

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

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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	DBS
Date of site visit	5 th July 2021
Date of report	20 th August 2021

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Certificate in International Business
	Award	Special Purpose Award
	Credit	30 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role on Panel	Affiliation
Dr Annie Doona	Chair	Accredited National and International Higher Education Quality Reviewer, Retired President IADT and Education Consultant.
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Independent communications consultant
Dr Julius Nyiwung	Academic Expert	Director of the undergraduate International Business Programme, Maynooth

Darragh O'Briain	Academic Expert	Academic Director for The International School of Business
Maria del Mar Palomares Marin	Academic Expert	Language tutor/ co-lecturer in Spanish, School of Languages, Culture and Linguistics in the Applied Language Centre, UCD
Li Ping Varley	Academic Expert	Lecturer in Chinese Language and Culture, Waterford Institute of Technology
Alison Harvey	Industry Representative	Planning Programmes Manager for the Heritage Council of Ireland, Kilkenny
Kai Duong	Learner Representative	Student, Business, Economics, Law, Sociology, Political Science, Trinity College Dublin

Section C. Certificate in International Business

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
DBS campus	150	5

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	September 2021
Maximum number of annual intakes	3
Maximum total number of learners per intake	150
Programme duration (<i>months from start to completion</i>)	3 months (12 weeks)
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:	
<p>Target learner groups</p> <p>This programme is designed for full-time learners enrolled in a higher education programme in a partner institution in a relevant cognate discipline at Level 6 (year 1 of a three-year BA (Honours) degree programme) or at Level 6 (Year 1 or 2 of a 4 or 5-year BA (Honours) Degree programme) in the European Union. The learners' cognate areas include Business Studies, International Business, European Studies or Management. Furthermore, the target learner will be International (i.e. learners whose first language is not English). The target age group is between 18 and 21 years of age. The programme is designed to provide a full-time and/or multimodal provision of the programme. Multimodal learning is a key element of DBS's strategic vision and it provides flexibility and greater learning opportunities for learners. It is our assumption that learners will be curious, interested and motivated to study aspects of business from new perspectives, with a particular focus on the Irish business environment and some awareness of sustainable development issues.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time
The teaching and learning modalities	
<p>Lecture classroom-based sessions</p> <p>Practical lab sessions</p> <p>Online tutorial (synchronous)</p> <p>Language Tutorials</p> <p>Asynchronous learning</p> <p>Workshops and tutorials</p>	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	
<p>The <i>Certificate International Business</i> (Level 6, 30 ECTS) programme has been designed to provide learners with a range of practical skills that complement theoretical knowledge in the subject area of international business. The curriculum also aims to provide learners with the communication skills necessary to operate effectively and gain future employment in an</p>	

industry of their choice. Strong emphasis is placed on the acquisition of interpersonal skills necessary to deal effectively with customers and colleagues.

The *Certificate International Business* programme offers a specialised core academic curriculum in five mandatory modules including the International Economy, Introduction to Business Finance, International Management Practice, Marketing Communication and Campaigns, Enterprise and Innovation along with four elective options including Event Planning and Operations and Digital Content & Media Tools, Irish Society and Economics, Chinese for Beginners and Spanish for Beginners. Students will choose one (of five) 5 ECTS elective modules.

The mandatory modules are structured according to the five pillars: *Economics, Finance, Management, Marketing and Enterprise*. For example, the *Economics* pillar (*The International Economy* module) will enable learners to see economics in action and the decision-making tools open to stakeholders, governments, industries and organisations. The *Finance* pillar (*Introduction to Business Finance* module) provides a good grounding in organising and planning the means to conduct business, manufacture goods, provide services, or make investments and take loans. The *Marketing* pillar (*Marketing Communication & Campaigns* module) focuses on analysing current product/service performances and climates and making projections and speculations. The *Enterprise* pillar (*Enterprise & Innovation* module) provides learners with the knowledge on intrapreneurship or entrepreneurship that are dynamic elements for enterprises harnessing the marketing knowledge, financial instruments and managerial concepts. These interdisciplinary modules explore key social, historical, cultural, political and economic forces that have shaped Ireland and its place in the world.

