Dublin Business School

# QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

## 2023 Edition – Part B

## Section 5: Assessment Regulations

2023

# Contents

## Assessment Regulations

*The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on student's future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support*.

*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (2005) cited in QQI (2022)[1]

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This section of the *Quality Assurance Handbook* sets out policies relating to learner assessment, including:

- The overarching assessment policy, including the role of examiners and moderators, assessment feedback, approach to assessment and grading
- Word counts
- Late Submission
- Repeat policy
- Progression
- Access and retention of exam scripts
- Verification of results

As with all sections of the QAH, DBS seeks to provide information as clearly and concisely as possible. DBS is aware that for learners, assessment (and ultimately, clarity around attainment and outcomes on their programme of study) is paramount. Therefore, while this document formally sets out policies and procedures around assessment, DBS advises any learner with a question to contact their Programme Coordinator for advice/direction as to whom to speak if you have questions.



[1] QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*, Section 2, **https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf** .

## 5.1 Assessment Overarching Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| *Document Name* | Assessment Overarching Policy |
| *Policy Document Number* | 019 |
| *Version Reference* | v2.3 |
| *Document Owner* | Registrar and Director of Campus Operations |
| *Roles with Aligned Responsibility* | Exams Manager, Exams Officers, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors |
| *Applicability* | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ) |
| *Approved by* | Academic Board & QQI |
| *Approval date* | 23/07/19; v2.1 15/02/2022, v2.2 02/03/2023 |
| *Date Policy Becomes Active* | 15/02/2022 |
| *Revision Cycle* | A minimum of every five years |
| *Revision History/ Amalgamation History* | N/A |
| *Additional Information* | |
| *References/ Supporting Documentation* | • ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, Standard 1.3 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment'.[2]<br>• QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*, Part 2 'Foundations'.[3]<br>• QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Section 2.6.1 'Assessment of Learning Achieved.[4] |

### 5.1.1 Policy Overview

When commencing a programme of study at DBS, each learner assumes responsibility for demonstrating the attainment of module learning outcomes to at least the minimum standard. Successful completion of all modules (and the satisfaction of all constituent learning outcomes) will demonstrate the attainment of programme level outcomes.

DBS assessment policy is informed by best practice across the international higher education sector and supports the principles for assessment outlined in QQI *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*.

The focus is on intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Assessment is integrated into teaching and learning, and DBS operates assessment on the basis of assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment in learning. Specific assessment activities are designed to determine a

[2] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

[3] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

[4] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

learner's progress, to inform additional learning requirements, and/or to assess a learner's attainment against clearly defined learning outcomes.

All learners are fully informed about 1. how they are assessed, and 2. the specific role and purpose of each assessment in the context of their learning journey and award outcome.

### 5.1.2 Policy Statement

DBS has endorsed and implemented the following underlying principles:

- **Integral:** Formative and summative assessment are essential to DBS programme design and delivery and the DBS learning environment.
- **Efficiently managed:** The assessment process will be sufficiently clear and within DBS's capacity to be managed.
- **Reliable:** All assessments will be designed to effectively, efficiently and consistently measure the attainment of learning outcomes at the NFQ level and number ECTS credits stated in the module descriptor.
- **Appropriate:** The mix and volume of formative, summative and small stakes assessment will be appropriate for the NFQ level and ECTS credits stated in the module descriptor.
- **Fair:** Learning outcomes should ideally be summatively assessed once, and assessments should only cover the aligned learning that has taken place.
- **Equitable:** Learner effort to complete assessments will be spread equally across a programme.
- **Relevant:** Assessments will facilitate students to learn discipline-specific knowledge and transversal skills and to develop as self-directed autonomous learners.
- **Flexible:** Assessment creators will develop a variety of assessment instruments and be open to innovative assessments and the potential for assessments in multiple formats.
- **Composite:** Assessment creators will design and build assessment types across modules, semesters and stages of a programme that facilitate incremental and composite skill and knowledge development for learners.
- **Complementary and Integrated:** Assessment creators will consciously develop assessment types that are complementary and/or integrated across modules, semesters and stages of a programme with a view to minimising the workload of learners.
- **Work-focussed:** Assessment creators will develop assessment methods and instruments that facilitate the development of workplace and work-ready skills for learners (that they can clearly understand, articulate and connect to the workplace).
- **Objective:** Best practice will be applied for internal and external monitoring of standards.

