

Dublin Business School

2023

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**Annual Quality Report  
(Dublin Business School)  
Reporting Period 2021-2022**

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2023

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**Annual Quality Report  
(Dublin Business School)  
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM  
Reporting Period 2021-2022**

## 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.

# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template.....	6
<b>PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG) .....	7
<b>Introduction and Overview of Institution.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.0 Internal QA Framework .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Governance and Management of Quality .....	10
1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision .....	16
<b>2.0 Programme Development and Delivery .....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Programme Development and Approval .....	17
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification.....	22
2.3 Procedures for Making Awards .....	24
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment.....	25
<b>3.0 Learner Resources and Support .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>6.0 Information and Data Management .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>7.0 Public Information and Communication .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments .....</b>	<b>55</b>
1.1 Strategic QA Updates .....	55
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR .....	62
<b>1.3 Governance and Management.....</b>	<b>69</b>
1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule.....	69
1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments .....	70
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review .....	72
1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews .....	72
<b>2.0 IQA System - Enhancement and Impacts .....</b>	<b>75</b>
2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity.....	81
<b>3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period .....</b>	<b>82</b>
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives.....	82

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods .....	84
3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period .....	84
3.2.2Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period .....	86
<b>4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies.....</b>	<b>87</b>

## Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template<sup>1</sup>

### 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](#)

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<sup>1</sup> 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 2021 - 31 August 2022**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 24 February 2023**.

The AQR has been approved by DBS Academic Board, Senior Leadership Team, and Board of Directors and is submitted by **Grant Goodwin (Assistant Registrar)**.

### 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. In the academic year 2021/22 the number of registered students at DBS was 8,297.

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/>).

During 2021/22 DBS decided to cease delivering English language programmes itself. Instead, where it has students who need English language teaching, they are referred to the Kaplan English Language School in Dublin. DBS continued to hold ACELS accreditation during the year.

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 2021/22 academic year attendance on campus returned to normal with COVID-related restrictions lifted. Learning experiences for students changed, however, during the time when COVID was prevalent and restrictions were in place. Many students requested to attend online even when classes were available on campus. As such, and in line with the available guidelines from QQI on the provision



of teaching during times of COVID restrictions, teaching delivery remained on a hybrid schedule from September 2021, 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, in 2021 Kaplan provided courses to approximately 700,000 individuals and professionals worldwide. It has turnover of approximately \$1.4 billion and represents just under half the overall Graham Holdings company business.

DBS currently (February 2023) employees 403 staff. Of these, 274 are directly involved in teaching delivery while 129 are non-faculty staff.

DBS successfully completed the Re-Engagement process with QQI in 2019, including gaining approval for provision of blended learning.

DBS's Strategic Plan was reviewed and a Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 was launched, and can be found [here](#).

### **Process for Development and Approval of the AQR**

DBS welcomes the opportunity to engage with the AQR process for the second time. This has been a chance for the organisation to monitor developments through the pandemic and formalise monitoring and self-reflection activities around professional services as well as policy development.

In terms of completion of the report, initial preparation was carried out by the Registrar and Assistant Registrar. Briefings on compilation of the 2023 Report were provided by the Registrar at meetings of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Academic Board prior to Christmas 2022.

The Assistant Registrar reviewed the 2022 AQR submission for any components of Section A that required updating for the 2023 submission, and transferred the corresponding components of Section B to the appropriate spaces for self-reflection and commentary or updates. The key stakeholders due to report back on progress since the 2022 submission were invited to provide their respective updates.

A draft of the report was presented to the SLT on 14 February and Academic Board on 16 February 2023 for consultation and approval. The document was left open for review and comment before finalisation ahead of the QQI deadline on 24 February.

## 1.0 Internal QA Framework

### 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Please refer to:

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

[1.2 DBS Governance and Organisation](#)

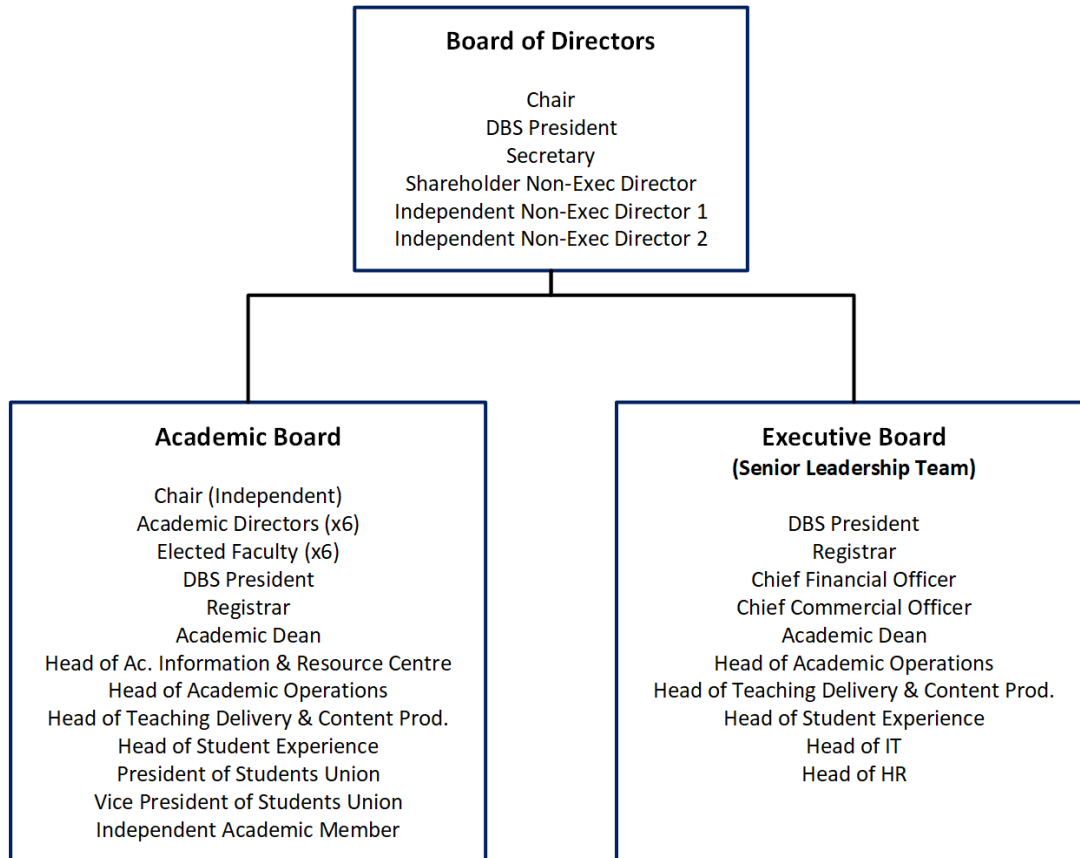
[1.3 Terms of Reference for Governance Boards and Committees](#)

[1.4 DBS Leadership Structure and Roles](#)

As per the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016, p.5) 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 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, DBS President
- Secretary, Rachael Convery, General Counsel, Kaplan International
- Shareholder Non-Executive Director, Lisa Nelson, Director of Learning & Curriculum, Kaplan UK
- Independent Non-Executive Director (Academic), Dr Richard Thorn, President Emeritus, IT Sligo
- Independent Non-Executive Director (Business), Audrey O'Sullivan, General Counsel and Legal Director, SIRO.

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

Two sub committees of the Board exist. One is the **Delegated Authority Committee (DAC)** whose purpose is to provide oversight and assurance to the Board of Directors that there is an effective process for continuous improvement in the preparations for and the state of readiness of DBS to apply for Delegated Authority from QQI and to guide the Executive of the College, as appropriate, in its preparations. The membership of the DAC is the DBS President (Chair of the DAC), the Chair of the overall Board, the Independent Non-Executive Director (Academic), the Registrar and the Independent Chair of the Academic Board.

The other sub committee is the **Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)**. The purpose of the ARC is to review and advise the Board on i) the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's arrangements for risk management, internal control and governance; ii) arrangements for ensuring sustainability, promoting economy & value for money, efficiency and effectiveness; iii) the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's data management and quality assurance data management; and iv) the provision of external and internal audit for the College. The ARC is chaired by the Independent Non-Executive Director (Business). The other members are the DBS Chief Financial Officer, a Legal Counsel from Kaplan and another member of the DBS senior leadership team, other than the President. (Currently that is the Head of Academic Operations, who also has responsibility for risk management at the College.)

**The Academic Board** is the supreme senior academic authority of DBS, and ultimate guardian of the academic integrity and quality of its provision of programmes of education. 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 DBS President, Registrar, Academic Dean, Head of Teaching Delivery and

Content Production, Head of Academic Operations, Head of Student Experience, Head of the Information and Resource Centre (Library), Academic 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 President of the College, and comprises the Chief Commercial Officer, Registrar, Academic Dean, Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production, Head of Academic Operations, Head of Student Experience, Head of Finance, Head of IT and Head of Strategy, Corporate Development & People.

The Executive Board is a decision-making entity.

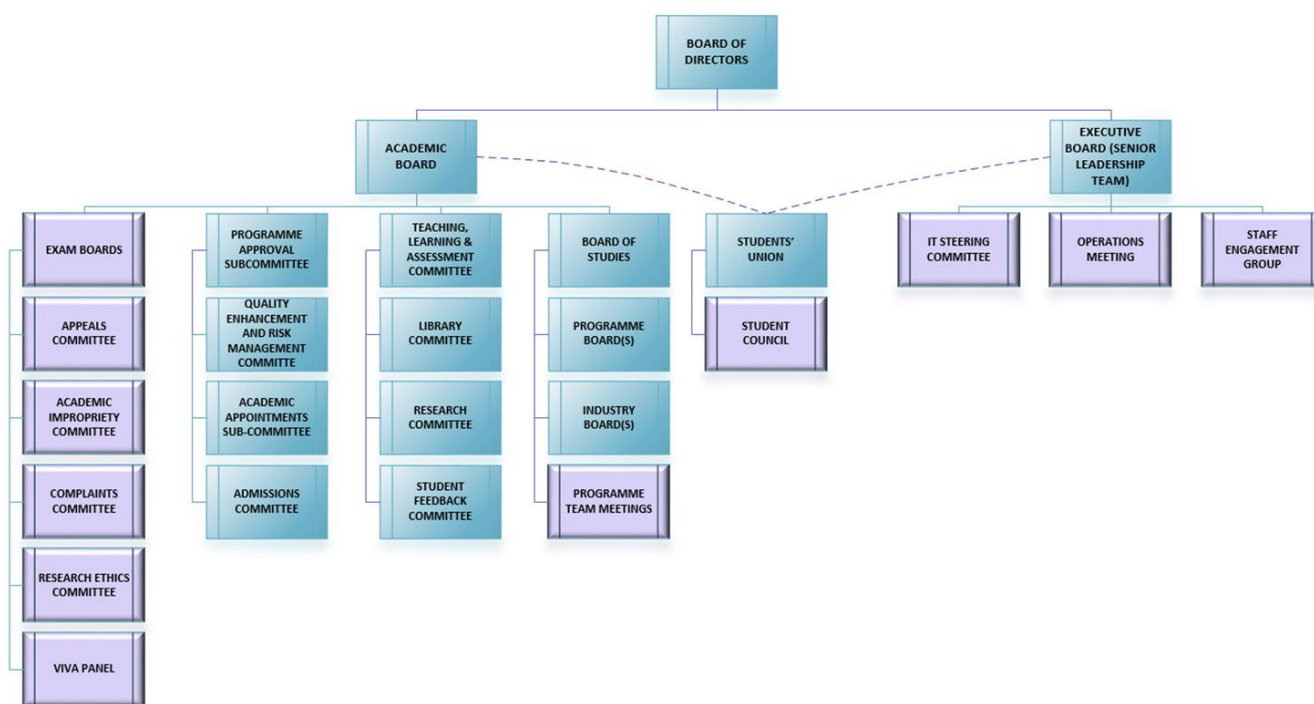
The interaction of these three Boards at the most senior level of the College is fundamental to the success of DBS in maintaining and improving quality and standards. As a private college, the business integrity of DBS is further safeguarded by strong corporate governance from the parent company structure, 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
- Annual review of Employee Engagement with the CEO and Chief People Officer of Kaplan Inc.
- 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 on a number

