

SLATE

Strategy for Learning,
Assessment and
Teaching Enhancement

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Objectives | 2 |
| Strategy Development Process | 2 |
| Objective 1: To be known as a learning-centred higher education institution | 3 |
| Measures | 4 |
| Objective 2: To greater integrate programme team educators, learners and industry experts into the learning experience | 5 |
| Measures | 6 |
| Objective 3 | 7 |
| Measures | 7 |
| Report and Review Schedule | 8 |
| References | 8 |

SLATE

Introduction

Dublin Business School's (DBS) Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 commits to:

- Deliver outstanding learning
- Create work-ready graduates
- Support student success
- Be distinct (DBS, 2019)

Behind these strategic objectives lies a teaching and learning challenge for DBS – How to inspire and nurture learners to be work-ready graduates?

To inspire and nurture learners, DBS will deliver a distinct and outstanding learning environment from which emboldened graduates will emerge ready to tackle the challenges of the modern workplace. Who are work-ready graduates? Among the work-ready attributes highlighted by the *National Employer Survey* (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2019) were professionalism, positive work ethic, reliability, ethical and social awareness, adaptability and flexibility and the ability to cope with work pressure, while working effectively, autonomously or with others. In other words, work-ready graduates are self-sufficient, autonomous learners who make the connection between learning and their environment. This SLATE sets out the objectives and actions required to produce the distinct, outstanding and supportive learning environment to embolden graduates equipped with these work-ready attributes.

To inspire learners is to adopt a learning-centred approach¹, which focuses on the activities and behaviours that engage learners actively in their own learning (Hunt and Chambers, 2012). The result for learners is the self-sufficiency and autonomy sought by industry in work-ready graduates. To be learning centred empowers learners to create their own opportunities, but it also challenges educators to look at their teaching environment, approaches and all aspects of the curriculum and ask “How can we engage learners more actively in their own learning”?

To meet this challenge, DBS can look to one of its key strategic values – to drive results together (DBS, 2019). Driving results together means adopting an integrated teaching approach, which unites educators to meet the challenge of engaging learners more actively in their own learning. Integrated teaching also acknowledges that, while the lecturer is key to the learning experience, learners and industry experts are peers in the process. Highlighting an integrated teaching approach identifies that the foundation of a positive learning environment is engaged, competent and supported educators acting with integrity to take collective responsibility for driving results together to ensure work-ready graduates emerge from DBS.

There is an expectation that work-ready graduates can perform and adapt in a flexible work environment and, therefore, outstanding learning must mean flexible learning. Flexible learning is defined as the capacity to be able to learn regardless of location, time or platform, but the term can also be extended to include the flexibility to move between the varieties of teaching approaches that can be employed in a learning-centred approach.

Therefore, this Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE) has at its core three objectives that, achieved collectively, will produce the outstanding learning environment where learners are engaged in their own learning to become work-ready graduates.

¹ The distinction between learner-centred and learning-centred is that the former focusses on the learner needs, whereas the latter focusses on the activities and behaviours that engage learners in their own learning.

Objectives

- 1. To be known as a learning-centred higher education institution (HEI)**
- 2. To greater integrate educators, learners and industry experts in the learning experience**
- 3. To increase the flexibility of the learning environment**

By October 2022, learners at DBS can expect to be full partners working with lecturers and industry experts to shape the learning experience. Flexible online learning complemented by flexible in-class learning will be the norm. Similarly, educators will have the capacity to seamlessly move between a variety of learning-centred teaching approaches, supported by programme teams working together. This flexible, integrated learning-centred environment will be supported by DBS and underpinned by its shared values.

Strategy Development Process

SLATE is a three-year plan to enhance the learning experience at DBS. This plan emerged from the reported experiences of DBS learners, staff and partners. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LT&A) Committee, which is made up of representatives of professional and academic staff, learners and academic management, guided the process behind the development of this strategy.

The process started with a review of the DBS's existing LT&A strategy by the LT&A Committee from which emerged a mix of specific and broad objectives. This review was followed by a thematic analysis of learner feedback, staff survey results and QQI panel responses from programmatic review. At the same time, faculty were invited to contribute to the strategy development process by attending drop-in sessions, engaging in one-to-one interviews or informally sharing their ambitions for DBS's LT&A strategy. The emerging LT&A themes were workshopped by the LT&A Committee to identify objectives and actions. The outcome of the workshop was a discussion document on SLATE that was put to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for review. The first draft of SLATE was drawn up following that review and shared with all academic staff and members of the LT&A Committee. This first draft was also workshopped by the SLT. Feedback on the first draft was incorporated into subsequent drafts, which was put to the LTA Committee and SLT for review. This final version of SLATE was approved by the Academic Board on the 24th September and by the Executive Board on 30th October.