An elective module *Digital Content & Media Tools* provides a grounding in content creation for business while *Event Planning & Operations* provides learners with the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and competence in operating a business event. Language modules are also available at CEFR A1 (Beginners) level are offered in *Chinese for Beginners* and *Spanish for Beginners*. This continues our commitment to retain a foreign-language option for learners.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Level 8 Honours Bachelor’s degree in Business or Level 8 Honours Bachelor’s degree in any of the following subjects or equivalent qualification in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economics ● Business ● Marketing ● Event Management ● Accounting and Finance ● Chinese ● Spanish <p>In addition, language faculty on this programme must also have a language teaching qualification.</p>	<p>6 part-time lecturers and 2 full-time lecturers.</p>

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lecture classroom-based sessions	1:150
Practical lab sessions	1:35
Online tutorial (synchronous)	1:25
Workshops and tutorials	1:25
Asynchronous learning	On demand
Language Workshops	1:15
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:	

Part 2. Evaluation against the validation criteria

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

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>b) The application for validation is signed by the provider’s chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	

As an established provider of higher education programmes DBS has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for revalidation of this programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression. DBS has also established arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) which have been approved by QQI.

DBS provided the panel with a copy of the letter to be submitted to QQI with the application for the revalidation of the programmes. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

¹ This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration of enforcing such requirements.

Criterion 2. The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought

<p>a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.</p> <p>b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.</p> <p>c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).</p> <p>d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>.</p> <p>e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p> <p>f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>g) For each programme and embedded programme</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(i) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.²</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">(ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.</p> <p>h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</p> <p>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</p> <p>For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.³</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	

In general, the panel is satisfied that the overall objectives and learning outcomes are clearly stated. The title of the Special Purpose Award is appropriate and consistent with the awards sought.

It was noted by the panel that the learning outcomes were not generally expressed using specific active verbs and, if this were modified, it would be easier to map the outcomes both to the assessment strategy and the overall goals of the programme. In discussion with staff at the review, this was considered to be both possible and appropriate. The panel made the following recommendation.

Recommendation

It is recommended that DBS review the learning outcomes to use specific, active verbs in describing the learning outcomes to enable them to be more clearly mapped to the assessment strategy and methods as well as to the overall programme goals.

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

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

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

- a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁴
- b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
 - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
 - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
 - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).
 - (iv) There is evidence⁵ of learner demand for the programme.
 - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁶.
 - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁷
- c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.
- e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	See recommendation by the panel on this criterion.

The panel is satisfied that the review undertaken by DBS has indicated that there is sufficient interest in the Certificate in International Business among the target groups. DBS has consulted with its partners and graduates in the review and there is evidence that learner interest remains sufficiently strong, despite a changing environment, due to the pandemic and other factors.

It was stated that the programme has been running for over 30 years and has a defined learning pathway that appeals to the learners and their colleges back home. As DBS attracts both domestic and international learners, participants on this programme like the opportunity to engage with people from different countries as well as to have the opportunity to learn more about the culture

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

⁵ This might be predictive or indirect.

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

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

and people of the host country. It was noted that key markets are learners from Germany and France.

In discussion with staff at the review, the panel inquired about how the business sector was involved in collaborating with DBS on the programme. DBS told the panel that both formal and informal mechanisms were in place to liaise with the business across many sectors through, for instance, DBS Advisory Panels in which business representatives provided input to DBS on their programmes and overall approach to producing employment-ready graduates. Informal contact was through invitations to industry experts to act as Guest Lecturers on specific topics, including, for instance, the evolving topic of sustainable business. As the latter is an important topic (see Criterion 5 below), with considerable interest shown by learners in this topic through their project work, it was the view of the panel that there might be scope to involve businesses in other ways, such as end of semester project presentations as a means of elevating this, as well as other topics, further.

Recommendation

It is recommended that DBS consider the opportunities to involve external business sector representatives in end of semester project presentations.

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

<p>a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied⁸.</p> <p>b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.</p> <p>c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR⁹) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Partially	See condition set.

The panel is satisfied that the programme’s access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory and working in practice.

It was noted that, in the documentation, there was an inconsistency in the stated requirements for language proficiency. Sometimes the requirement stated that a score of B2 was required and at other times that a score of B2+ was required. In response, DBS clarified that the standard for the proposed programme was B2+. It was further stated that this was now definitively stated in the DBS QA Handbook (section 1.3.7). The B2+ standard allows learners to participate in other programmes, including a module on the Introduction to Business Finance, it was stated. This had the added benefit of learners having the opportunity to study and mix with a larger cohort of learners.

⁸ Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider’s evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

It was stated that the reference in the Programme Review document to B2 as the proficiency standard was a reference to a requirement for an older programme. The panel ~~was~~ considered that some confusion may arise as to the standard now required and made the following condition.