of occasions in 2021/2022, but a review and rationalisation of membership was carried out, along with that of other Academic Board committees, during 2022 and some changes were recommended. These were implemented after the end of the 2021/2022 academic year.

#### **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 Academic 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 Academic 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. As referenced earlier a review of Academic Board committees has taken place and some rationalisation has been done. This will be outlined in next year's AQR.

## 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 this section of the QAH 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.

DBS currently has transnational and collaborative provision as detailed in Section 9.2 below. DBS has had an on-going relationship with KPTM in Malaysia for many years and as such has an established track record of successful transnational provision. DBS also has a recent relationship with EU Business School in Munich where two programmes were validated for transnational provision during the 2020/21 academic year. Student recruitment has commenced onto these programmes. In February 2022 DBS submitted an application to QQI for differential validation of the MSc in Business Analytics and MSc in Digital Marketing for transnational delivery with the University of New York in Prague (UNYP). That application is currently still in process and the panel meeting was held in December 2022, which is after the end of the academic year being reviewed. This will be reported on in more detail in the 2024 AQR.



## 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. 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)

Academic 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 Academic Dean 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 Academic Dean's Annual Report to Academic Board.

In the 2021-22 academic year, DBS successfully held Programme Boards across all disciplines. The meeting schedule is set out in Part B 1.3.1 of this Report.

**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 Academic Dean (Chair); the Chair of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee; the Chair of the Research Committee; the Registrar; all Academic Directors; the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production; the Head of Student Experience; a Library representative; the School Administrative Officer 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.

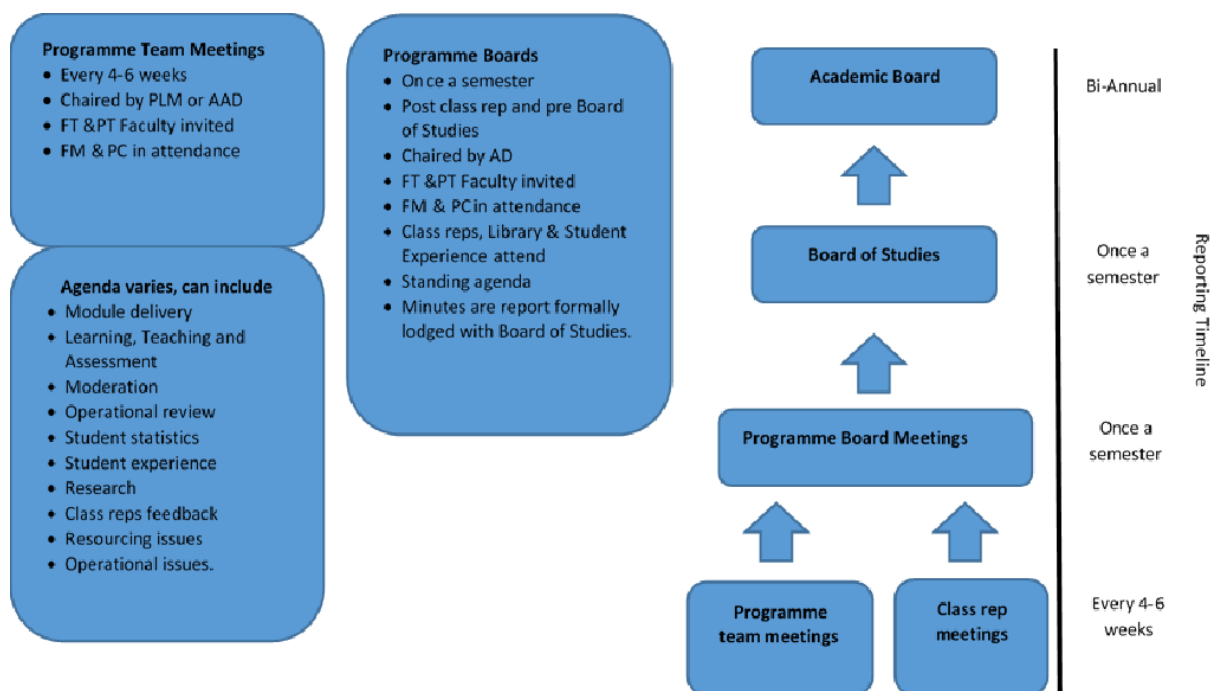
**Annual Programme Reports (APRs)**

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 Academic Directors to the April/May Board of Studies. The Academic Dean will then report on the Annual Programme Reports in the Academic Programmes Annual Report at Academic Board in July each year.

This process was trialled for one discipline area in 2020 and brought forward for all programmes in 2020/2021 with reports presented in all discipline areas. Given the volume of detail and content in the reports, a dedicated session on this was held on 10 September 2021 with all Academic Directors and key members of academic management as well as the President of the College. Academic Directors presented detail of each of their reports at this meeting.

For APRs in the academic year 2021/22, timings are currently under consideration to ensure the process is fully optimised to bring the maximum benefits of the process in addressing issues and making enhancements in the most timely manner. DBS has three standard intakes of students annually, in September, January and April, as well as other smaller non-standard intakes. This can make the reporting cycle challenging.

This process was trialled for one discipline area in 2020 and brought forward for all programmes in 2020/2021 with reports presented in all discipline areas. Following an assessment of workload and data availability, it was agreed that APRs would be produced for each academic discipline on a bi-annual basis for the November Academic Board following the reporting period.



DBS Programme Reporting

### Review of Certification of Validation periods

Through an ongoing review of programme reports, retention data, consultation with executive management and market needs, the Academic Dean keeps under constant review any DBS programmes which require review and revalidation. As a minimum all programmes undergo a full review once every 5 years as per statutory requirements, but programmes may be brought forward for early review where a need is identified. Once these are agreed for review, programme teams commence the programme development process. This is further outlined in the next section.

### Programme Review

The Academic Dean is responsible for overseeing the formal review process for all programmes. This is carried out under the academic leadership of Academic 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's Office for internal approval before release to the programme review panel. Final approval is through application to QQI for Re-validation following the full review process.

### **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, and updated in 2021 with the approval for Devolved Responsibility by 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 condensed 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.

### **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 2021-2025, 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, Academic 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 Academic 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.

DBS currently has four industry boards:

- Marketing and Business, in existence since April 2020 (25 members)
- Computing, in existence since September 2019 (16 members)
- Accounting and Finance, in existence since September 2018, reformulated from an original FinTech basis (9 members).
- Human and Social Sciences, in existence since January 2022 (16 members)

## 2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

*Please refer to:*

**QAH Part B Section 1 Learner Admissions:**

- o 1.1 Information for Applicants Policy

**QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:**

- o 2.9 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

**QAH Part B Section 6 Examination Boards and Award Classifications:**

- o 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 2021-22, eleven open events were held during the year, all 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**
- **5.10 Online Exams 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 Academic 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 Academic Dean. Learner feedback on teaching and learning quality is also captured via regular Class Rep meetings, details of which are fed back to the Academic Dean and the Academic 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 Teaching Delivery and Content Production, and Academic Dean. 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. Prior to commencement of the academic year 2021/22, in light of continued restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made that exams would continue to be held online for the duration of the academic year to allow for planning and advance information to be provided to incoming and continuing learners regarding the nature of assessment. This was supported by the Online Exams Policy which had been created and implemented from February 2021, and exams were hosted online through the 2021/22 academic year. 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. Since 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. Since 2021-22, academic support outside the timetable for learners at DBS is coordinated by the Academic Support Community (ASC), which brings together staff-led support through the library, student-led support through Student Experience and targeted support for at-risk learners identified using learning analytics by the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU). Collectively, the ASC offers a seven-phase programme of themed events and interventions over two semesters. The first four phases of the programme, which replaces the previous "First 100 Days Programme" offers the same topics of learner support but from both the learner and staff perspective, with the added layer of bespoke support for at-risk learners.

### Semester One

- Weeks 1-3 Are you ready to learn?
- Weeks 4-6 Assignment Success
- Weeks 7-9 Applying Feedback
- Weeks 10-12 Exam & Research Success

### Semester 2

- Weeks 1-4 Re-energise
- Weeks 5-6 Breathing Weeks
- Weeks 6-10 Exam Success

### 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 followed in 2021 when they were recognised globally as a Kaplan Way Award Winner for Student Success. The Student Experience Team look after a number of areas including Student Services Hub, Student Welfare and Well-being, Disability and Inclusion, International Office, Clubs and Societies, Student Leadership Programme, and Careers Hub.

### **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.

### **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 2021/22 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 then, DBS has been incorporating options for blended delivery, including on-demand asynchronous content, into new programmes and to existing programmes as they are reviewed and revalidated.

### **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. 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 Academic Directors, and staff who support research, including the Research Librarian and a representative of the Ethics Committee. The Practice Research Coordinator, in place since February 2021, drives the College's research strategy, and coordinates with the Library and academic disciplines to focus resources and encourage research in each area.

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.

The Practice Research Coordinator produces an annual report each December that includes a record of research outputs from DBS faculty and staff, research support initiatives, funding applications and a summary of the annual Practice Research Conference, which takes place in May.

## 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 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy (HR)*

*DBS Policy on Staff Members Attending Internal Courses*

### 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 Diversity, Equity 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. All teaching staff are also subject to endorsement by the Academic Appointments Sub Committee (AASC), a sub committee of the Academic Board, which verifies that the proposed appointee to a teaching or supervision role is suited and/or may be in need of some teaching or assessment supports.

