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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Dublin Business School
Date of site visit	13 Aug 2020
Date of report	31 August 2020

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance
	Award	Higher Diploma in Science
	Credit	60
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions being met

Embedded programme 1	Title	n/a
	Award	
	Credit	0
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Karen Jones	Chair	National College of Ireland
Mary Jennings	Secretary	Independent Consultant
Konstantinos Gavriilidis	Subject Matter Expert	University of Stirling
Eoin Geoghegan	Learner Representative	TU Dublin
Michael Hannon	QA Expert	Galway Mayo IT
Marie O Brien	Subject Matter Expert	A&L Goodbody
Tim O'Connell	Industry Representative	Grant Thornton

Section C.   Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners *(FT)*	Maximum number of learners *(PT)*
Dublin Business School	75	75

Proposed Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	**Duration**	**Intakes per Annum**	**Enrolment i.e. learners per Intake**	
			Maximum	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
Full-Time	October 2020	12 months	2	5	75
Part-Time	October 2020	18 months	2	5	75
Intake Schedule e.g. January September					

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

The panel noted the timing proposed for the first intake will not be met given the delay in the revalidation process to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions. The first intake date will need to be amended to another point in Semester 1 2020/21 or Jan/Feb 2021 following the programme being formally validated by QQI.

Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)

Technological innovation applied to aviation finance has created a wave of disruptive activity that will change the shape of the global financial system over the next decade. This has created demand from graduates and employees for programmes specifically tailored to the skills required for an evolving financial environment.

This is an interdisciplinary programme that focuses on finance, data analytics and computing for Aviation Finance. It is designed to appeal to graduates seeking to enhance their career prospects in Aviation Finance. This is a 1 year full-time, 1.5 year part-time programme with six taught modules each of 10 ECTS which combined, leading to a Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance (Level 8, 60 ECTS).

Target learner groups

This programme is aimed at learners with a Level 8 honours bachelor's degree in a non-cognate area with a minimum pass classification, or learners with a Level 7 ordinary bachelor's degree in a cognate area who wish to progress to a Level 8 qualification (cognate areas include business, finance, engineering, computing, technology or science).

It is aimed at those who wish to specialise in the field of Aviation Finance with a view to entering the industry, or those who are working in Aviation Finance already and who require a qualification in the area in order to progress professionally.

Applicants who do not have a Level 8 qualification and who have at least 3 years' work experience may also be considered through the College's normal RPL procedures. Relevant professional experience may be taken into account and individuals will be assessed on a case-by-case basis through DBS RPL procedures.

Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time and Part-time

The teaching and learning modalities
1. Classroom lectures
2. Case-based learning
3. Practical skills sessions
4. Workshops
5. Tutorials
6. Individual and group work

Summary of specifications for teaching staff		
Role	**Profile**	**WTE**
Teaching Staff	Teaching staff will have a minimum of a Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma or Masters in the following areas: ● Finance, Financing, Treasury, Trading, Aviation Finance and Financial Statement Analysis ● Information Security, Cloud Computing and Computer Networking. ● Business Intelligence, Predictive Analytics, Data Management and Software Engineering. In modules where industry experience is desirable, holders of Level 8 honours degrees in the above disciplines, who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of significant industry experience may also be considered.	4

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lecture classroom-based sessions	1:150
Online class (live)	1:150
Online tutorial (interactive)	1:25
Practical Lab sessions	1:35
Workshops	1:50

Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:

See Criteria 6 for special condition in relation to staffing

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	**Title**	**Last enrolment date**
N/A	N/A	N/A

Section D.   Other noteworthy features of the application

Part 2.   Evaluation against the validation criteria

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

a)	The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.
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.
c)	The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.[1]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

As an established provider of higher education programmes DBS has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of this programme. It was noted that DBS has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression as set out in Section 4 of the Programme Document. 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 validation of the programme. The letter contained the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

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[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

a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.
b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.
   (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.
c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).
d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards.*
e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.
f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are
   (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.
   (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.
g) For each programme and embedded programme
   (i) The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.[2]
   (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are **consistent with** the relevant QQI awards standards.
h) Where applicable, the **minimum intended module learning outcomes** are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.
i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.
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]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

The panel found that the aims, objectives and rationale for the programmes were expressed clearly, as set out in Section 2.1 of the Programme Document.