Objective 1

To be known as a learning-centred higher education institution

DBS will inspire and nurture learners with a learning-centred approach, which focuses on the policies, processes, actions and behaviours associated with engaging learners actively in their own learning. To enhance its academic reputation as a learning-centred HEI, means DBS will create the supportive environment to enable learners to be more fully engaged in the learning experience and faculty to embrace the collaborative and social aspect to learning.

| Institute-wide Actions to support learning-centred approach | |
|--|--|
| Action | Description |
| Publish DBS LT&A guides on level-appropriate learning centred approaches | College-wide guides for programme teams to amend and incorporate into their programmes. |
| Create a learning-centred resource repository | An online interactive resource containing case studies, activities, readings and videos on learning-centred approaches to teaching, assessment and feedback. |
| Annual showcase of learning-centred LT&A | Organise an annual LT&A Day, similar to Research Day, to showcase research informed teaching and learning practice. |

| Academic CPD and Research Actions | |
|--|--|
| Action | Description |
| Devise a programme of informal lecturer-led learning-centred approaches | Stage four "Lunch and Learn" sessions on learning-centred approaches per semester. |
| Devise a programme of learning-centred academic CPD workshops | Run three formal workshops on learning-centred approaches per semester. |
| Facilitate access to learning-centred short CPD courses | Make available to academic staff three short CDP courses per semester, for example National Forum digital badges. |
| Add a learning-centred section to staff performance management points system | Devise a system where lecturers receive points for participation in learning centred extra-curricular activities that can be translated into funding to attend discipline-based and T&L conferences. |
| Provide a pathway to accredited courses | Devise a mechanism for staff to be supported in studying for accredited T&L courses and level 9 and level 10 qualifications. |
| Develop accredited teaching qualifications delivered by DBS | New programme proposals for teaching certificate, diplomas or masters. |
| Set up a learning-centred research group | Building on the CoP, develop a research group to seek internal and external funding for research into learning-centred approaches. |

| Programme Level Actions | |
|---|---|
| Action | Description |
| Develop a work-ready competency test | Design a self-assessed curriculum-based work-ready competency test that learners take periodically through their course of study. |
| Devise an “academic buddy” procedure to mentor new academic staff in learning-centred approaches | A documented series of tasks between a new member of staff and a discipline-based programme relevant academic buddy covering Teaching approaches, assessment, feedback, grading, communication with learners. |
| Introduce a classroom observation programme | A programme of classroom observation to assist in nurturing learning-centred behaviours conducted by the Course Directors as part of programme teams’ action plans. |
| Incorporate the principles of learning-centred teaching into module review | Annual module reviews by programme teams take into consideration the principles of a learning-centred approach. |
| Develop agreed commitments between learners and programme teams | Learners and educators enter into curriculum commitments that cover for example: Programme and module teaching approaches and teaching content release schedule. |
| Develop mechanisms to bring learners more into developing the learning environment and experience | Building on the experience with NStEP training, examples of increased learner involvement include greater participation in programme review and learner-led events, Peer-assisted learning (PAL). |

Measures

- Increasing numbers of faculty participation in learning-centred CPD semester-on-semester
- Increasing numbers of funded research projects into learning-centred teaching and learning year-on-year
- Increased Student Engagement as reported in ISSE
- Recorded activity by faculty on the online learning-centred resource
- Record of learning-centred activities and discussions in programme team meeting minutes and action plans
- Increasing number of learners engaging with the work-ready competency test
- Increased learner satisfaction with a module as measured through the College module survey

Objective 2

To greater integrate programme team educators, learners and industry experts into the learning experience

Driving results together involves bringing everyone who teaches, and supports teaching, together into a cohesive integrated programme team. For programme teams to be more integrated, learners and industry experts will increase their participation in the processes and decision-making behind defining the learning environment, and staff will clarify communication and share more of their experiences between the team and with learners. For DBS, increased integration requires increased time, support and training for programme teams to work collectively to take responsibility for enhancing programme design and delivery. It also requires the desired faculty behaviours, based on the DBS values, to be articulated and rewarded.

| Programme Level Actions | |
|---|---|
| Action | Description |
| Embed programme team meetings in the academic calendar | Monthly communication between faculty teaching on the same programme or across the same programmes that discuss teaching approaches, formative and summative assessment, grading, rubrics, feedback and learner communication. |
| Incorporate Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LT&A) issues into industry-engagement boards | Discipline-based and DBS-wide industry engagement boards discuss guest speakers, work placement, assessment strategy, curriculum design, teaching approaches. |
| Increase involvement of learners in Programme Board meetings | Learner representatives attend programme board meetings and feedback into conversations about programme review and development. |
| Develop programme-level curriculum plans to address 'at risk' learners | Utilising the developing early alert and learner engagement measures, programme teams to have curriculum-based action plans to address poor performing learners who are at risk of dropping out or failing. |
| Programme teams to adopt self-assessment mechanisms and criteria into programme team communications | Programme team meetings to regularly self-assess aspects of learning, teaching and assessment. |
| Increase work placements for learners | Work placements added to curriculum through programme review & revalidation and new programme approval. Increased industry-based research options for postgraduate learners. Increased options for extracurricular work placements. |