## 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.

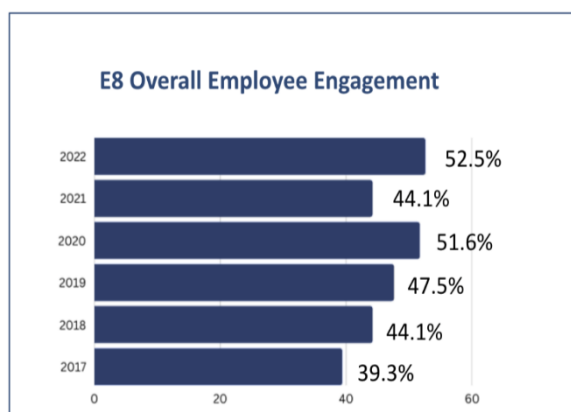
The DBS values are:

- ★ 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 six years. Over this period the overall employee engagement has continued to increase incrementally with just one exception in 2021. The graph shows that trend over the past 5 years.



### Talent Management and Development

DBS is focused on the talent management and development of its staff. Following a training needs analysis DBS launched a training calendar inviting staff to participate in a range of online courses covering Microsoft Office 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. Staff can take a course free of charge and family members receive a 25% discount. 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, Learner Engagement and Research Support.

### 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 in the process of 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 during 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. These have continued while operations and teaching returned to on-site.

**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 Academic 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 Academic 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 members of academic management of the College 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 requirement for an Advanced Pathway with additional Teaching or Supervision training and supports, 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, Academic 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.

As part of the induction 'pathway' process, the new lecturer meets with the Faculty Manager, Academic Director and the Learning Unit (formerly known as the 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 Academic Director
- Takes the lecturer through the process of how they get paid
- In conjunction with the Academic 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 Learning Unit
- Provides a campus tour
- Arranges a staff ID card
- Arranges induction with the Exams Team
- Arranges induction with the Library Team

#### 2. Academic 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. Learning, Teaching and Assessment Unit:

- Shows the lecturer how to use Moodle and teaching tools (such as Zoom)
- Directs 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 Academic Directors in staff planning for their relevant programmes. The Academic 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 Academic 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 Academic 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. During 2022 formalised its Learning Unit to support faculty, with additional resources. The Learning Unit now consists of two Educational Developers and a Learning Technologist. The unit provides

formal and informal training and development opportunities in multiple modes, covering both technical and pedagogical issues.

### **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 synchronous online teaching and learning, such as designing and delivering 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 Learning Unit and the Assistant Registrar host a drop-in session (currently online) every Wednesday from 5-6.30pm. All faculty are welcome to attend to ask any questions or raise concerns at these sessions, which are often followed up by one-to-one training at a later date. An appointment booking mechanism is available for faculty unable to attend the drop-in times.

### **Training by request**

The Learning Unit 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:

- During 2022, the Learning Unit developed an eight-phase on demand module pathway, which takes faculty from the initial steps of taking on a new module through to reflecting on their teaching performance having taught the module. This module pathway can be engaged with individually, with the support of the learning unit or with peers from a programme team. The module pathway will be mandatory for all new faculty during their probation period from the start of 2023. The Module Pathway is accompanied by workshops and informal lunch n' learns staged by the Learning Unit.
- Formal short courses designed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.
- Access to AdvanceHE fellowships through institutional access membership.

### **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 Academic 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. The peer-based teaching observation is currently focussed on the quality of teaching content, with assessment moderators also tasked with reviewing teaching content and the layout of the Moodle pages. Observation of recordings and peer feedback on delivery is not taking place as a matter of course, but only when an issue with the teaching delivery has emerged through learner feedback or moderation of the teaching content. Moderation of content and observation of recordings can lead to bespoke training by the Learning Unit at the request of the Faculty Manager and/or Academic Director.



## 6.0 Information and Data Management

*Please refer to:*

*QAH Part A Section 2 Overarching Policies:*

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

*Student Guide to Learning Analytics*

*Student Engagement Dashboard User Guide*

Information about learners enrolled with DBS is currently held on the internal Student Information System (SIS), Agresso (note, a new SIS is in the process of going live and will be reported upon in the 2024 AQR) . 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, the Koha library management system, and, the Mercer Mettl online exams proctoring platform, which has been used for some exams in 2021/22 and will be rolled out further in the next academic year.

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 Academic Dean and Academic 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).

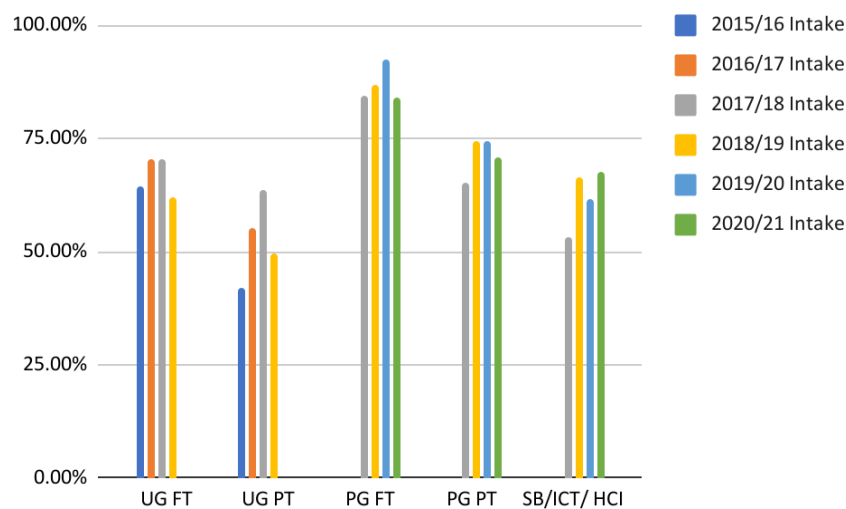
This data allows a comparison, where appropriate, with retention data published by the HEA in 'A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education' (2010) or 'A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education' (2018). Note: The 2018 publication does not provide a breakdown of progression for years 2 and 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 Academic Dean and

Academic Directors, Faculty, Academic Board, and Board of Studies, which in turn feeds into Programme Boards and other fora as necessary.

Retention figures are provided to Academic Directors and the Academic Dean team, which includes Academic Learner Support and Faculty support. The retention figures inform discipline and institute-wide initiatives to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and assessment content and delivery. Where the retention figures throw up anomalies, Learner Support, Academic Directors and Faculty support come together to devise bespoke initiatives to target those anomalies. Additionally, semi-annual Learning Reviews are carried out and presented by the Academic Dean and College President to Kaplan, where DBS reports on its measures of student success-Academic Performance, Student Satisfaction and Student Advancement-and initiatives to improve DBS's performance in those areas.

### Completion

DBS defines completion as the percentage of students who successfully complete a programme on time or plus one year. Previously, DBS was unable to report accurately on programme completion due to system limitations. However, a completion reporting has been developed, tested and brought into use for programmes completed in the academic year 2021/2022. This data is now being tracked of completion of programmes commenced from the academic year 2015/16 for full-time undergraduates, part-time undergraduates, full-time postgraduate, part-time postgraduates and funded programmes (Springboard/ICT/HCI).



DBS Completion Rates

As with retention data, and the other mechanisms used to measure student success, completion rates feed into discipline and institute-wide initiatives to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and assessment content and delivery. Completion rates are captured on a programme level-basis, which allows for programme comparison within and across disciplines.

### **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
- Focus Groups
- Compliments and Complaints.

Once student feedback has been gathered, a report is produced and circulated to the Academic Dean, Faculty Managers, Academic 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. Student feedback and satisfaction is also discussed regularly at senior leadership team meetings.

## 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](http://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, as follows:

### 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.
- In June 2021 DBS was approved by QQI for Devolved Responsibility for Validation of New Programmes, thus assuming responsibility for the management of external evaluation and reporting for new programmes, subject to approval and final sign-off by 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 approved and ratified by the Senior Leadership Team and 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 QQI, and may entail a Differential Validation or Programme Review.

### **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 two independent non-executive directors, one with higher education experience and one with business experience. The Academic Board membership includes an independent Chair and independent academic member, both with significant experience in higher education.

Proposed External Examiners are nominated by members of the programme team and endorsed by the relevant Academic Director based on the criteria as indicated in the External Monitoring of Programmes Policy (*Quality Assurance Handbook*, Part B Section 6.1). The nominating Academic 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:



As noted above, in 2021 DBS gained approval from QQI for Devolved Responsibility for validation of new programmes within its scope of delivery. While the overall process remains the same, the Quality Assurance Handbook, Part C Section 2 sets out the distinct elements where Devolved Responsibility or the QQI-led validation applies. QQI-led validation remains in place where programmes constitute a change of scope and for other categories such as transnational delivery. In all cases, DBS submits a programme application, including Terms of Reference, to QQI before convening a panel, and approval is sought to proceed.

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).

Dublin Business School  
2023

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**Annual Quality Report (Dublin Business School)**  
**PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE  
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT**  
**Reporting Period 2021-2022**

## **PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM**

## 1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

### 1.1 Strategic QA Updates

#### **Applied Social Care**

One of the most significant occurrences in the 2021/22 academic year related to our application to CORU for their approval of the DBS Applied Social Care programmes. Approval from CORU was not attained and a series of happenings occurred that led to the withdrawal of the programmes and the refund of fees paid to almost all students.

#### **Background**

DBS had two programmes in Applied Social Care validated by QQI in 2018/19. They were the

- Level 7 BA in Applied Social Care (3 years FT, 4 years PT), and
- Level 8 BA (Hons) in Applied Social Care (4 years FT).

The first three years of the Level 8 programme were the same as the full content of the Level 7. When the Level 7 programme was validated we also validated a one-year Level 8 programme which, at the time, we saw as a progression route for graduates of the Level 7. We subsequently decided to validate a four-year Level 8 ab initio programme and, as a consequence, retired the one-year Level 8 programme. We had not submitted the one-year Level 8 programme to CORU for their approval.

The programmes fall under the remit of the statutory body CORU for recognition of the protected title of Social Care Worker. As such, it is necessary for any programme to go through a recognition and approval process with CORU. As the CORU recognition process is evidence-based, programmes must have been running before an application can be made to CORU.

Eight four students had commenced the Level 7 and 8 programmes since they were validated. By the time this matter arose, ten had already completed the programme and the remainder were at different stages.

The core requirement for CORU recognition for Social Care programmes is a 3-year Level 7 programme. DBS sought approval for both its Level 7 and Level 8 programmes. DBS made an application to CORU to commence the process for recognition of the programmes in September 2021, with submission of the documentary evidence in February 2022, as per agreed timelines with CORU. Following feedback received from CORU, whereby issues identified by the CORU Review Team suggested that the application could not be successful, DBS withdrew its application pending further internal discussion on next steps to amend or redevelop the programmes. This was done in good faith with the intent of protecting the programmes from outright failure in the process, with no recourse.