It was concluded that the programme and module learning outcomes have been clearly outlined and were appropriate to the level of the awards. The title of the programme was deemed to be appropriate and in line with the QQI standard for the award type on the NFQ.

The panel observed that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes for the Higher Diploma in Aviation Finance were informed by the QQI Science Awards Standards and have been mapped against these standards.

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[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 evidence[5] of learner demand for the programme.
   (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant[6].
   (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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

Overall, the panel was satisfied that the proposed programme is soundly based, with adequate consideration given to a very dynamic context in the aviation sector.

The panel was informed that, in line with its overall strategy to produce employment-ready graduates, DBS has forged strong links with industry through its sectoral industry panels and industry representation on its Academic Board, as well as with its learners and graduates. These mechanisms provide a means to inform the development and evolution of programmes that met a need, including the needs identified in the aviation finance sector. The panel is satisfied that DBS has undertaken a comprehensive consultation with stakeholders in the development of the proposed programme.

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[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.

The panel noted that, while this is a strong sector in Ireland, it is also a global industry. It was further noted that despite the current difficulties in the sector world-wide, there will be opportunities for graduates with a broad understanding of the sector in areas such as leasing, taxation, legal, tokenisation of assets, fleet management and, crucially, management of the maintenance function and related cash flows, together with an understanding of the financing needs in the overall lifecycle of aircraft. In discussion with the team, it was clear that the proposed programme was designed to provide this broad grounding in the core topics outlined. It was noted that the aim was not to produce graduates who would have specialist knowledge in any one area, but ones that should gain sufficient knowledge and understanding to be attractive to potential employers.

Given the evolving nature of the sector, particularly due to the current pandemic, the panel advised of the importance of future-proofing the proposed programme by ensuring that the curriculum was reflective of the changes happening, including, for instance, exploring how digitisation and data analytics might bring change to this sector as they have done in other sectors. They advised of the need for innovation in the sector and suggested that a programme with a clear proposition, one that addressed the existing and future needs of the sector offered DBS and its graduates a competitive advantage. Such a programme could attract potential learners from other industry sectors. The panel is satisfied that, in general, the proposed programme offers this proposition. See Criterion 5 for further specific comment on this topic with specific recommendations made around the content of key modules, aimed at aligning the content with the current and future needs of the sector.

The panel, particularly the industry representatives stressed the importance of having experts in the sector available to the learners on the programme. See specific comments in Criterion 6 below.

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

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 satisfied[8].

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.

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 (CEFRL[9]) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.

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).

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.

f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-
   (i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes*, 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.

g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

Overall, the panel was satisfied that the proposed programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are appropriate. Information on access, transfer and progression is available through the Student Handbook. The entry requirements are clearly stated in terms of prior qualifications This includes information on EU and non-EU entry requirements and information for students with disabilities. It was noted that DBS intend to ensure that similar information on the proposed programme will be available via the DBS and in promotional material when the process of validation has been completed.

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[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)

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

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.
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.
c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.
e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles[10].
f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
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]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Partially	See Condition in relation to content of Modules

The panel found that, in general, the curriculum for programme proposed for validation is broad-based and well-structured. **However, it is a condition that DBS Review the modules (specifically Modules 1,4 and 6) to reinforce the currency and competitiveness of the programme and its graduates.**

The panel made some specific observations and recommendations on the content and structure of some of the modules with a view to enhancing the applied nature of the programme and the work-readiness of the learners. There are outlined below.

Module 1: Aircraft Leasing Legal Frameworks
Key areas to consider for review in the module include:
- Emphasis on the global context – Ireland is a hub but the industry is global
- The issue of owner trust structures and the impact on the industry to be highlighted
- Emphasis on the principles of contract law, not just Irish law

Module 2: Aircraft Leasing Taxation
Key areas to consider for review in the module include:

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[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

- Ensure that the cross-border element in tax optimisation is included – not just the Irish position
- Ensure that there is future-proofing around changes in taxation regimes, including Ireland, but also globally, by comparing jurisdictions and what has been successfully in other areas of the world

Module 3: Aviation Finance and Financial Statement Analysis
Key areas to consider for review in the module include:
- Emphasis on the Financial Statements section of accounts – not all of the accounts
  Look at these from point of view of lessor and lessee
- Ensure that Financial Statement Analysis is a key component of the module– with less time allocated to general accounting issues as outlined