- **Transparent:** Learner-facing guidance and information on assessments will be clear, unambiguous and ongoing.
- **Authentic:** Assessments will be relevant to the nature of the learning and, where possible, replicate the real world challenges learners are likely to face as citizens of the world.
- **Accessible:** Assessments will be accessible to all learners.
- **Inclusive:** Assessment strategies will be differentiated to accommodate varied learner needs and abilities.
- **Supported:** Assessment design and delivery will be supported by training, CPD and collegial support.
- **Varied:** A variety of types of summative assessment are required across a programme.
- **Reviewed:** At a minimum, assessments are reviewed and reported on annually in consultation with students, lecturers and external examiners to ensure they are fit for purpose.

### 5.1.3 Intended Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are clear statements of what a learner is expected to know and to be capable of demonstrating upon completion of a specified period of learning. The level and standard of knowledge and ability reflected in a learning outcome varies according to the level of the award. Learning outcomes articulated as part of a DBS programme of study leading to a QQI award are aligned with the applicable award standards as published by QQI.

Minimum Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Inform the design of a relevant assessment tool.
- Enable a moderator, reviewer or External Examiner to determine the suitability of the assessment tool.
- Notify learners of that which an examiner is seeking to establish/impart.
- Act as a threshold standard, i.e. that which is required to secure a pass mark, for examiners marking an assessment.
- Inform feedback to learners in identifying where learning outcomes were not met/were satisfied/were exceeded.
- Inform the review of effectiveness and suitability of assessment methods.
- Provide fairness and consistency to the assessment process.
- Provide clarity and serve as tools for learning and for improvement for learners.
- Provide transparency within the assessment process.

The responsibility for demonstrating attainment of learning outcomes remains with the learner. In order to fulfil this responsibility, learners are required to engage in the relevant assessment activities, and it remains their responsibility to be familiar with the associated expectations and requirements including submission dates, attendance and location arrangements for examinations or other assessments. Lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of such requirements which have been clearly communicated by the College is not considered reasonable justification for non-completion of assessment requirements.

Learners have a limited number of opportunities to satisfy assessment requirements. Whilst there is a standard practice of a maximum of three repeat opportunities per assessment, special regulations apply to individual programmes which may result in fewer opportunities being available. Full details are included in the programme validation document and programme handbook. Where a learner fails to satisfy these requirements either through not taking up the assessment opportunity, or through failure to meet the required standard, they will be deemed to have failed and will be withdrawn from their programme after exhausted opportunities. Any exception to this will only be in the context of standard procedures for mitigating circumstances (see QAH Part B Section 4.3).

DBS provides learners with relevant and appropriate assessment opportunities that enable learners to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes. In assessing learners, DBS will ensure learners are fully informed of the learning outcomes against which they are being assessed.

Appropriate review, moderation, monitoring and external examining arrangements are in place to ensure assessment methods and decisions are reliable, credible and valid and that they provide an appropriate and effective means of attaining the specified learning outcomes.

### 5.1.4 Role of Examiners

Any member of DBS faculty allocated responsibility for assessing learners is deemed to be an Examiner. The role of an Examiner is to:

- Prepare assessments in consultation with the moderator, in accordance with the approved module descriptor.
- Submit examination papers, solutions and marking schemes, in consultation with the moderator, to the Examinations Office where they are forwarded to the External Examiner(s) within deadlines stipulated by the Examination Team.
- Alongside the Academic Director, take account of suggestions, deletions, additions or amendments proposed by the External Examiner(s) and implement as recommended or provide a rationale for non-implementation.

- Mark the assessments and arrange for moderation.
- Submit marks to the Examinations Team via the means specified (Moodle upload or through the student information system).
- Prepare a sample of marked continuous assessment (CA), in conjunction with the moderator, for submission to Examinations Office, for provision to the External Examiner(s).
- Return marked scripts and any associated forms to the Examinations Office.
- Receive feedback from the External Examiner(s) and, in conjunction with the Academic Director or moderator if necessary, agree the marks proposed to be awarded to each candidate (prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners).
- Attend the Examination Board, to verify marks and contribute to the deliberations concerning grades and awards.