Following this the students on the programme were informed and academic management started to work on options to put to students that would lead them to successfully become eligible for application to the register of social care workers when it would open.

Communicating with the students led to a significant wave of negative social media coverage which was very quickly picked up by mainstream media. The matter ultimately became political.

Over a two week period media coverage continued and solutions as offered to the students to progress through other channels to the social care register were lost in a demand for fees to be refunded. It was agreed to refund the fees.

#### ***Actions and responses of CORU***

As stated above, DBS agreed a timeline with CORU for the submission of its application for approval. That timeline was followed with the process commenced in September 2021 by an application to CORU. This was followed in February 2022 with a self-evaluation submission against the CORU criteria for social care programmes. CORU fed back to DBS in writing on 30th May 2022 and in a meeting with DBS on 10th June 2022 that, in effect, the programmes would not be approved by them. This was because of a mix of insufficient evidence provided to demonstrate compliance against some criteria and the view expressed by CORU that our programme construct, as it pertained to a mandatory placement, was not correct (in that there were insufficient credits applied to the placement). CORU indicated at that time that approval was very unlikely to be given and that we could consider, if we wished, to withdraw the application, change the programme and the submission document, and reapply again.

After the application was withdrawn, DBS management, headed by the President, met with CORU to explore options for our students. In this discussion CORU confirmed it was unable to facilitate alternative options for progression of learners as this would be outside its legislative remit. CORU's legislative remit was to approve or not approve programmes that produced graduates who wished to be eligible to apply for the register of social care workers, and in doing so ensure the protection of the public who engage with social care workers.

#### ***Actions and responses of QQI***

In 2018 QQI had validated the Level 7 programme and in 2019 it validated the Level 8 programme. At the time a condition of the Level 7 programme was that it be mapped against the CORU criteria, which it was. Once this condition was satisfied the programme was approved by QQI. The panel for both programme validations was convened by QQI and they had two social care experts on the panel; one was an academic from an Irish public HEI and the other was a practitioner from a children's charity in Ireland.

Once this matter became public in August 2022 QQI contacted DBS to discuss the validation of the programmes. The discussion was robust as the DBS view is that this was not a matter of non-



compliance with programme validation. We operated a validated programme that had been approved by QQI, in full compliance with that validation. Ultimately DBS reached agreement with QQI that we would discontinue the programmes. In hindsight, it was a mistake to agree to do this as it closed off options for students and left those who had part-completed the course disadvantaged in terms of their options, unable to complete their award.

Once it was confirmed to QQI that the programmes were not continuing, their normal processes applied whereby the validation was subsequently ceased.

### ***Progression routes for students***

Formally, when a programme terminates before learners have finished, it triggers the PEL (Protection of Enrolled Learners) arrangement. In the case of DBS its PEL arrangement is for the fees most recently paid (as set out in legislation) to be returned to the learner. To facilitate this and to meet its legislative requirements, DBS has a financial bond with Kaplan Inc. In line with the values of DBS and Kaplan, we decided to return not just the fees most recently paid but, instead, to return all fees paid by all students, including those who had completed the course.

QQI endeavoured to find a solution to transfer students to another CORU-approved course and to have their credits achieved at DBS recognised. This proved not possible because at the time i) so few other programmes in Ireland had CORU approval and ii) none, other than one in Galway, had a process approved by CORU for the recognition of prior learning. For a small number of students who had done no more than approximately 60 credits at DBS (equivalent to one year full time) they were able to start again on an approved CORU programme at another college in Dublin. Ultimately the solutions provided to students are as follows,

- 16 started in 1st year on a new Social Care programme at another college
- 9 transferred to a different programme at DBS with as many credits as possible recognised
- All others were offered a refund of all the fees they had paid.

### ***Analysis***

Currently we are having an external review undertaken by an independent consultant. That person is John Vickery who is a former Registrar of an Irish public HEI. The main purpose of that review is to identify the root causes and other factors that contributed to the decision to withdraw the application for approval and to make recommendations for changes DBS should implement to ensure this or similar could not happen again.

In the meantime an internal analysis has been conducted to understand how this came about. We believe there are a number of factors that contributed to the matter relating to the Applied Social Care programmes.

1. This is the first application for approval that DBS made to CORU. While the criteria were clear and the submission was made against the criteria, the quality of the submission made was not sufficient to meet the requirements of CORU. The internal processes that applied at the time as they related to professional bodies was insufficient and therefore did not challenge the quality of the submission. The people writing and reviewing the submission document leaned on their experience of the academic programme approval process and were not

sufficiently versed or trained on the process for preparing and submitting statutory approval documents. CORU did offer guidance on how to complete a submission. However, the DBS staff found it technical in its nature and felt that it did not provide the more qualitative or formative assistance that would have been to the benefit of a new application for approval. Thus, we leaned on our own best understanding of what a submission to CORU should look like.

The points above arose because of custom and practice within DBS which places the responsibility for a professional relationship with discipline experts. We have professional relationships with bodies such as ACCA, CIPD, PMI, PSI, IAHIP, IACP and others, all of which have been managed successfully by members of the academic programme team. We applied the same approach to CORU, placing the responsibility for the relationship and the interactions with the programme team. This, however, was insufficient.

2. The submission made by DBS to CORU was not the only factor in this matter. Elements of the programme construct needed to be changed. CORU indicated that the credit weighting of the placement modules was too low, notwithstanding that the total number of hours attached to the placements were correct and met the CORU requirements. They also indicated that the learning outcomes of the placement modules do not demonstrate constructive alignment of the achievement of the standards of proficiency. These factors are more difficult to comprehend as the placement module, delivered in both stages 2 and 3, are exactly as set out in the programme document approved at validation. A condition of the Level 7 programme validation was that the programme be mapped against the CORU guidelines. This mapping was done. It satisfied the experts on the QQI panel and was subsequently approved by the QQI PAEC approval meeting. The subsequent identification by CORU of an issue with the construct of the programme was difficult to understand and accept. The matter has identified a weakness in the programme validation process where approval by a professional body is required in addition to QQI's approval of the programme. The fact that the programme could run for four years without a requirement for CORU to assess if it met its criteria has transpired as fatal to the programme. QQI have since stated to DBS that they will endeavour to work with CORU to prevent any future contradictory outcomes arising.
3. A further contributing factor is the fact that CORU does not review for approval a new programme; they only review, or accept an application, once students are on a programme. This meant the programme could not be reviewed in 2018, when the Level 7 was validated, or 2019 when the first intake started. The earliest it could have been reviewed was 2020 and, in that year, CORU did not review any applications. The first engagement with DBS about making an application was March 2021. This meant that even if we had reached the same result as in 2022, we would have been managing a solution to the matter a year earlier than we did and the matter would have impacted about 40% fewer students (34 less). Further, CORU indicated clearly to us when we met them in early June that they believed we could not either provide sufficient evidence or make the structural changes to the programme within the time window available to us, which closed on 30th June 2022.

At the time of writing, the matter overall continues. It has been a significant challenge for the College to deal with and one that was not identified in the risk register prepared for 2022.

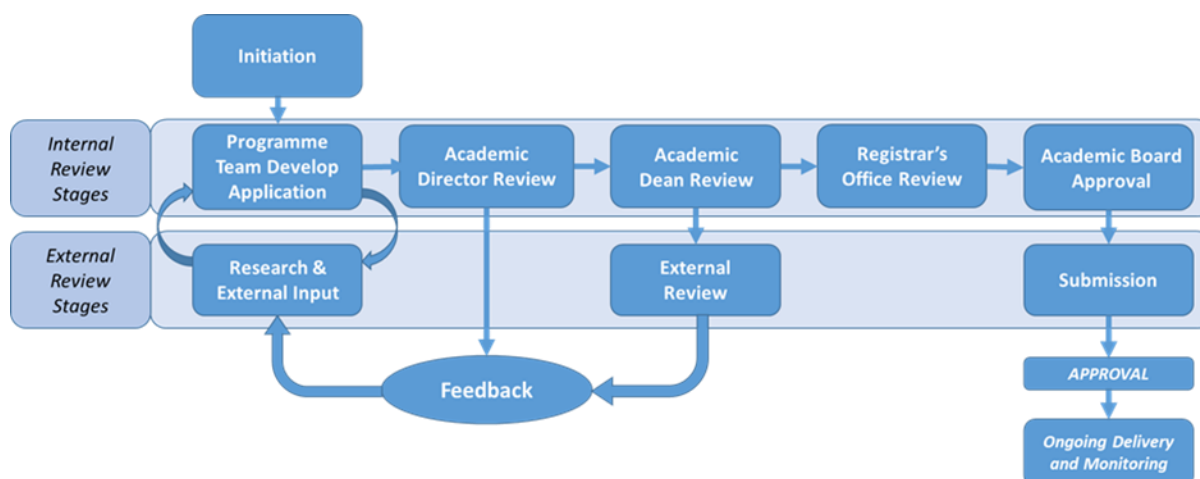
### ***Changes required to mitigate a similar future risk***

The formal review being done by the external consultant is not yet complete and when it is, will make recommendations. Already, however, our own internal analysis has identified changes that need to be made, as follows.

1. The relationship with professional bodies has always been managed at the discipline level. This will now change whereby all relationships will be managed at the institutional

level. In practice this means that the owner of the relationship will be from the Registrar's Office and all formal communication, including the submission of request for approval or retention of approval, will be managed through the Registrar's Office. This will likely need an increase in resourcing of the Registrar's Office and that is being worked through at the moment with the Registrar

2. A new approval process will be implemented internally to sign off on submissions to professional bodies. The following flow diagram outlines the steps and the key elements required to provide a more rigorous review internally followed by the convening of an external panel of experts to assess the suitability of the submission. This has been approved by the DBS Academic Board.



## DBS Strategic Plan

The DBS Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 was developed in consultation with the SLT over the period from January to July 2021; the full strategic plan and objectives are accessible on this [link](#). Arising from the update strategy a number of projects were identified, work upon which is on-going, and where relevant are captured later in this report in the Objectives sections. These are listed below.