| Institute-wide Actions | |
|---|---|
| Action | Description |
| Define acceptable and unacceptable behaviours of Faculty and other learner-facing staff | Based on the corporate values, determine the behaviours that staff should follow and monitor these behaviours through regular performance management. |
| Introduce a training programme on team work, communication and integration skills and competencies | Make available to staff training and support on integrated team work. |
| Increase learner representation on DBS committee and boards | Increase learner representation on decision making and policy development bodies. |
| Incorporate aspects of programme team integration and DBS values into faculty recruitment and orientation | Review recruitment criteria to ensure it includes aspects of team integration skills and competencies. |
| Introduce Programme level learner feedback | Participate in studentsurvey.ie , which captures learner feedback at a programme level. |
| Incorporate aspects of programme team integration and DBS values into performance reviews | Review Performance Reviews to incorporate aspects of programme team integration into the review process. |

Measures

- Year-on-year increase in staff engagement index
- Semester-on-semester increase in attendance at programme team meetings
- Semester-on-semester increase in attendance at training workshops
- Semester-on-semester increase in industry guest speakers/industry events on programmes
- Year-on-year Increase in programmes offering work placements
- Year-on-year Increase in the number of industry-DBS research projects that involve learners
- Year-on-year increase in pass rates
- Year-on-year increase in learner retention

Objective 3

DBS will avail of advances in technology and spatial planning to increase the flexibility of the learning environment to enable learners, educators and industry to engage regardless of time, place or platform. Increased flexibility comes from making the physical learning environment less restrictive and by increasing the blend between face-to-face and online learning delivery. This increased flexibility will enable educators and learners move seamlessly between the different methods – peer learning, reflective learning, active learning and experiential learning – required for a learning-centred approach.

| Institute-wide Actions | |
|---|--|
| Action | Description |
| Establish an EdTech User Group | Establish an EdTech user group to raise awareness about EdTech and initiate EdTech projects. |
| Conduct a Spatial Planning Review | Review classroom orientation and IT/AV setup for flexibility. |
| Achieve QQI approval for blended learning | Re-engagement with QQI for blended learning delivery. |
| Engage in a blended learning pilot | Develop and deliver four BL modules. |
| Establish a Blended Learning team | Put together a team of instructional designers and experienced blended learning lecturers to facilitate the development of blended learning modules. |
| Comprehensive adoption of Lecture Capture | Move from an opt-in to an opt-out approach to using lecture capture, thereby making lecture capture a standard part of the learning environment. |

| Programme Level Actions | |
|--|--|
| Action | Description |
| Increase the blend of face-to-face and online delivery on all modules | Carry out a phased blended learning development schedule per discipline and per level. |
| Adopt an opt out approach to blended learning on all new programme development | All new programmes to be reviewed for blended learning or online development and delivery. Only where online is not appropriate can an opt out be permitted. |
| Introduce online and blended training for educators | Facilitation in Workshop and short courses in flexible learning. |
| Increase learner choice of engagement | Learners to have the ability to engage with learning using multiple access points, whether in the classroom or learning remotely. |

Measures

- Increasing number of classrooms with flexible layouts
- Increasing number of blended learning and online modules
- Increased learner activity on Moodle
- Increased lecturer activity on Moodle
- Increasing number of learners engaging with learning off campus
- Increasing volume of recorded educational technology activity
- Recorded Increase in learners engaging with learning using multiple entry points

Report and Review Schedule

Head of Quality Enhancement and Innovation in Teaching and Learning will report on the progress of SLATE to the LT&A Committee, the Senior Leadership Team and the Academic Board.

| Academic Year 2019/20 | | | |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Date | Date | Date |
| LT&A Committee | Dec 2019 | Mar 2020 | Jun 2020 |
| Senior Leadership Team | Jan 2020 | Jun 2020 | |
| Academic Board | Jun 2020 | | |

| Academic Year 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Date | Date | Date | Date |
| LT&A Committee | Sep 2020 | Dec 2020 | Mar 2021 | Jun 2021 |
| Senior Leadership Team | Oct 2020 | Jan 2021 | Jun 2021 | |
| Academic Board | Jun 2021 | | | |

| Academic Year 2021/22 | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Date | Date | Date | Date |
| LT&A Committee | Sep 2021 | Dec 2021 | Mar 2022 | Jun 2022 |
| Senior Leadership Team | Oct 2022 | Jan 2022 | Jun 2022 | Sep 2022 |
| Academic Board | Jun 2021 | Sep 2022 | | |

References

Dublin Business School (2019) *Strategic Plan 2019-2024*. Dublin: Dublin Business School.

Fitzpatrick Associates (2019) *Irish National Employer Survey*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority.

Hunt, L and Chalmers, D (2012) *University Teaching in Focus: A learning-centred approach*. London: Routledge.



Dr. Tony Murphy

Head of Quality Enhancement and
Innovation in Teaching and Learning

admissions@dbs.ie

+353 1 4177500