### 5.1.5 Role of the Moderator

A moderator is appointed for each module by the designated Academic Director. The appointment is made on the basis of experience as an educator in the particular subject or a related area, normally including at least 2 years' teaching and assessment or other curriculum-related experience within the last 5 years at the same level on the framework as the subject which is being moderated. The moderation process can be defined as:

**A process undertaken within DBS in which assessment practices and decisions are regularly sampled and evaluated, and findings are acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness.**

The moderator works closely with the examiner in a monitoring/advisory role to ensure:

- Assessment is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not discriminate against any learner.
- Assessment has been set in line with learning outcomes of the module.
- An assessment has been marked in line with the expressed aims and learning outcomes of the assignment/examination, and the marking criteria.
- Fairness of marking and the equality of treatment of each learner.
- Internal consistency of assessment within a module.
- Comparable standards across modules within a given subject area.
- Assessment is appropriate to the level at which it is taught.

All lecturing staff receive a detailed moderation guidance document and training is also made available.

### 5.1.6 Role of External Examiner

External Examiners are appointed to a particular programme, subject or module. In some cases, a programme may have a team of External Examiners where specialist subject expertise required is too broad for any one External Examiner. In such cases a chief External Examiner should be identified. The role of the External Examiner is to provide independent quality assurance for the assessment process. Their function is to provide externality to quality assuring the assessment process and the marking of learner work. The External Examiner process assists in assuring standards appropriate to the award level are maintained and that standards at DBS are consistent with national standards and are comparable to other institutions.

### 5.1.7 Assessment Types

DBS recognises that in order for learner assessment to be effective it should be a process that includes diagnostic, formative and summative assessment over a period of time.

**Diagnostic assessment:** assists in determining a learner's preparedness for a programme, or stage in a programme, and in identifying any possible learning needs. In itself it doesn't normally attract a grade or contribute to an overall award. In some instances, it is used merely as a starting point and can inform or contribute to a formative or summative assessment task at a later stage.

**Summative Assessment:** summative assessments are for the purpose of determining a learner's performance against specific learning outcomes. A mark is awarded in accordance with objective marking criteria, and this forms a part of learners' formal learner record, which is reported to the Examination Board and will be ratified as part of their overall award and classification. Summative assessment is aligned to the concept of assessment OF[5] learning.

**Formative Assessments:** formative assessments are designed to give learners an opportunity to practise unfamiliar skills or demonstrate their understanding in a new area of learning and receive guidance on how to further improve. Formative assessments can be graded as this is useful information for the learner as to how well they are progressing or achieving, but those grades **do not** contribute to the overall summative result. It is to be expected that participation in formative assessment tasks that are designed to assist and/or support learners, will further enhance their understanding of material covered on their chosen programme of study, and may assist in their performance in subsequent summative assessments. Formative assessment is aligned to the concepts of assessment FOR learning.

[5] To see a definition of Assessment OF, FOR, AS learning, please see https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/our-priorities/student-success/assessment-of-for-as-learning/#!/Understanding

**Low-stakes Assessment.** Low-stakes assessments are graded and collectively contribute, in a small part, to a learner's final grade. Small-stakes assessments tend to take place during class time and, as such, contribute to the learning. Low-stakes assessments are an opportunity to exercise assessment AS learning.

**Professional Suitability for Practice** may be an assessed component in certain programmes, particularly training programmes. Where concerns arise in relation to a learner's suitability for, for example, clinical or client work, the programme team are entitled to determine appropriate action for addressing these concerns, subject to the nature of the programme in question. In extreme cases, learners may be required to withdraw from the programme.

See **Section B.5.11.3** for further information regarding the Feedback Policy.