No.	Project	Description
SP1	Alumni	Develop a plan to engage with alumni to i) increase placement and employer opportunities for learners and ii) to sell additional products to them
SP2	Programme Strategy	Prepare an academic programme strategy and plan covering the next 3 years to include i) an outline skills matrix to guide what we will develop, ii) incorporate WBL into programmes as standard, iii) incorporate environment/sustainability into programmes and iv) incorporate the values of good citizenship.
SP3	Careers Service	Define the "award-winning careers service" we want to have in place and prepare a plan to develop it, including the measures of its success, i.e. graduate outcome rates
SP4	Academic Delivery	Define and implement a new agile academic delivery resource with the skills and competencies to meet the needs of the future multi-modal delivery. Use this work as the basis of creating the desired faculty culture

SP5	Student Wellbeing	Establish a health and wellbeing service for students to incorporate the disability service previously managed through the Academic Information & Resource Centre
SP6	International Student Service	Develop a support proposition for international students taking account of their requirements arising from now living in a different country and learning in a different academic culture
SP7	Professional Academy	Develop a professional training business to take the opportunity for short courses and bespoke programmes aimed at individuals and businesses
SP8	Customer Service	Develop a customer service plan and charter covering all areas of the College that interface with students, customers and the public. In parallel, review and improve processes both within department and across departments so as we can establish credible targets that we are confident we will meet
SP9	Student Feedback	Prepare a more integrated and effective plan to seek feedback from students, analyse it, distribute it to the areas where action is necessary and monitor the implementation of actions
SP10	Internal Communications	Develop and implement an effective internal communications plan so as all staff are appropriately informed and have the opportunity to provide feedback locally and corporately
SP11	Environment	Build on the work of the sustainable environment group to create a sustainable environment policy and plan to i) reduce the carbon footprint of the College and ii) promote that face
SP12	Digital Capacity	Further expand our digital capacity for teaching and learning, and customer service. Expand the use of digital technology in teaching and enable automated solutions to service where appropriate, building on the theme that the learner or customer can access “however and wherever” they wish
SP13	Business Incubator	Launch and sustain a business incubator unit and leverage this in programmes to enhance innovation and develop entrepreneurial skills amongst students
SP14	Recognition	Achieve formal reputable recognition for the College which can be used to promote the brand and our programmes
SP15	Overseas Delivery	Pursue articulation agreements, international collaborations and transnational validation relationships to increase international business in-country as well as in Ireland
SP16	Cybersecurity	Review our IT networks and systems for vulnerabilities and take steps as necessary to minimise the risk associated with a ransomware attack
SP17	Financial Governance & Audit	Ensure the highest level of financial governance at DBS through audit and periodic checks to ensure compliance with government contracts and Kaplan/GHCO policies
SP18	Academic Standards	Establish a means of measuring and evaluating our academic standards and outcomes in the development, delivery and assessment of programmes to enable robust benchmarking internally and externally, and identify areas for improvement that will enhance our academic standards.

Terms of Reference for each project were developed by the responsible member of the SLT, with agreed timelines.

At its meeting in September 2021 the Board of DBS approved the revised strategy, presented by the President.

#### **Membership of Board of Directors**

As per DBS's previous AQR submission, the desire for additional independent expertise on the Board of Directors was identified as part of an independent review in 2020. In the academic year 2021/2022 this was progressed and in September 2022 Audrey O'Sullivan was appointed as a Non-executive Director. Audrey currently works as Legal Director at SIRO, the joint venture company of ESB and Vodafone. She graduated from UCD with both a Bachelors and Masters degree,

#### **Delegated Authority**

A key strategic focus for DBS is to attain Delegated Authority from QQI. In March 2021 DBS assembled a project team and Project Board and initiated a plan to work towards readiness for an early application for Delegated Authority. The exercise involved internal mapping and audit against the QQI Criteria for Delegated Authority as well as an independent review of professional service areas (i.e. all non-academic departments) in the College, carried out by BDO from June 2021 to January 2022. A panel of external experts was then assembled to conduct a mock panel review and provide feedback.

## 1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
	Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	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.
2019-1	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. A review of the Boards and Committees structure was initiated in 2021 through a paper presented to the Academic Board in December 2021 by the independent Chair. A working group of the Academic Board was convened to review the committee structures and their Terms of Reference. This work was on-going into the academic year 2022/23.
2019-2	Consider the appointment of Programme Board Chairs who would report to the Course Directors	Senior Lecturers were appointed. This has been superseded by further appointments in Academic Management in late 2021 and through 2022 into 2023. In 2021 the role of Course Director was replaced with Academic Directors in each area and a role of Assistant Academic Director was created.
2019-3	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.
2019-4	Review quality assurance documentation for any references to legacy language	Completed at time of the Re-Engagement Response.
2019-5	Continue to plan towards formal accreditation of all offerings, prioritizing 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. Further accreditation of unaccredited offerings will be pursued where an accreditation process suited to the purpose of the offering is available. This will contribute to the strategy of creating a more formal structure to the

<sup>2</sup> Number convention here is a numbered sequence for the Strategic Objective for each year.

No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
		professional programme portfolio scheduled to be launched in September 2023.
2019-6	Ensure that qualifications recognised for advanced entry – accredited or otherwise – and including in articulation contexts, are subject or rigorous approval and continuous review.	Oversight of admissions is on-going through the Admissions Committee.
2019-7	Further consider how the College’s use of completion rates can increase the effectiveness and strategic capability of its quality assurance system	On-going. Completion rates are now tracked and reported on in the Annual Retention Reports. Programme completion has been captured for intakes from 2015/16 for undergraduate and postgraduate full-time and part-time and separately for Springboard/funded programmes. DBS continues to monitor both learner outcomes and feedback closely.
2019-8	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.
2019-9	Ensure that agreements with other parties reflect the grievance, appeals, and disciplinary procedures that apply to these arrangements.	On-going. Collaborative provision is subject to DBS Quality Assurance policies and procedures.
2021-1	Devolved Responsibility application	Approved June 2021.
2021-2	Readiness for DA/institutional review	<p>On-going. A large body of work and a number of key milestones have been met on this project.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An independent external review was carried out by BDO, commencing in 2021, with the purpose of determining if the central office functions are working to support the academic purpose of the College.</li> <li>2. A mock panel was held in mid-2022 with experts who reviewed a draft submission and supporting evidence relative to the criteria (2016) currently available.</li> <li>3. A project team, comprising many of the senior leadership of the College, is progressing a detailed plan to guide us through actions that will lead us to a successful application for DA when it becomes possible.</li> </ol>
2021-3	T&L staff training and development	On-going. The former EdTech Team has been formalised into a Learning Unit in 2022, comprised of an Educational

No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
		Developer, Senior Educational Developer, and Learning Technologist. The team develops and supports CPD opportunities for staff.
2021-4	Online proctoring	Pilots of online proctoring were successfully carried out in previous examination cycles. Selected 'high stakes' exams were deployed in the online proctoring platform for summer exams in the academic year 2021/22. January and April 2021, in that exams for two cohorts of Masters students (September and January intakes across all programmes) were deployed with most students successfully completing exams via the proctoring platform, although a 'light touch' approach was taken with minimal security features utilised in order to minimise potential technical difficulties. The project has now progressed and was implemented in full for the January 2023 exams. The intension is to continue this through the remaining exams in 2023.
2021-5	RPL Review	On-going. Review of Admissions articulation agreements completed 2021. This will be revisited as part of an additional audit function in the Registrar's Office under a second Assistant Registrar role that was created in 2022, and change in Admissions structures in the academic year 2022/23.
2021-6	Review of strategic plan	Complete. Updated plan published 2021.
2021-7	Appointment of a second independent director to the governing Board	Complete. Appointment made September 2022.
2021-8	Academic Programmes Annual Programme Reporting evaluation	Completed; Annual Programme Reports are now established. The first reports were developed and presented in 2021 and again in 2022. Now that there have been two cycles of reporting, the Academic Dean is currently looking at the structure of the reports with the Registrar to ensure they are optimal and fit-for-purpose in terms of capturing sufficient quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the programmes while optimising efficiency for the teams in generating the reports.
2021-9	Postgraduate academic writing support – future enhancement based on findings and review of pilot	On-going. Supports have been rolled out for cohorts from September 2020. Adjustments have been made to the delivery for each intake to respond to feedback, engagement and emerging needs. The Academic Information and Resource Centre created a report on delivery to date and has collated data which is currently being analysed with a view to updating the programme from September 2023 based on learnings from delivery so far.



No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
2021-10	Pilot of postgraduate academic learner support in computing	Commenced September 2021. As above this is monitored and adjusted according to any emerging needs. Data and feedback will be gathered through the academic year and refinements made accordingly.
2021-11	DBS review professional body possibilities for relationships and exemptions	On-going. This is included as a consideration for all new Programme development. DBS received CIPD centre and programme accreditation approval for the MSc in HRM in March 2022.
2021-12	Academic Programmes Development to include Graduate Skills Map/Matrices – i.e. what does a DBS graduate look like?	All new validations and re-validations going forward will include this. A set of Programme Development Principles approved by the Senior Leadership Team in February 2022 specifically address this.
2021-13	Academic Programmes Assessment Review	On-going. Principles of Assessment and an updated policy on Marking Feedback and Moderation was developed through a Working Group in 2021 and presented to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee at several meetings for comment and feedback. The final principles and policy were presented for agreement at the SLT meeting on 8 February 2022 and Academic Board on 14 February 2022. However further work on assessment best practice is required and will be part of actions for the 2022 into 2023 year.
2021-14	Industry Advisory Boards established in Arts and in Health Sciences/reconstituted in A&F and Computing	Industry Advisory Boards are now established in all areas other than Creative Media.
2021-15	Study Abroad and partner review	A review of options for Study Abroad students was completed for September 2021.
2022-1	Strategic Project 2: Programme Strategy (arising from the refresh of the DBS Strategic Plan 2021-2025)	Preparation of an academic programme strategy and plan to include i) an outline skills matrix to guide what we will develop, ii) incorporate work-based learning into programmes as standard, iii) incorporate environment/sustainability into programmes and iv) incorporate the values of good citizenship. Responsibility for this sits with the Academic Dean and work is on-going. It is intended to have a Programme Strategy approved by the end of Q2 in 2023.
2022-2	Strategic Project 4: <b>Academic Delivery</b> (arising from the refresh of the DBS Strategic Plan 2021-2025)	On-going. Actions were implemented from 2021/22 with a new Academic Management team put in place, and as described elsewhere the creation of the Academic Director and Assistant Academic Director roles. A number of new