Condition

It is a condition that DBS review the documentation on the programme to ensure that there is consistency in the stated entry requirements for language proficiency and that it is clear that the requirement for the proposed programme is proficiency at the level B2+.

Criterion 5. The programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

<p>a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.</p> <p>b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁰.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Partially	See conditions set and also see recommendations below.

The panel reviewed the proposed curriculum and held discussions with the programme team, including several of the lecturing staff on the proposed curriculum. It was acknowledged that, as the programme is only 12 weeks in duration, there was pressure on the curriculum to ensure that it covered a wide range of topics. The panel did however consider that, in a programme entitled Certificate in International Business, more attention be given to topics that have a major impact on the world economy and the geo-political situation, such as the on-going impact of Brexit, for instance. The panel has set a condition in this regard as set out below.

Condition

It is a condition that DBS broaden the scope of the topics to cover major international economies and geo-politics in a more comprehensive manner.

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

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

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

The panel further considered that DBS review how the international dimension of business is included in all programme and module learning outcomes and that this dimension is clearly articulated and to the fore in the programme. For example, consideration might be given in the finance module to the changing nature of Fintech and the rise of crypto currencies, all of which have an international dimension. The panel noted that, for instance, the module on economics has an emphasis on the Irish economy and there was less coverage of emerging economies, for instance, Russia and Brazil.

In response, DBS stated that, as learners come from different background and colleges, they may not have covered basic concepts in finance or economics or, alternatively, have considerable skills in, for instance, accountancy and maths. This can make it more difficult to ensure all learners were as engaged as possible throughout the programme and that achieving the right balance in programme content was constantly under review. The panel made the following recommendation to the team in this regard.

Recommendation

It is recommended that DBS undertake a faculty-led review of modules to ensure that they cover the international dimension of business.

The panel was informed by the team that the topic of sustainable development, including the 'green agenda', had come to the fore in recent years and that this was covered in different ways across several modules. It was further stated that an increasing number of learners were featuring issues around sustainable development in their project work and that the team was responding to this learner-led interest in a number of ways, including through case studies, invitations to specific guest lecturers with expertise in the area, linking in with DBS Student Society events and linking in with the college's own work on sustainability on Green Campus initiatives. Overall, it was reported that topics such as ethical supply chains, 'green washing', issues around recycling are consistently covered and that learners are prominent in defining this agenda in the programme.

The panel considered however that the subject of sustainable development might be more formally embedded in the learning outcomes of key programme modules, with more specific cover given to international perspectives such as the UN Sustainable Goals, the EU Green Deal and the examples provided by strong initiatives in New Zealand, as well as facilitating learners to explore areas of evolving interest to themselves.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the topic of sustainable development is more clearly articulated and visible across all modules and included in specific module learning outcomes, UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In discussion with the lecturing team at the review session, the panel discussed the issue of how cultural elements of language were included in the elective language modules. It was stated by the language tutors that issues of culture are embedded in ordinary situations such as shopping, ordering of food, how to address people in a business meeting and so on. Culture is about how people interact as much as about broader issues such as the history or art practices of particular cultures, the panel was informed.

Therefore the emphasis in the language modules tended to concentrate on how to communicate in everyday situations, as well as on more formal issues of grammar, alongside content covering cultural backgrounds, it was stated. The panel recommended that the more formal aspect of cultural awareness might be strengthened in the modules.

Recommendation

It is recommended that cultural elements be strengthened in the language modules.

As noted above, the panel has made several specific recommendations and has set a condition in relation to the overall content, structure and deliverables for the modules on the proposed programme. In summary, these include having a broader international business dimension to the programme, a clearer articulation of the topic of sustainability and a strengthening of cultural element in the elective language modules.

In addition, the panel considered that overall, the programme documentation should be reviewed to ensure it was more comprehensive and provided greater clarity on issues such as content and deliverables of modules as well as learner supports provided. See also further comment in Criterion 8 below. In the light of these concerns, the panel has set the following additional condition:

Condition

It is a condition that the documentation for this programme be reviewed to be more comprehensive, targeted on course content, structure and deliverables for all modules and learner supports, including core and elective modules.

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

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹² (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners’ achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme’s staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹³ opportunities¹⁴.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	

The panel is satisfied that this criterion is met for the programme. Additional staffing resources may be needed for the further growth in enrolment that is envisaged for the programme. This is discussed in more detail in Criterion 7 below.

