


QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2019 Edition – Part B

Section 2: Learner Supports (EXTRACT)

2019

2.7 Digital Wellbeing Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B Section 2		
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References/ Supporting Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENQA (2015) <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i>, Standard 1.3. 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment'.¹ • QQI (2016) <i>Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines</i>, Section 2.5.1, 'Teaching and Learning' and Section 2.5.2 'A Provider Ethos that Promotes Learning'.² 	

2.7.1 Policy Overview

This document details DBS policy relating to online behaviours, including e-mail activity, use of social media and academic propriety in the online context. As technology is constantly evolving, this policy is not deemed to be exhaustive in terms of specific technologies or apps to which students and staff might be exposed. However, central to the policy is the tenet that as per the DBS Code of Conduct, all communications should be conducted in a professional and courteous manner. All members of the College, both students and staff, should be treated with respect and dignity at all times. Further, high standards of academic and personal integrity must be maintained.

¹ https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

² <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>

2.7.2 Policy Statement

DBS encourages learners to engage in groups and societies and establish networks, including through the use of social media and technology, to promote the development and enhancement of the learner community. Participation, whilst often social in nature, must be appropriate, inoffensive and respectful at all times. All parties are required to be mindful of their language and the material they choose to share.

Students may set up social media groups for study and socialising but the College is in no way aligned with or responsible for these. Notwithstanding this, if inappropriate behaviour such as cyberbullying involving DBS students is brought to the College's attention, the College will take action in line with the Disciplinary Policy.

Communications by learners relating to their programme of study, assessment or any official College supports must be directed through formal channels, i.e. via the Helpdesk or via DBS e-mail to the appropriate department. Messages via social media about programmes of study are not considered formal communications channels and will not be actioned.

Before sending an e-mail or posting on social media, users should consider if it is the best medium of communication. It is also important to consider the tone and approach. Be aware that, without visual cues, there is more scope for misunderstanding than in a face-to-face setting. Be as clear and concise as possible.

- Students must either log a ticket via the Helpdesk or use their DBS e-mail for all correspondence with staff, including lecturers.
- Lecturers and other staff members are not expected to respond to e-mails from students outside of working hours.
- Complaints or other issues should be raised via the proper channels, as per the Appeals, Complaints or Disciplinary policies.
- Defamatory posts via social media will not be tolerated and will be removed and disciplinary action will be taken.
 - Learners are entitled to make complaints about a College service or individual where they feel it necessary to do so. Complaints must be dealt with through the proper channels, with all parties given the opportunity to state their position.
- Students may not contact DBS staff via social media apps such as Facebook messenger or WhatsApp.
- Formal **professional** communications may be sent via LinkedIn, but correspondence relating to programmes of study must be conducted via the Helpdesk or College e-mail.

- Lecturers and other staff are **not** obliged to accept connection requests in LinkedIn or to respond to messages via LinkedIn.
- Staff and lecturers are not permitted to share their personal contact details with learners. Where a member of staff has a DBS mobile phone they may choose to share this number if it is required for the programme of study (for example, in the case where external site visits are part of the programme of study it may be necessary for students and lecturers to be able to make contact).

Online Behaviours

E-mail Etiquette

- E-mails should always be sent from College e-mail accounts to College e-mail accounts.
- E-mails should be appropriate and professional.
- E-mails should commence with an appropriate salutation and be signed off by name. It is very helpful if learners also include their programme and student number.
 - It is not necessary to be overly formal, but mails must always be courteous. An address such as 'Hi X' is usually acceptable between learners and staff. If in doubt, or if sending a more formal request, a more formal address such as 'Dear X' should be used – no one will be offended by this so it can be best to err on the side of caution.
 - Acceptable sign-offs include 'Best regards', 'Best wishes', 'Regards', 'Many thanks'.
- E-mails should be properly written, punctuated and spell-checked. It is discourteous to the recipient to send poorly written e-mails and creates a bad impression.

Social Media Etiquette

- Online study groups, even amongst friends, should be treated as a professional and constructive environment.
- Posts and discussions should be properly written, punctuated and spell-checked.
- The tone of a communication should be considered, and whether it could be misinterpreted or seen as an attack on someone.
- Posts should be relevant to the discussion at hand.
- Social media groups used to study should not be used to air personal political or religious views or to discuss sensitive topics that are not germane to the area of study.
 - It is recognised that students in specific disciplines may have more need to discuss sensitive topics. Such discussions should nonetheless not become overly personal.
- Consideration should be given to whether a topic may be perceived as sensitive, and if so, whether it is appropriate to post at all, and possible motivations for doing so.

- If a post raises concerns, before reacting, consideration should be given to whether there is a possibility of a misunderstanding.
 - It can be better to send an individual message politely asking for clarification, rather than risk inflaming the situation with a group post.
 - Most platforms are moderated or have mechanisms for reporting controversial posts – it can be better to have matters dealt with formally than to try to intervene in something directly.
- Other people’s content, such as text, photos or videos should never be posted or re-posted without their permission.
 - Learners are reminded that, as per the Code of Conduct, it is not permitted to record sound or video in a teaching situation (such as, but not limited to, lectures, seminars, tutorials or labs) without the prior written consent of the lecturer and the other participating learners.

Users should remember:

- *Digital content is effectively indelible – once content has been posted it is impossible to remove its footprint completely.*
- *You are unlikely to regret **not** posting something at a later date. If in doubt, do not post.*
- *You are free to block individuals or to leave a group if you become uncomfortable.*
- *Even if you only post in your personal accounts, with secure settings, posts can be screenshotted and redistributed.*
- *It is possible to disagree with something and still remain polite.*

Academic Propriety

The full DBS policy on Academic Impropriety (i.e. including all forms of cheating and plagiarism) is given in the Academic Impropriety Policy in the QAH Part B Section 3.3. However, learners and staff alike should be aware of proper academic conduct in the digital and online contexts.

- Websites or other electronic resources consulted and cited as part of any academic piece of work should be verified as legitimate sources of information, and fully referenced.
- The use of purchased material from online ‘essay mills’, whether purchased by the learner or otherwise, is an intentional attempt by the learner to submit work that is not their own and will be dealt with severely.

- It should be noted that Ireland has introduced a law to make the advertising and provision of cheating services illegal³.
- There have been reported cases of students who have used essay mills or ghost-writing services subsequently being blackmailed by such sites.

2.7.3 Additional Documents

- DBS Online Code of Conduct – see Part B, Section 3.2.7

³ Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/act/32/section/15/enacted/en/html#sec15>