No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
		appointments have been made with additional posts still being filled.
2022-3	<p>Strategic Project 12: <b>Digital Capacity</b>  <i>(arising from the refresh of the DBS Strategic Plan 2021-2025)</i></p>	<p>Expansion of digital capacity for teaching and learning, and customer service. Expand the use of digital technology in teaching and enable automated solutions to service where appropriate, building on the theme that the learner or customer can access 'however and wherever' they wish. Responsibility for this sits with a working group comprised of heads of departments, Academic Directors and a student representative.</p> <p>Timeline: Actions implemented from 2021/22 and ongoing as technology develops and pedagogy evolves.</p>
2022-4	<p>Strategic Project 18: <b>Academic Standards</b>  <i>(arising from the refresh of the DBS Strategic Plan 2021-2025)</i></p>	<p>Establish a means of measuring and evaluating academic standards and outcomes in the development, delivery and assessment of programmes to enable robust benchmarking internally and externally, and identify areas for improvement that will enhance our academic standards. Responsibility sits with the Registrar's Office with a working group comprised of all academic-facing heads of department. It was planned to convene a Working Group on this by Q3 of 2022 but this was postponed. This project requires review as it may have been superseded at least in part by other activities. The Registrar and Academic Dean will revisit this in Q2 of 2023.</p>
2022-5	<p><b>Consolidation and alignment of all academic student support functions,</b> including bringing together the work of SESU, LT&amp;A Unit and AIRC</p>	<p>This has been completed through the creation of an Academic Support Community to bring this work together.</p>
2022-6	<p><b>Discipline-based CPD</b></p>	<p>Work on this is on-going. From January 2023, the intention is for each Academic Director to have a discipline plan for each calendar year in January.</p>
2022-7	<p><b>Review of assessment policy and practice</b></p>	<p>Complete. An updated Marking and Feedback policy was submitted to Academic Board for approval in February 2022.</p>
2022-8	<p><b>Review of Learner Charter</b></p>	<p>Complete. The Charter was circulated for consultation in Q4 2021 into Q2 2022, for final ratification at Academic Board in 2022.</p>
2022-9	<p><b>Student Success Project</b></p>	<p>SESU is undertaking an exercise to define student success. The aim is to have a DBS definition of student success that includes 'metrics' so it can be determined if a programme is successful or not.</p> <p><b>Timeline:</b> The first draft has already been circulated for consultation with Academic Directors. The aim is to have a</p>

No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
		definition of student success ratified by the <b>Academic Board in Q2 2022</b> .
2022-10	<b>Review of Boards and Committees</b>	The basis for a Committee Review was presented to Academic Board in December 2021 by the independent Chair, for feedback and the formation of a Working Group in February 2022. The Working Group met on a number of occasions in 2022 and benchmarked and mapped existing structures to proposed aligned structures, developing Terms of Reference. The structure and Terms of Reference were approved at the Academic Board in December 2022 and work is on-going to transition in 2022/23. It is noted for the purposes of this AQR that in reviewing the committee structure none of the existing governance or functionality has been lost. An additional layer of governance has been put in place under the Academic Board to further strengthen governance and oversight.
2022-11	<b>Academic Plan</b>	The Academic Plan was presented to the Academic Board on 15 <sup>th</sup> February 2022, for feedback and commentary, with approval at the Board in April 2022. The plan was further reviewed in January/February 2023. The next version of the plan will be prepared in advance of the 2023/24 academic year.
2022-12	<b>Research Activity Enhancement</b>	<p>A new role of Research Practice Coordinator was established in February 2021 in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the reliability of the data behind the research profile;</li> <li>• Illustrate a measurable increase in research outputs;</li> <li>• Work with Academic Directors to define a research strategy for their disciplines;</li> <li>• Conclude and publish an updated research section of the Intranet;</li> <li>• Continue to publish the newsletter bi-monthly but as a gateway into the Intranet;</li> <li>• Stage an online Practice and Applied Research Conference (PARC) in May 2022;</li> <li>• Define a research strategy for DBS with the Research Committee</li> </ul> <p>Work on this is on-going, with goals set out for 2023.</p>
2022-13	<b>Readiness for DA and Institutional Review</b>	As set out elsewhere in this report, DBS continues to work towards this. A Working Group was constituted in March 2021 to map out requirements against the QQI, Professional Services Review conducted between September 2021-February 2022, Mock Panel May 2022. Ongoing improvement plan being led by an

No. <sup>2</sup>	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
		operational group and overseen by the DA Committee of the Board.

## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

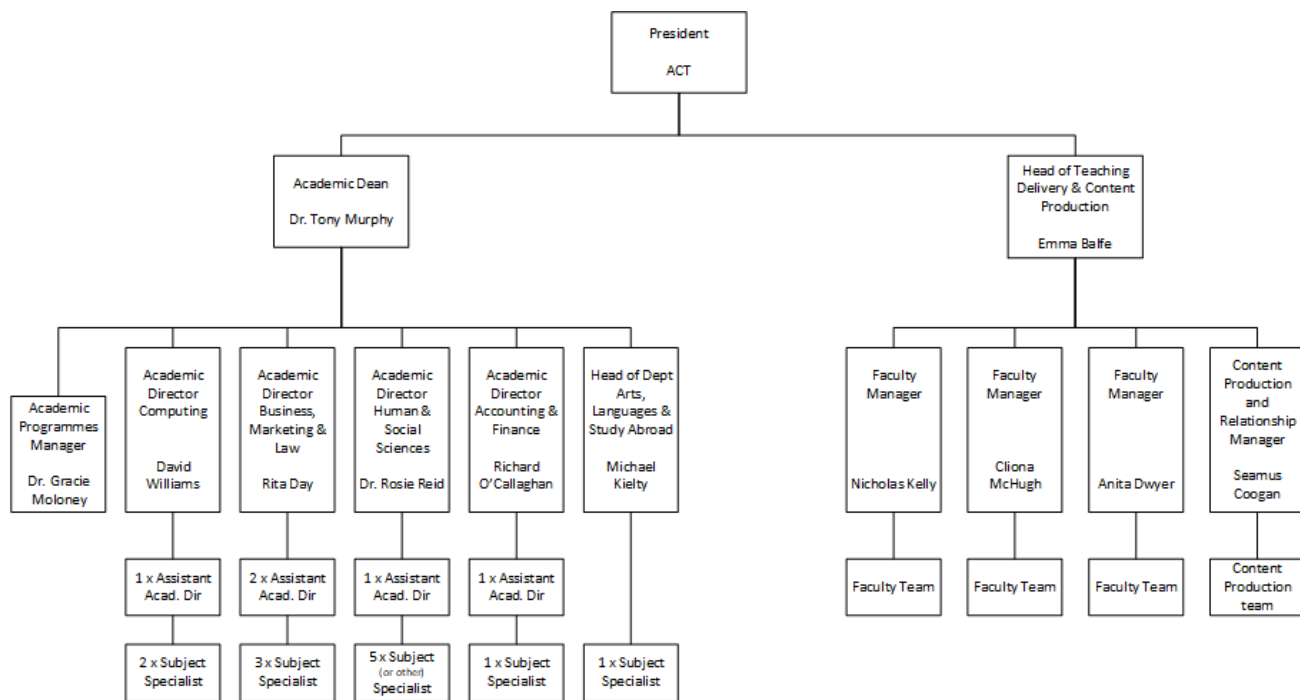
Body	Meeting dates
Board of Directors	4 November 2021 22 April 2021 21 July 2021 1 September 2021 4 November 2021 13 April 2022 11 August 2022 24 November 2022
Academic Board	5 October 2021 7 December 2021 15 February 2022 19 April 2022 21 June 2022 11 October 2022
Board of Studies	26 November 2021 29 April 2022 2 September 2022 (extraordinary)
Programme Boards	Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 March 2021</li> <li>• 18 November 2021</li> <li>• 12 April 2022</li> </ul> Business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 March 2021</li> <li>• 22 November 2021</li> <li>• 13 April 2022</li> </ul> Marketing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 March 2021</li> <li>• 23 November 2021</li> <li>• 12 April 2022</li> </ul> Computing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19 February 2021</li> <li>• 22 November 2021</li> <li>• 28 February 2022</li> </ul> Accounting & Finance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 March 2021</li> <li>• 22 November 2021</li> <li>• 25 April 2022</li> </ul> Human and Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 March 2021</li> <li>• 14 December 2021</li> <li>• 22 March 2022</li> </ul>

	Arts, Languages and Study Abroad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 March 2021</li> <li>• 23 November 2021</li> <li>• 3 March 2022</li> </ul>
Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Committee	10 September 2021 1 November 2021 9 December 2021 20 January 2022 22 March 2022 30 May 2022 4 August 2022 9 September 2022
Exam Boards	11 August 2020 (January intake UG Internal) 28 August 2020 (UG Internal) 3 September 2020 (UG External) 14 September 2021 (January intake PG Internal) 21 September 2021 (January intake PG External) 18 October 2021 (September intake PG Grad Internal) 22 October 2021 (September intake PG Grad External) 2 February 2022 (Internal) 9 February 2022 (External) 20 May 2022 (PG Proceed Internal) 25 May 2022 (PG Proceed External) 16 June 2022 (Internal) 17 June 2022 (Internal) 23 June 2022 (External) 24 June 2022 (External) 26 August 2022 (Internal) 1 September 2022 (Internal) 14 September 2022 (PG Proceed Internal) 21 September 2022 (PG Proceed External)

### 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

On 1st January 2022 the post of Assistant Registrar - validations was created and filled internally. This post replaced the post of Validation and Accreditation Manager that had operated previously. The Assistant Registrar post reports to the Registrar to assist with all aspects of the validation process for new and reviewed programmes, as well as assist with preparation for an application for delegated authority from QQI.

Other than this change there have been no other fundamental structural changes in the 2021/22 academic year. Some vacant posts were filled and new additional posts at certain levels were created to increase the resource available for certain functions. The addition of new resources was also influenced by the work of the Academic Delivery Working Group (ADWG) which concluded its work during 2021/22. In summary, and arising directly from the workings of the ADWG, by the end of the 2021/22 academic year the following academic leadership and management structure was in place.



Programme Management

Programme Delivery

## 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
MSc in Financial Technology (PG23852)	July 2022	<a href="https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24859">https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24859</a>
Higher Diploma in Science in Financial Technology (PG23577)	July 2022	<a href="https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24858">https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24858</a>
Certificate in Fund Accounting (PG23231)	July 2022	<a href="https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24857">https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24857</a>
Diploma in Big Data for Business (PG23239)	July 2022	<a href="https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24856">https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProgrammeDetails?programmeCode=PG24856</a>
Cert in Risk & Financial Analysis (PG23236)	January 2022 (for closure)	N/A
Cert in Cloud Platform Development (PG23229)	January 2022 (for closure)	N/A
BA (Hons) in Applied Social Care (PG23251)	January 2022 (for closure)	N/A
Functional Reviews of all Professional Services Departments	January 2022	N/A
Institutional Review Preparation (alongside Delegated Authority Preparation)	On-going through 2022	N/A



## 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>3</sup> 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	11		1		6	4	
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	0						
Desk reviews	0				2		
Virtual processes	11				6	4	
Average panel size for each process type*	6						

\* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

<sup>3</sup> 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**

	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	8	4	4			8				1	/
Secretary	8	1	7			8				1	/
Academic/Discipline Specific	17	9	8			10	7			2	15
Student Representative	8	1	7			8				5	3
QA											
Teaching & Learning	1		1			1					1
External Industry /Third Mission	6	5	1			6					6

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

### 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 Policies:

- Acceptable Usage Policy (QAH B.2.8)
- Feedback, Marking and Moderation Policy (QAH B.5.11)

### Updated Policies

Date of change	Subsection	Classification of change	Summary	Explanation
11/11/2021	C.2.1.6 New Programme development	Updates	Updates to Phase 5 in table	With Devolved Responsibility granted by QQI, slight functional shift in formation of QQI panel.
11/11/2021	B.3.2 Learner Code of Conduct	Updates	Addition of reference to the online learning environment	From March 2020, the move of more teaching, learning and assessment to online platforms requires recognition in the Code of Conduct guidance.
11/11/2021	B.3.3 Academic Impropriety Policy	Updates	Addition of clarity for some steps in the investigation process	Improved clarity for academic staff and learners.
11/11/2021	B.3.3.11 Academic Impropriety Policy	Updates	Addition of subsection with link to the required form	Additional Document linkage had been missing, added for clarity and accessibility.
11/11/2021	B.3.3 Academic Impropriety Policy	Correction	Amendment of 'Urkund' to 'Ouriginal'	The Urkund organisation was incorporated into a new entity, called Ouriginal, although both names can be used in different documents.
15/11/2021	B.3.4 Disciplinary Policy	Amendments	Amendment to steps in the process of Disciplinary investigation.	Amendments required in line with the move to more online mechanisms, and to extend the ability of the investigating manager to undertake the necessary review.
16/11/2021	C.1.3.7 Research Ethical Guidelines	Amendments	Amendments to align with Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants	Updates to the Ethical Guidelines, with corrected links and guidance and updated forms, requiring matching updates in the policy
29/11/2021	B.2.7.2 Digital Wellbeing Policy	Amendments	Additional clarity given for online behaviour	Increased delivery of teaching, assessment and learning through the online environment requiring more explicit detail to be set out around online conduct.