The panel was informed that a particular strength of the programme staff was their own experience of working, studying and living internationally, and that this creates a greater sense of empathy and connection with learners. It was further stated that DBS has formal training in place for staff on how to be aware of best practice in working with international learners, who, for example, may have difficulty with English as a second language and to allow for this in marking assessments for instance. In DBS’s Faculty Pathway, a process for inducting new faculty members, intercultural awareness forms part of what is covered, the panel was informed.

¹² Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme’s provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.

¹³ Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.

¹⁴ Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff’s professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

It was stated that, as DBS as a college has an international learner profile on many of its programmes, staff have on-going discussion at staff meetings and CPD events on teaching and learning on developing best practice in working with this cohort of learners.

It was stated that DBS, as an institution, is planning to offer more formal training in intercultural awareness for staff and the panel welcomed this development.

Criterion 7. There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme’s learning environments including the workplace learning environment) (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided) (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable (v) technical support (vi) administrative support (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable <p>c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Planned intake (first five years) and (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake. <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	See recommendation on this criterion below

The panel noted that a five-year plan had been outlined for the programme. Projected enrolment was for a maximum enrolment of 450 in years 4 and 5 of the plan. This would require additional resources in staffing ratios and in physical resources such as language laboratories to deliver the programme as planned. In reviewing the documentation provided, the panel is not satisfied that a fully worked out resources plan is in place and recommends that DBS review the plan to take account of additional resources that may be required. It was noted that, in some of the documentation, different figures on projects levels of enrolment were provided and this needs to be clarified.

Recommendation

It is recommended that DBS provide a detailed Resource Plan for the potential growth envisaged in the overall plan for the programme and its delivery, including clarity around delivery ratios.

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

<p>a) The programme’s physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme’s learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.</p> <p>c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Partially	See condition set below for this criterion.

In reviewing the documentation provided and in discussion with the staff at the review meeting, it was not clear to the panel that sufficiently clear and detailed information on a range of topics was readily available to learners on the programme. It is acknowledged that some additional information on module guides was provided at the review, but it is the view of the panel that important topics such as the exam formats that learners might expect on assignments was not clear and that guidelines on groupwork and plagiarism were not easily accessible in the documentation provided to learners. This was in contrast to best practice in other DBS programmes and it is a condition that this information deficit be remedied for the first intake of the proposed programme.

Condition

It is a condition that DBS review the information provided to learners on this programme to ensure that it is more comprehensive and includes information, for example, on module content, assessment guidelines, exam formats, groupwork guidelines and plagiarism guidelines in line with its best practice in other DBS programmes.

Criterion 9. There are sound teaching and learning strategies

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁵ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	

In general, the panel is satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place. It was stated that, as the Certificate in International Business is aimed at learners who wish to study abroad for a semester, there are particular elements included in the overall programme that involve providing opportunities for learners to visit and experience places of interest in Ireland. Through organised trips and events DBS provides those opportunities over the course of the semester.

As noted in Criterion 5, the panel is recommending that elements of the curriculum, such as the international dimension in business and the formal inclusion of learning outcomes on sustainable business be reviewed by DBS, including the associated teaching and learning strategies such as cross learning where the topics are covered in a variety of modules in different ways. See Criterion 10 for further comment.

¹⁵ Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

Criterion 10. **There are sound assessment strategies**

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>¹⁶</p> <p>b) The programme’s assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.¹⁷</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written programme assessment strategy for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.¹⁸</p> <p>f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.¹⁹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Partially	See conditions set by the panel on this criterion.

As outlined in the Programme Document, that there is a cross-learning strategy in place around, for example, the topics of sustainability in business across modules. The criteria for cross-assessment however were not clearly stated in the documentation. In discussion with staff at the review, the panel was informed that, in order to simplify the assessment process, this subject is only assessed once in the Module on Enterprise and Innovation. It was further stated that learners did have the opportunity to apply the learning and practice from any module where the topic was covered and bring that into projects undertaken in the assessed module. The panel is not satisfied ~~that~~ that the documentation provided ~~does not~~ fully reflects the practice cited at the session and set the following condition:

Condition

It is a condition that the documentation be reviewed to ensure accuracy and consistency, for example, assessment weighting and that the document fully reflects the practice as described at the review visit.

¹⁶ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁷ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

¹⁸ The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁹ If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

The panel concluded that the marking scheme used in the assessment of the language modules was not sufficiently clear; for example, it was not clear if, in certain assignments, listening skills are being assessed or if a number of language skills were being assessed. It was noted that the learning outcomes and how these are to be assessed needed further clarification and clear information to be available for learners, including clear criteria for what constitutes levels of proficiency in the language being assessed. The panel set the following condition:

Condition

It is a condition that DBS provide learners with more detailed written information on the formative and summative assessment criteria and marking schemes used in the language modules.