Except where specified otherwise, assignments are required to be marked and moderated and returned to the learners within a period of not more than four weeks from the submission deadline. Some larger modules may require a longer time, by agreement with the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production in conjunction with the Exams Manager. In such cases the lecturer will communicate the expected feedback date to the learners. Marks awarded by the examiner are subject to verification by the moderator, who reviews a sample of learner scripts for the purpose of assessing the marking standards applied by the examiner. Any issues noted are referred back to the examiner for consideration and action as deemed appropriate.

### 5.1.8 Assessment Methodologies

DBS programmes are assessed by continuous assessment (CA), practical, placement, project/thesis, written examination, or a combination of these assessment tools.

The assessment methods used on a particular module or programme are made known to learners at the beginning of the academic year.

The Academic Director is responsible for the overall management of assessment on the programme(s) they lead. This includes working closely with faculty management, programme teams and the Examinations Team to assure themselves that appropriate arrangements are in place, and in particular that:

- Responsibilities and expectations are clearly communicated to all stakeholders.
- Appropriate assessment timing, weighting and scheduling is provided for across the programme.
- Diagnostic, formative and summative assessment are included in course design, as appropriate.

- Arrangements are in place for the moderation and external examining of assessments.
- Arrangements are in place for the ongoing review of assessment processes and procedures.
- The academic regulations, policies and procedures for the conduct of assessments are correctly followed.
- Full and accurate assessment data is made available for Examination Board decisions to be reached.

Responsibility for the management and coordination of all CAs within a module rests with the module lecturer, under the leadership of the relevant Academic Director who will act to ensure a consistent programme-wide approach to assessment.

The coordination of final examinations is the responsibility of the Exams Manager.

Continuous Assessment briefs, requirements and marking rubrics are provided to learners through the VLE (Moodle) on the module home page. In turn, learners are required to submit any written work or supporting files via the Moodle platform. All work must be submitted via Moodle. The only exception is assessment work undertaken synchronously in-class or during a work placement, such as practical work or presentations. Written work on assessments must not be submitted via e-mail or any third-party platform.

DBS requires that lecturers provide all assessment material (including final examinations, CAs, etc.) for an entire academic year and to cover both original attempts and repeats. A copy of this material should be submitted securely via the Moodle examination submission link.

### 5.1.9 Authoring Assessments

Best practice in assessment looks to remove the over-assessment of learners and to incorporate a variety of assessment types (diagnostic, formative and summative), and assessment tools to suit the needs of the assessment, the learner group, level and type of award.

The development of assessments should be informed by the programme and module assessment strategy as outlined in the relevant programme validation document. The assessment strategy for each module should reasonably include diagnostic (establishing the learner's start point and pre-existing knowledge and ability), formative (monitoring the learner's progress and informing additional learning and development required), and summative (providing learners with the opportunity to demonstrate the attainment of learning outcomes) and grading them accordingly against agreed, published criteria.

Depending on whether the assessment is formative or summative, the author of an assessment is reminded that when designing an assessment, they should ensure that the activity will enable the learner to demonstrate their achievement of, or progress towards, the learning outcomes. In all

assessments learning outcomes being assessed should be communicated to the learner as part of the assessment brief.

The length and complexity of the assessments should reflect the purpose of the assessment, the level of the award, the stage the learner is at within the programme, and the weighting of the assessment in relation to the overall module or programme. It is important that parameters are agreed at programme level in order to ensure parity of assessment demands across a programme.

In using multiple summative assessment tools within a module, assessment authors are required to give consideration to the possibility of learners securing higher marks as a result of an accumulation of marks from smaller assessments which may only enable superficial demonstration of knowledge and skills. This type of practice has the potential to cause grade inflation and should be avoided, particularly where a module requires a learner to demonstrate detailed subject knowledge, more in-depth thinking, critical analysis, reflective practice or evaluative skills. Lecturers are also encouraged to be mindful of the overall programme assessment load and to avoid over-assessment.

DBS does not dictate prescribed assessment methods. Programme teams are encouraged to be creative and innovative in the design and implementation of assessment techniques that are reliable and valid and also reflect the nature of the field of study. DBS also encourages the use of assessment techniques that are reflective of real-life employment activities and requirements in the subject area being assessed.

An important role of assessment is the support and reinforcement of learning. Hence, consistent and systematic feedback to learners is important. DBS requires that all learners are provided with informative feedback which outlines areas of success and areas for further development.