Date of change	Subsection	Classification of change	Summary	Explanation
29/11/2021	B.2.8 Acceptable Usage Policy	New Policy	New Policy	The increased use of online platforms requiring the extended specification of Acceptable Usage for learners (staff are already subject to the College's employee Acceptable Usage policies)
29/11/2021	B.2.2 Premises & Facilities	Amendments	Addition of cross-reference to Code of Conduct and new Acceptable Usage Policy	Cross-reference required to new Learner Acceptable Usage policy.
29/11/2021	B.2.7.2 Digital Wellbeing Policy	Amendments	Addition of cross-reference to new Acceptable Usage Policy	Cross-reference required to new Learner Acceptable Usage policy.
29/11/2021	B.3.2.5 Learner Code of Conduct Policy	Amendments	Addition of Penalties for Major Offenses for misuse of College facilities or services.	Cross-reference required to new Learner Acceptable Usage policy.
29/11/2021	B.3.2.7 Online Code of Conduct	Amendments	Addition of cross-reference to new Acceptable Usage Policy	Cross-reference required to new Learner Acceptable Usage policy.
03/12/2021	C.1.1.3 Approval of Teaching Staff	Updates	Update of recommendations the AASC may make.	New Faculty Pathway introduced set out a variant version of conditions for new faculty appointments, replacement required of original conditions with new Pathways.
07/12/2021	B.2.1.4 Student website	Updates	Update of Registrar section, to Quality Assurance and Academic Operations	Restructure of information breakdown under the 'Registrar' tab to separate Academic Operations and Quality Assurance sections, into their respective functional and QA sections.
08/12/2021	C.1.5.3 DBS Strategic Plan	Updates	Updated link to Strategic Plan	Introduction of 2021 Strategic Plan, updated cross-reference required
08/12/2021	C.1.5.3 Panopto Privacy Policy	Amendment	Removal of cross-reference	Cessation of use of Panopto in the College
08/12/2021	A.1.3.12 Terms of Reference for Library Committee	Amendment	Addition of members and removal of defunct role	Replacement of the Deputy Librarian in the team requires removal from Terms of Reference, and addition of Information Literacy Manager and Reader Services Manager roles added.
08/12/2021	A.1.3.2 Academic Board Terms of Reference	Updates	Q1 meeting updated from March to February, addition of April meeting	Academic Board meeting in Q1 determined to be more appropriate in February than in March, functional need for additional meeting in April

Date of change	Subsection	Classification of change	Summary	Explanation
08/12/2021	A.1.2.3 Calendar of Committee meetings	Updates	Updated move of Academic Board and QERMC from March to February, and addition of April; clarity of Board of Directors meetings	Academic Board meeting in Q1 determined to be more appropriate in February than in March, and additional meeting in April, consequent impact on QERMC
08/12/2021	A.1.3.9 Terms of Reference for Academic Appointment SubCommittee	Updates	Update of recommendations the AASC may make.	New Faculty Pathway introduced set out a variant version of conditions for new faculty appointments, replacement required of original conditions with new Pathways.
08/12/2021	Throughout documents	Correction	Update of titles for Academic Director, Assistant Academic Director, Academic Dean, Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production	Updates to titles following internal governance updates
04/01/2021	A.1.3.5 A.1.3.9 ; A.1.6.8 ; A.2.1 ; A.2.2 ; A.2.3 ; A.2.4 ; A.2.6 ; A.2.7 ; B.1.1 ; B.3.4 ; B.3.5 ; B.4.1 ; B.4.2 ; B.4.3 ; B.4.4 ; B.5.1 ; B.5.3 ; B.5.4 ; B.5.5 ; B.5.6 ; B.5.7 ; B.5.9 ; B.6.2 ; C.1.1.3 ; C.2.1 ; C.2.1.5 ; C.2.1.7 ; C.2.1.8 ; C.2.2 ; C.2.2.3	Correction	Update of title for Validation & Accreditation Manager to Assistant Registrar	Updates to titles following internal governance updates
14/01/2022	A.1.6.12	Amendment	Replacement of the Professional School Product Manager with the Content Production and Relationship Manager	Update to functions and roles within the faculty management teams, with the Professional School Product Manager merging with Faculty Managers, and the new role of the Content Production and Relationship Manager arising out of the increased development of educational content for online delivery, and increased partnerships.
01/02/2022	C.2.1.9 Programme Development for Non-Framework Programmes and Professional Programmes	Updates	Replacement of the Professional School Product Manager with the Academic Director of the corresponding subject area	Update to functions and roles within the faculty management teams, with the Professional School Product Manager merging with Faculty Managers, and the ownership of Professional Diplomas moving under Academic Directors.
01/02/2022	A.1.2.2 The Board of Directors	Updates	Update of details of the independent Board member on the Board of Directors.	Appointment of the independent Board member (a late update to reflect a prior appointment)
21/04/2022	B.5.1.2 Assessment Overarching Policy	Amendment	Updated list of Underlying Principles of Assessment	More extensive and comprehensive breakdown of Assessment principles for enhanced learner experience

Date of change	Subsection	Classification of change	Summary	Explanation
21/04/2022	B.5.1.7 Assessment & Feedback	Amendment	Updated Assessment Types and removal of 'Feedback' elements	Rationalisation of subsection into a more focussed breakdown of Assessment Types, with the Feedback elements relocated to B.5.11
21/04/2022	B.5.11 Feedback, Marking and Moderation Policy	New Policy	New Policy	Separating out Feedback, Marking and Moderation components from the Overarching Assessments (B.5.1) sections to be clearer and more explicit about these principles and definitions
21/04/2022	B.3.3.8 Potential AI Outcomes	Amendment	Standardisation and simplification of potential outcomes to Academic Impropriety findings for learners.	Greater clarity for learners regarding the potential outcomes of impropriety, removal of needlessly duplicated breakdowns, replaced with a standardised and simplified breakdown.
01/07/2022	A.1.3.9; C.1.1.3	Update	Addition of the Academic Developer to the membership of the Academic Appointment SubCommittee	Change in management structure (merger of Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Quality Enhancement roles) requiring a replacement appointed to the AASC.
08/07/2022	B.3.1.2 The DBS Learner Charter	Update	Update of the Learner Charter	Updates arising from a review of the Learner Charter by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, with stakeholder feedback, to ensure currency in the current learning environment.
31/08/2022	B.3.3.8 Potential AI Outcomes	Correction	Correction of "access" to "assess".	Correction of update error
31/08/2022	A.1.3.9; C.1.1.3	Correction	Correction of the title of the Academic Developer to Senior Academic Developer	Correction of update error

### Enhancements

Enhancement/ Development	Details	Impact
Review of strategy for Learning Teaching and Assessment Enhancement (SLATE)	A review of DBS's three-year Strategy for Learning Teaching and Assessment Enhancement (SLATE) (2020-2022) was completed in 2021/22, and during 2022 a new LT&A strategy will be developed for rollout in 2023.	Ensuring alignment of approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in light of changes in delivery and student needs over the past number of years, including expectations for increased flexibility and enhanced use of technology, including responding to advances in AI technologies, which

		are challenging the integrity of assessment.
Proctoring of Online Exams	As noted in the 2021 AQR submission, in January 2021 DBS piloted online proctoring for Master-level exams. A second pilot was complete for January intake Masters students in the summer exam cycle. The proctoring software was introduced as a 'soft' pilot without browser lockdown and other security/punitive measures enabled, in order to test basic features of the system and build confidence. While overall the pilots were deemed successful, it did put significant strains on the College resources to support this. The project was paused and was re-initiated in 2022 into the academic year 2022/23 with additional resourcing.	Integrity of online exams. Flexibility for learners completing exams going forward. Enabling larger sittings online (i.e. no need for room bookings) will reduce exam session timeframes and give more time for marking and QA if fully implemented.
Delegated Authority Preparation	DBS convened a Steering Committee for Delegated Authority in March 2021 comprised of senior members of the team and Board of Directors and Academic Board level. Simultaneously a working group was put together to carry out preparation for this through a series of reviews across the College. The exercise involved internal mapping and audit against the QQI Criteria for Delegated Authority as well as an independent review of professional service areas (i.e. all non-academic departments) in the College, carried out by BDO from June 2021 to January 2022. As part of the process a 'mock panel' event was convened in May 2022, with a panel of external experts appointed to undertake a review of the College and provide feedback. A number of key	Improved institution.

	<p>areas for development have arisen from internal review and the BDO review exercise, and DBS has a project plan to address these areas ahead of a full application to QQI.</p>	
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## 2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

DBS is part of QQI's National Academic Integrity Network and took part in the National Academic Integrity week in October 2021, organising a series of internal events for students also:

- Mon 18th - launch of our Academic Integrity learning artefact
- Mon 18th 4:30pm - Library class for learners on Referencing Tues 19th 2pm - Library class for lecturers on Urkund/ Ouriginal
- Tues 19th 5pm - 'Beatdown: Why the music industry has become so aggressive in defending its intellectual property and what this means for your academic journey' - a presentation by Richard O'Callaghan (hosted on site and live through Zoom)
- Weds 20th 2:30pm - Library class for learners 'Using Ouriginal to Enhance Academic Writing' Weds 20th 5pm - RESq session, on looking at 'Evidence for Academic Impropriety, and spotting Suspected Ghost Writing'
- Thurs 21st 4pm - Library and Exams team, 'How to prepare for an Online Exam, with a Q&A with the Exams team'.
- Fri 22nd 1pm - Panel discussion, 'Creating Online Content - Copyright, Continuity, & Context'

DBS is constantly developing resources for students to support and guide them - see for example the recorded podcast on Essay Mills: <https://students.dbs.ie/quality-assurance/academic-integrity#GhostWriting>

There was limited engagement by learners and faculty with the October 2021 events. The Registrar's and Exams offices are reviewing this to establish strategies to improve future engagement.

