per year. From March to July 2020, the Board met monthly. All exam contingency proposals were presented to the Academic Board for discussion and approval.

Personal Mitigating Circumstances – dedicated COVID-19 Committee

DBS operates a Personal Mitigating Circumstances (PMC) process for students who have particular circumstances arising which impact their studies. A dedicated 'COVID-19 PMC Committee' was convened to ensure consistency, fairness and timeliness of decision-making around COVID-19 impacts on learners. The committee comprised Dr Lee Richardson (Data Analytics and Reporting Manager, SESU Team Lead), Dr Rosie Reid (Course Director), Rita Day (Course Director), David Williams (Course Director) Mary Nolan (Level Manager), Grant Goodwin (QA Officer). Students making contact regarding COVID-related circumstances impacting assessment were not required to provide medical evidence in the period March 2020 to September 2020.

No Disadvantage Policy

DBS additionally instituted a No Disadvantage Policy under COVID-19, approved through Academic Board. The following principles were applied:

- **Borderline module marks:** The existing policy for consideration of borderline marks within 1% of a higher grade threshold was extended to 2%, based on review of preponderance and trajectory.
- **Failed modules:** For students who failed a module or modules, the repeat was given as a first opportunity, with no penalty, no capping of award, and no repeat fees incurred.
- **Award Stage:** Students whose performance deteriorated between the previous stage and current stage (undergraduate) or previous semester and current semester (shorter programmes) were reviewed in detail by a committee comprising the Registrar, QA Officer and x2 Course Directors/CD nominee. Performance and any anomalies were followed up with lecturers and it was ensured that the full range of factors was taken into account. Anomalies were then flagged to exam boards and it was ensured that as a minimum, students were able to avail of the 'free' repeat opportunity.

Outcomes

- Attendance at exams was tracked and a >90% attendance rate across all exams from March 2020 to September 2020 was achieved (this includes repeats, where attendance is typically less strong).
- Overall final student outcomes for the academic year 2019/2020 were consistent with previous years, with 86% successfully progressing.
- 335 students were offered repeats as first sittings.
- Feedback from External Examiners was extremely positive overall. One Extern commented that extension of consideration of marks at the 2% threshold was perhaps too generous.
- A snapshot of global pass rates is given below. Across and within levels analysis showed variation, with increased pass rates in some areas and dis-improvements in other areas.

Comparison of Global Pass Rates						
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total	84%	81%	81%	82%	86%	86%

NEXT STEPS: Online Exams Proctoring Pilot from January 2021

Moving towards online exams as a 'new norm' in 2021, DBS has felt it incumbent to ensure the integrity of exams by considering additional approaches, including but not limited to, online proctoring.

In deploying online proctoring DBS has remained cognisant that, in ensuring integrity of assessment and outcomes, other considerations include assessment design generally. In particular, while maintaining assessment strategies as per the programme validations, consideration should be given to writing exams specifically for an open-book environment, or at least allowing for the potential that students will be able to access notes; as such a focus should be put on higher-order learning and the demonstration of understanding and application rather than memorising facts, though this should inform best practice in assessment at all times.

In January and February 2021 DBS piloted online proctoring for 34 exams and approximately 1100 individual student exam sittings. The exams involved were Irish NFQ Level 9 exams and Ofqual Level 6 exams on the English framework. The online proctoring company used was identified following six months of research with companies by the Registrar, Assessment and Regulations Manager and Head of IT. The company was selected based on considerations around user experience, security features, ease of deployment of different paper types, and of course, cost considerations played a part.

Proctored Exam Deployment

Experience in deploying exams via Moodle was beneficial in terms of understanding the implications of deploying different types of exams online. Sample questions across a range of subject areas were provided to the company concerned for demonstration papers to be built so that the functionality and rendering of papers could be fully tested. Initially, it was DBS's intent that any proctoring introduced would need to be carried out within the existing VLE (Moodle) in order to simplify the process, retain the benefits of student and staff familiarity with the platform, and ensure lecturer access to scripts for marking within Moodle. However, once the features of the proctoring platform were more fully understood, the decision was taken to avail of the option to deploy exams from the third party platform. This allowed for much greater flexibility in terms of building papers within the platform and a greater range of features. Notwithstanding this, DBS proceeded with caution and a backup plan. Above all, the College was aware of the concerns around introducing students to a new platform in an already stressful context of exams combined with remote working. As such, the following approaches were applied:

- Exams were launched from a link within Moodle – while the exams themselves took place in the third-party platform, the timed link was made available from the DBS module Moodle page, which students were already familiar with. No additional log in was required in linking through to the platform; though students were required to fill in their details before commencing the exam, this process was similar to completing the front of an exam script booklet and did not require a login.
- Exam types were tested in advance to ensure that in addition to text, the system could appropriately handle complex exams such as maths/statistics/accountancy and programming. Students were given the option to type answers directly, or type or handwrite their answers and upload file.
- Security features such as browser lock-down or infringement warnings (such as cautioning candidates moving around/out of camera sight etc.) were not applied.
- A team internal to DBS comprised of the Exams Team, IT Team and Academic Operations were online throughout, with the DBS IT phone number and Moodle LiveChat available to students. While support was available via the proctoring company, students were not required to contact this directly – any technical queries which could not be resolved by DBS immediately were referred to the company, but students were at all times dealing with a team directly in DBS.
- Live observation of students was not used in the pilot and it remains under consideration if this will be availed of for future exams. Instead, an analysis report of activity during the exam is used to assess if improper activities have taken place. DBS staff did avail of the option to look at students' computer screens 'live' only to help with any technical trouble shooting.
- PDFs of papers with an upload link were readied in Moodle as a backup for any students who had issues which could not be remedied during the exams.
- Extra time of 30 minutes was allowed.

Outcomes

As with exams in Moodle, attendance numbers were monitored against maximum expected numbers and all issues during exams were monitored.

In terms of accessing of exams, a small number of students (<0.25%) were completely unable to access the platform due to technical issues. These were given the option to complete their exam in Moodle.

A number experienced issues during exams: examples include on-screen issues such as questions not displaying properly or difficulties uploading. Where students reported any issues, if these were not able to be easily resolved, they were permitted to upload to a link in Moodle. While a full analysis is still being carried out, the order of magnitude was around 10–20 students affected overall. As with contingencies applied in 2020 as above, a full analysis will be carried out and follow up steps taken to ensure no students are disadvantaged by online proctoring.

Two significant considerations arose:

- In some of the first exams, students seemed unaware of the timed nature of the online exams, despite visibility of a clock on the exam page 'desktop' and times on the timetable and in Moodle, as well as extra time of 30 minutes being applied. As such, some students failed to submit before the close of the exam. The first time this happened a link was opened in Moodle to allow for late uploads, and this was followed by a larger communications follow up to all students.
- Lecturers became accustomed to and adept at marking within Moodle with the move to online exams in 2020. With the move to the new platform this was no longer accessible, and additional administration was required. The workflow here is a consideration moving forward. While it is very easy to download from the platform, this requires access and training. There may be options to automate this going forward.

A survey was issued to staff and students w/c 15 February 2021 to gather feedback on proctored exams. To date, the majority of students responding are in favour of retaining at least some exams online, with a clear minority wanting to return to on-site traditional exams for all exams.

Conclusions

Summer exams will be closely monitored and students will be supported to ensure they can achieved their potential in the on-going environment. DBS will continue to carry-out on-going analysis and respond accordingly.

[End of Dublin Business School AQR 2021]