Module 4: Aircraft Economics and Life Cycle Management
Key areas to consider for review in the module include:
- Consider that maintenance-related cashflows as the key component here; this tie back to lease contract and is linked to Financial Statement Analysis
- Opportunity here to show the impact caused on by current crises – it's not a 'what-if' scenario (good opportunity for graduates of this course)

Module 5: Aviation Financial Management
Key areas to consider for review in the module include:
- Focus on the principles of this topic and ensure future-proofing e.g. where might innovation come from?
- Bring out unique aspects of the sector, including non-consolidation; the exposure of noteholders; the possible return of ABS; consider what the structures and safeguards will look like?

Module 6: Digitisation and Innovation in the Aviation Industry
Key areas to consider include:
- Thread data governance and data ethics throughout
- Be aware of where the thought-leadership is or might be: environmental issues; data privacy and regulation; Fintech, not just Finance
- Cost elements and demonstrate how to do this (key for employment)

The panel noted that, in the documentation to be provided to learners, it was not always clear what programming languages, software and databases were to be used on the proposed programme. The panel made the following recommendation in relation to this point.

Recommendation
It is recommended that DBS review the documentation to be more explicit at a programme and module level of the languages, software and databases to be used on the programme to manage learner expectations.

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

<table>
<tr><td>
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).
b)   The programme has an identified complement of staff[12] (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.
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.
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 development[13] opportunities[14].
e)   There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.
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.
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Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Partially	See the Condition that applies as set out below in relation to industry expertise being embedded in the staffing model

The panel met with the teaching staff at the review session. The panel found that it was clear from reviewing the CV's of the proposed teaching team that it did not include industry experts

The panel noted that, for the proposed programme, a core teaching strategy was to have specialist input provided by expert industry guest lecturers. In general, this was by way of one-off teaching or tutorial sessions. Learners would also have access to the contracted experts by way of email or other technology platforms for follow up questions or queries. DBS informed the panel that it was currently engaged in actively seeking to recruit staff with the required expertise in aviation finance to become part of the faculty on a more long-term basis but that this was proving difficult. DBS acknowledged that the specialist expertise required to cover all aspects of the curriculum did not reside in the current faculty, although all had expertise and many years' experience in teaching on the related and relevant topic of finance/accounting/law/tax which formed part of the overall curriculum.

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[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.

The panel was of the view that the expertise needed to be embedded into the core delivery structure, rather than as an additional element. The panel suggested that the programme documentation (Section 7) be amended to reflect how industry experts will be woven into the teaching staff model. This is a condition that DBS must meet as set out below.

Condition
It is a condition that DBS clarify the programme staffing model to demonstrate how industry experts are embedded into the teaching team across all modules.

The panel was informed that DBS had taken steps to increase its overall teaching capacity during the current pandemic. Specifically, DBS had provided training for both full-time and part-time staff in how best to deliver a mix of on-line/off-line and in-person approaches to take account of the social-distance guidelines provided to the third level education sector by the Department of Education.

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

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).
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:
   (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
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).
d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address
   (i) Planned intake (first five years) and
   (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.
e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

The panel is satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned.

As the review by the panel took place via Microsoft Teams platform the panel was informed by the DBS team on the library facilities, classroom and study facilities and technology services. The panel was informed that DBS Library comprises a physical library at Aungier Street and an extensive online library which is accessible via the Library Website (http://library.dbs.ie/).

The panel was informed that there had been a reallocation of the library budget in favour of the procurement of additional e-books and other publications to cater for the blended learning approach and to facilitate learners who, because of social distancing guidelines, may not have access to the physical library as easily. Additional services, such as having a 'click and collect' service for physical books/periodicals/journals had been put in place for learners as a means of making the library facilities more accessible.

As a result of recent investment in the physical infrastructure, additional technology-enhanced study places recently became available to learners. These will be available in line with social distancing guidelines to both full-time and part-time learners. The panel noted that DBS intends to

continue with its investment in its physical infrastructure over the coming years, in addition to the resources being made available for blended learning during the current situation with COVID-19.