Criterion 11. Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

<p>a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.</p> <p>e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.</p> <p>f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²⁰.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i>²¹ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.</p> <p>j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	

The panel was advised that DBS uses a number of mechanisms to develop and implement supports for students including:

Learner surveys

- Peer Mentoring Support (with training provided for mentors)
- Student representation on the Academic Board and Board of Studies
- Support for, and engagement with, an elected Student Union
- Student services for:
 - Accommodation
 - Counselling and referral services
 - Sports and societies, with many student-led events
 - Entertainment
 - Career Hub

²⁰ For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

²¹ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

The panel found that these are well-established processes and services within DBS. It was said that DBS pays particular attention to providing a 'soft landing' for international learners, with, where possible, pre-arrival assistance provided on, for example, how to look for accommodation in Dublin. There is a formal induction period where learners find out about how to use the library and other resources such as the services provided by the student welfare department. Information is provided in the Student Handbook, on the DBS website and at induction meetings.

The Student Engagement Office tracks learner attendance at class, engagement with the library and on Moodle at early stages so that learners who may need additional supports are identified quickly.

The panel noted that the Student Handbook was quite short, with a considerable number of links for learners to click in order to obtain necessary information on a range of subjects. See Criterion 8 above for further comment on this point and the recommendations made by the panel in relation to providing information and guidance to learners.

Criterion 12. The programme is well managed

<p>a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider’s general or institutional procedures.</p> <p>b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider’s QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI’s statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.</p> <p>c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme’s staffing requirements and can be added to the programme’s complement of staff.</p> <p>d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme’s complement of supported physical resources.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance²² is intrinsic to the programme’s maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI’s statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in International Business	Yes	

The panel is satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programme under review. The QAH contains the governance structures for the College and procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning.

It was noted that the QAH and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines.

²² See also QQI’s Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1 Certificate in International Business:

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

Reasons for the overall recommendation

1. The programme meets the QQI criteria overall.

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

1. It is a condition that DBS review the documentation on the programme to ensure that there is consistency in the stated entry requirements for language proficiency and that it is clear that the requirement for the proposed programme is proficiency at the level B2+.
2. It is a condition that DBS broaden the scope of the topics to cover major international economies and geo-politics in a more comprehensive manner.
3. It is a condition that the documentation for this programme be reviewed to be more comprehensive, targeted on course content, structure and deliverables for all modules and learner supports, including core and elective modules.
4. It is a condition that DBS review the information provided to learners on this programme to ensure that it is more comprehensive and includes information, for example, on module content, assessment guidelines, exam formats, groupwork guidelines and plagiarism guidelines in line with its best practice in other DBS programmes.
5. It is a condition that the documentation be reviewed to ensure accuracy and consistency, for example, assessment weighting and that the document fully reflects the practice as described at the review visit.
6. It is a condition that DBS provide learners with more detailed written information on the formative and summative assessment criteria and marking schemes used in the language modules.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

As above

Summary of recommendations to the provider

There are 6 recommendations:

It is recommended that DBS review the learning outcomes to use specific, active verbs in describing the learning outcomes to enable them to be more clearly mapped to the assessment strategy and methods as well as to the overall programme goals.

It is recommended that DBS consider the opportunities to involve external business sector representative in end of semester project presentations.

It is recommended that DBS undertake a faculty-led review of modules to ensure that they cover the international dimension of business.

It is recommended that the topic of sustainable development is more clearly articulated and visible across all modules and included in specific module learning outcomes, UN Sustainable Development Goals.

It is recommended that cultural elements be strengthened in the language modules.

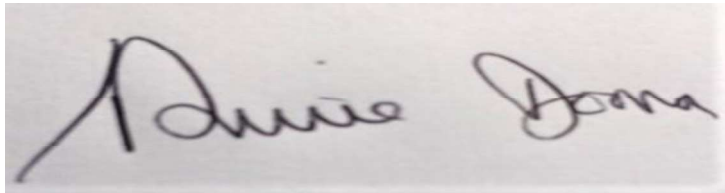
It is recommended that DBS provide a detailed Resource Plan for the potential growth envisaged in the overall plan for the programme and its delivery, including clarity around delivery ratios.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Dr Annie Doona

Date: 20th August 2021

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature reads "Annie Doona" in a cursive script.

Signed:

3.2 Disclaimer

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