Exams remained online for the academic year 2021/2022 due to continuing concerns about COVID-19 restrictions as the College wanted to be able provide assurance to learners at commencement of the academic year that there would be no disruptions in the exams cycle. DBS recognised the need to protect the integrity of online exams and continued with the online proctoring pilot that had commenced previously, proctoring selected high stakes exams. In addition, there was an identified need to update the policy around academic integrity and penalties for Academic Impropriety. At the Academic Board in April 2021 policy updates were approved to include more severe potentially penalties including:

- For online exams, a resit on campus required
- Resit carries an automatic fee of €250
- Subsequent capstone modules (e.g. project or dissertation) to include a Viva
- AI noted on the transcript
- Suspension
- Expulsion

These are in addition to the previous existing penalties of:

- 0% awarded for the assessment and module mark capped at 40%
- At award stage, award capped
- Attend library class

It was additionally made more explicit that, while previously more severe penalties may be applied for repeat offences, these could also be applied in the case of particularly egregious first offences.

## 3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

### 3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No. <sup>4</sup>	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
	Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<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>
2023-1	Successfully Complete QQI Focused Review	Submission of Provider Statement, completion of panel event (March 2023) with associated outcomes and responses.
2023-2	Implement changes to structure of Registrar's Office	Appointment of Assistant Registrar for Audit and Compliance. Implementation of audit function in Registrar's Office. Updates of reporting of Admissions to Registrar's Office. Implementation of increased separation of duties and independent oversight.
2023-3	Implement changes to Academic Management	Appointment of all roles.
2023-4	Implement changes to Academic Board sub-committees	Approval of finalised Terms of Reference at February/March 2023 Academic Board. Commencement of meetings under new structure.
2023-5	Update and publish SLATE	Approval and publication by June 2023.
2023-6	Update and publish Research Strategy	Approval and publication by June 2023.
2023-7	Complete review of ethical approval process for student research and implement changes	Updated process implemented from September 2023.
2023-8	Implement changes to internal examination boards	Implementation of Internal Module Boards, commencing with the winter exams January 2023.
2023-9	Review of end-to-end exams process in light of new SIS	Following full implementation of SIS for exams functions, SoPs reviewed and in place for all aspects of the process.
2023-10	Develop and implement an annual institutional audit plan	Plan developed and approved by Academic Board and Senior Leadership Team by June 2023.
2023-11	Complete readiness for Institutional Review	Review of all areas as required and completion of evidence and documentation.
2023-12	Complete readiness for Delegated Authority	Review of all areas as required and completion of evidence and documentation.

<sup>4</sup> Number convention here is a numbered sequence for the Strategic Objective for each year.

No. <sup>4</sup>	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
2023-13	Re-alignment of DBS Library as the Academic Information and Resource Centre	Updated strategy and re-branding.
2023-14	Review of assessment practices	Benchmarking and review of standards.
2023-15	Extend Zoom Rooms to facilitate hybrid delivery from one third to two thirds of all learning spaces.	Two-thirds of all teaching space in the College to hold full technology requirements to support hybrid delivery.
2023-16	Extend internal faculty moderation to cover teaching content and delivery.	Moderation plan in place and commencement of implementation.

### 3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
BA (Hons) in Audio Production & Music Project Management (PG23892)	2022/2023	Validated September 2018, Last intake August 2023
Higher Cert in Arts in Sound Engineering & Music Production (PG23890)/ Cert in Arts in Sound Engineering & Music Production (PG23891)	2022/2023	Validated September 2018, Last intake August 2023
Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies PG24182	2022/2023 (for closure)	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2023
Institutional Review	2022/2023	2010

#### 3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Certificate in Data Analytics (PG24444)	2022/2023	Validated February 2021 Last intake December 2023
Certificate in Marketing Essentials (PG24435)	2022/2023	Validated February 2021, Last intake December 2023
Certificate in Regulatory Technology (PG23960)	2022/2023	Validated December 2019, Last intake December 2023
Master of Arts in Addiction Studies (PG24066)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Addiction Studies (PG24067)	2023/2024	Validated April 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Arts in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy PG24065	2023/2024	Validated April 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Science in Business Analytics PG24049/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Analytics PG24050	2023/2024	Validated April 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Financial Services (PG24204)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Arts in Psychotherapy (PG24189)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Counselling and Psychotherapy (PG24188)/ Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Social Studies (PG24190)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Laws (Honours) (PG24186)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Higher Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy (PG24185)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Science in International Accounting and Finance (PG24183)/	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Postgraduate Diploma in Science in International Accounting and Finance (PG24184)		
Higher Diploma in Arts in Business (PG24181)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Certificate in Business & English Language (PG24180)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance (PG24166)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Science in Management Practice (PG24225)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Management Practice (PG24226)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Science in Information and Library Management (PG24214)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Information and Library Management (PG24215)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Science in Marketing (PG24206)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Marketing (PG24207)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychology (PG24169)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology (PG24168)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business (PG24239)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Business Administration (PG24237)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Business (PG24238)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Master of Science in Information Systems with Computing (PG24222)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Information Systems with Computing (PG24223)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Marketing (PG24208)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Certificate in Digital Marketing (PG24205)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (PG24224)/ Certificate in Information Technology (PG24230)	2023/2024	Validated September 2019, Last intake August 2024
Certificate in Social Care Skills (PG24528)	2023/2024	Validated May 2021 Last intake August 2024
Certificate in Data Visualisation (PG24527)	2023/2024	Validated August 2021 Last intake August 2024

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Certificate in Business and Digital Skills (PG24522)	2023/2024	Validated August 2021 Last intake August 2024

### 3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Higher Diploma in Business in Project Management (PG24321)	2024/25	Validated December 2020 Last intake August 2025
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Film and Creative Media (PG24397)	2024/25	Validated September 2020 Last intake August 2025
Bachelor of Arts in Film and Creative Media (PG24396)	2024/25	Validated September 2020 Last intake August 2025
Bachelor of Business (PG24398)	2024/25	Validated September 2020 Last intake September 2025
Higher Certificate in Business (PG24399)	2024/25	Validated September 2020 Last intake September 2025
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Science (PG24400)	2024/25	Validated September 2020 Last intake September 2025
Master of Science in Financial Analytics (PG24328)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Financial Analytics (PG24329)	2024/25	Validated October 2020 Last intake September 2025
Higher Diploma in Science in Digital Marketing (PG24323)	2024/25	Validated September 2020 Last intake September 2025
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance (PG24322)	2024/25	Validated October 2020 Last intake September 2025
Certificate in Marketing Technology (PG24320)	2024/25	Validated October 2020 Last intake September 2025
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing (PG24463)/ Bachelor of Science in Computing (PG24464)	2024/25	Validated December 2020 Last intake December 2025
Higher Diploma in Science in Data Analytics (PG24461)/ Certificate in the Fundamentals of Data Analytics (PG24462)	2024/25	Validated December 2020 Last intake December 2025
Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence (PG24324)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Artificial Intelligence (PG24325)	2024/25	Validated October 2020 Last intake December 2025
Master of Science in Cybersecurity (PG24326)/ Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Cybersecurity (PG24327)	2024/25	Validated October 2020 Last intake December 2025

## 4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

### CASE STUDY 1: Standard Operating Procedures

In October 2021, DBS engaged an external auditor to undertake a professional services review of non-academic functions. The purpose of this review was to identify areas of weakness in the College's business processes and supporting documentation, and to recommend changes that would both improve operational performance, and provide robust evidence of good practice to underpin an eventual application for Delegated Authority.

One of the main findings of the report arising from the review process was the lack of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) within the College. In instances where the documentation was available, it was found to be in a wide range of formats, locations and tones, with no standardisation or controls in place.

In March 2022, the College initiated a project to address this. This project had four main phases, to be concluded in September 2022:

1. Creating an approved, standardised template document for all SOPs, with effective document controls embedded
2. Providing guidance and training to all staff on how to write, review and maintain SOPs
3. Documenting all required SOPs through engagement with senior managers and other key stakeholders
4. Creating a centralised repository for published SOPs, accessible to all staff

The project faced a number of challenges from the outset. The availability of key staff to identify and then create the required SOPs was limited due to prior commitments and conflicts with critical assessment and awarding periods. This necessitated an extension of the project timeframe to March 2023 in order to ensure sufficient time could be dedicated to their creation.

Though a standardised SOP template and guidance was created, in order to ensure that SOPs were created as required to a consistent standard, the project manager was required to exercise close control of the drafting process, reviewing all drafts to ensure consistency of content, style and tone. Additional training and guidance on SOP writing was provided.

A significant and unexpected challenge was the unforeseen growth of the project. In the third phase (engagement and document creation), approximately 100 SOPs were identified by stakeholders. During the drafting and review of the documents, SOPs were revised, split out from one into multiple documents, and a large number of new SOPs were identified to be created as a result of interrogating existing drafts. In a six month period the number of SOPs grew from 100 to 315, which further supported the extension of the project.

As the project is nearing conclusion, with over 70% of SOPs published, its benefits have become apparent. The intended benefits, which have been realised, are that standardised SOPs:

- Allow many business problems to be identified, understood, and resolved based on clear, accurate written procedures as it is easier to see where gaps exist.
- Allow process improvements to be easily made, with benefits quantified and captured
- Demonstrate a consistency of procedure to be carried out
- Make it easier to train new staff
- Improve visibility of and accountability for each step
- Provide clear evidence of good practice and operational efficiency

These operational benefits result in improved student record management and query resolution, reducing operational difficulties and thereby improving overall learner experience through a number of institute-learner interfaces. Improvements in processing and staff training has been found to reduce errors arising in quality assurance processes such as grade finalisation and communication plans.

The project also had a number of unintended benefits or outcomes. The principal outcomes in this respect were:

- Increased cross-functional engagement, due to better understanding of where processes and procedures impacted on or were carried over between teams
- Explicit recognition from stakeholders of the importance of the project, and appetite for further improvement. This stemmed not only from a strategic aim of supporting Delegated Authority, but from the overall business improvements that were evident across many functions due to having agreed and consistent documentation.

It will be important for the College that, having carried out this work, existing SOPs are maintained and kept up-to-date, and new SOPs are initiated for any new processes or areas of development. All stakeholders must ensure continued responsibility for SOPs in their functional areas.

**[End of Dublin Business School AQR 2023]**