The panel was informed that Computer Services department provides IT support for all technology-based services throughout the college, supporting learners both on and off-campus and supporting staff to deliver a blended learning format. The panel was informed that DBS had increased both its capacity and flexibility in relation to the supply of technology, including additional mobile labs, virtual desktops for learners via the learner's own computer for instance. As technology is likely to play an increasing role in facilitating learning in the future, it is understood that DBS keeps this service under regular review.

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

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.

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.

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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

The panel was informed that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that learners have the appropriate level of learner supports in the current environment, involving more delivery online with more restricted numbers on campus due to social distancing requirements. Contingency planning for the new academic year foresees a proposed induction to online learning as the new term begins, provision of access to appropriate software and the recording of classes and additional library services. See also Criterion 7 above.

The panel was informed that learners who, for whatever reason, are not in a position to learn online will have access to the premises as much as possible. The panel was informed that, while DBS does not receive grants from government agencies to provide appropriate facilities for people with disabilities, nevertheless it makes every effort to accommodate people with disabilities.

The panel found that the Student Handbook had clear information provided for learners.

Criterion 9. There are sound teaching and learning strategies

<table>
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a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.
b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.
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).
d) Learning is monitored/supervised.
e) Individualised guidance, support and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.
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<tr><td>Programme</td><td>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</td><td>Comment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance</td><td>Yes</td><td></td></tr>
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In general, the panel is satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies in place to deliver the programme as proposed. The use of industry guest lecturers was a key part of the overall teaching and learning strategy, the panel noted. However, as noted in the condition outlined in Criterion 6 above, the panel has outlined the necessity of having a staffing model that ensures that the required industry experts are embedded into the teaching team across all modules.

The Programme Team advised the panel that the whole area of technology-enhanced, blended learning was changing, with disruption caused by Covid-19 pandemic accelerating a process already in train. Examples provided to the panel included the more interactive use of MOODLE to both enhance student engagement and promote more independent learning, whereby activities and resources are well scaffolded through in-class learning and continued on MOODLE.

The use of case studies that are specific to the global aviation finance sector were an important feature of the learning strategy, the panel was informed.

Criterion 10.   There are sound assessment strategies

a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with *Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards*[15]

b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.

c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.[16]

d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.

e) There is a satisfactory written **programme assessment strategy** for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.[17]

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.

g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.

h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.[18]

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

The panel is satisfied that, in general, there are sound assessment strategies in place. These include an appropriate mix of formative and summative strategies.

As the overall programme is aimed at producing generalists more than specialists, it is suggested this approach be fully reflected in the assessment strategy proposed.

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[15] See the section on transitional arrangements.

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

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

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

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

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.

b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.

c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.

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.

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.

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.

g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.

h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities[19].

i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*[20] and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.

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).

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

The panel was advised that DBS has a number of specific supports at a central level to provide services to learners. This includes the Student Experience Department which encompasses Careers and Student Services who work to enhance the experience of students at all stages. With a diverse range of students from many countries, the team stated that the overall focus was to promote a DBS community and a culture that is focused on student wellbeing and success. It was stated that there is a system of class reps and class mentors in place and which was working well, with good, active engagement by DBS staff and learners, all of which contributed to the building of a supportive environment.

The panel was informed that, with the advent of COVID-19 that there had been an increase in the level of support needed, particularly for international students, many of whom were isolated working from their own rooms. This was delivered through additional on-line supports such as a new chat function on MOODLE, coordinated services from the student welfare teams and the library and an increase in

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

[20] See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

the counselling services offered by an outside agency. DBS told the panel that this type of service will be offered to students of the proposed programme as required.

The panel noted that there is student representation on a number of boards, including the Academic Board. The panel was informed that DBS works with the Students' Union, particularly in relation to issues of student welfare and educational matters, including involvement by learners in the DBS Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning forum. These mechanisms provided a way for DBS to receive feedback from learners in relation to areas such as the experience of taking exams online for instance and to refine such processes which are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Criterion 12.   The programme is well managed

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.

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.

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.

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.

e) Quality assurance[21] is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.

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.

g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.

h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance	Yes	

The panel is satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the proposed programme. The QAH contains the governance structures for the College and sets out procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning. The panel noted that the structures, roles and responsibilities for line management of the proposed programme were set out clearly. The panel is further satisfied that the QAH and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines.

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[21] See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 3.   Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1   Principal programme: Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance

Satisfactory subject to 2 conditions stipulated	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);

Reasons for the overall recommendation

The proposed programme meets the criteria with two special conditions applied. These are set out below.

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

1. It is a condition that DBS Review the modules (specifically Modules 1,4 and 6) to reinforce the relevant and competitiveness of the programme and its graduates.
2. It is a condition that DBS clarify the programme staffing model to demonstrate how industry experts are embedded into the teaching team across all modules.

Recommendation to the provider

1. It is recommended that DBS review the documentation to be more explicit at a programme and module level of the languages, software and databases to be used on the programme to manage learner expectations.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Karen Jones   Date: 31 August 2020

Signed: Mrs Karen Jones

3.2   Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While QQI has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk, and in no event will QQI be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from, or in connection with, the use of the information contained in the Report of the External Evaluation Panel.

Part 4. Proposed programme schedules

Name of Provider:	Dublin Business School
Programme Title	Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance
Award Title	Higher Diploma in Science
Stage Exit Award Title[3]	N/A
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):	Full Time
Teaching and learning modalities	Formal lectures, seminars interactive group work, specific learning groups as defined by area of academic need, workshops, presentations, educator/teacher review, case-based learning, problem based learning

Award Class[4]	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, …, or Award Stage):	Stage NFQ Level[2]	Stage EQF Level[2]	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	8	6	Award	8	6	60	Sept 2020	0412

Module Title (Up to 70 characters including spaces)	Semester no where applicable (Semester 1 or Semester 2)	Module Status[22]	NFQ Level[1] where specified	Credit Number[5] Credit Units ECTS	Total Student Effort Module (hours) Total Hours	Class (or equiv) Contact Hours	Directed e-learning	Directed Learning	Hours of Independent Learning	Work-based learning effort[23]	Allocation Of Marks (from the module assessment strategy) C.A. %	Supervised Project %	Proctored practical demonstration %	Proctored written exam %
Aircraft Leasing Legal Frameworks	1	M	8	10 ECTS	250	60	62	128		50			50
Aircraft Leasing Taxation	1	M	8	10 ECTS	250	60	62	128		100			0
Aviation Finance and Financial Statement Analysis	1	M	8	10 ECTS	250	60	62	128		50			50
Aircraft Economics and Life Cycle Management	2	M	8	10 ECTS	250	60	74	116		100			0
Aviation Financial Management	2	M	8	10 ECTS	250	60	74	116		50			50
Digitisation and Innovation in the Aviation Industry	2	M	8	10 ECTS	250	60	74	116		100			0

Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters): N/A

Name of Provider:	Dublin Business School
Programme Title	Higher Diploma in Science in Aviation Finance
Award Title	Higher Diploma in Science
Stage Exit Award Title[3]	N/A
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):	Part Time
Teaching and learning modalities	Formal lectures, seminars interactive group work, specific learning groups as defined by area of academic need, workshops, presentations, educator/teacher review, case-based learning, problem based learning

Award Class[4]	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, …, or Award Stage):	Stage NFQ Level[2]	Stage EQF Level[2]	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	8	6	Award	8		60	Sept 2020	0412

Module Title (Up to 70 characters including spaces)	Semester no where applicable (Semester 1 or Semester 2)	Module Status[24]	Module NFQ Level[1] where specified	Credit Number[5] Credit Units ECTS	Total Hours	Class (or equiv) Contact Hours	Directed e-learning	Hours of Independent Learning	Work-based learning effort[25]	C.A. %	Supervised Project %	Proctored practical demonstration %	Proctored written exam %
Aircraft Leasing Legal Frameworks	1	M	8	10 ECTS	250	30	68	152		50			50
Aircraft Leasing Taxation	1	M	8	10 ECTS	250	30	68	152		100			0
Aviation Finance and Financial Statement Analysis	2	M	8	10 ECTS	250	30	68	152		50			50
Aircraft Economics and Life Cycle Management	2	M	8	10 ECTS	250	30	80	140		100			0
Aviation Financial Management	3	M	8	10 ECTS	250	30	80	140		50			50
Digitisation and Innovation in the Aviation Industry	3	M	8	10 ECTS	250	30	80	140		100			0

Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters): N/A