### 5.1.10 Marking Scheme and Grade Criteria

The author of an assessment is also required to produce a marking scheme that indicates the key areas to be addressed within the task and how the marks will be distributed within each section. It is important that marking schemes are as detailed as possible to ensure consistency when used by a team of examiners.

For example, where a marking scheme lists a number of points that may be addressed within a question, it should indicate what degree of detail, analysis, evaluation and application is required in relation to the number of points – thus preventing learners being awarded marks for merely providing a list.

A marking scheme should clearly outline which learning outcomes are expected to be addressed and the format in which it may be presented. Ideally, further detail should be provided to indicate those specific sections in the examination that can attract potentially higher marks.

It is important to note that the achievement of learning outcomes is the threshold standard – i.e. that required to achieve a Pass. Learners awarded a higher mark should have exceeded the learning outcomes. This is reflected in the grade descriptors provided to all examiners and learners.

### 5.1.11 Assessing Learner Attainment

Assessment of learner attainment is measured against the applicable learning outcomes and informed by the published grade descriptors. Marks awarded will be reflective of the extent to which learning outcomes have been met or exceeded.

There will be a clear demonstrable relationship between assessment and learning outcomes, the standards required for different levels of performance, and the grades awarded.

All assessment will be criterion referenced against clearly published requirements, and marks will be awarded according to the standards defined in published grade descriptors. Assessment decisions will not be made based on the comparison of learners' work against one another nor by the requirement for specified percentages to be awarded particular grades (i.e. the practice referred to as 'marking to a bell curve' is not permitted as it is at odds with a learning-outcome centred approach).

Generic grade descriptors are in use across DBS, but programme teams are encouraged to design and implement module-specific ones. In such instances, these should also be approved by the External Examiner along with the assessment tasks for the programme.

A basic 'Pass' mark (normally 40%) for an assessment task indicates threshold attainment of the learning outcomes that are being assessed.

A mark above Pass level is an indication of the extent to which the threshold has been exceeded. Contextualising grade descriptors is a useful way of outlining what is required to achieve higher grades.

Examiners must utilise the marking schemes and grading descriptors to ensure that the work to which the mark is awarded reflects the standard that correlates with it.

Assessment of learner performance is greater than the mathematical computation of marks for subsections. Having totalled marks of subsections, the examiner is required to review the final overall mark against the correlating grade descriptor and satisfy themselves that the appropriate

mark is awarded. The examiner is entitled to add or deduct marks to reflect more accurately the standard of the overall piece of work assessed.

Wherever possible, examiners should avoid the issuing of borderline marks – i.e. 1% below the next grade band – because this may be perceived as uncertainty in allocating one of two grade bands.

The full range of marks from 0% to 100% should be used by examiners.

Examiners are advised that the awarding of a mark below 40% indicates work of an unsatisfactory standard and demonstrates only a superficial understanding of the subject matter.

Work that is considered a marginal Fail in that it demonstrates achievement of some of the learning outcomes, albeit limited or with evident gaps, should fall into the grade band of 35–39% where the opportunity for compensation may apply depending on programme and award regulations.

The awarding of a mark over 70% indicates work of an excellent standard and over 90% would be considered outstanding or exceptional, possibly of a publishable standard.

### 5.1.12 Assessment Review

Assessment tasks, marking schemes and grade descriptors should be reviewed regularly as should the assessment strategies of modules and programmes along with the assessment procedures and regulations associated with them.

Within DBS, assessment is reviewed annually as part of the programme monitoring process and a more detailed review of assessment strategies is undertaken as part of the five-year regulatory Programme Review process. In all instances of review, learner feedback is sought and utilised to inform decisions relating to assessment.

The Academic Director is responsible for ensuring the programme team undertakes the necessary assessment review for their module. A programme-level approach should be taken to ensure learners are not over assessed or subjected to an over emphasis on a narrow range of assessment tools.

Changes to an assessment strategy should be proposed to the Academic Director who will review it, along with the rationale for the change, in the context of the overall programme and the proposed impact on learners. Where the Academic Director supports the proposal, s/he will present it for approval to the Board of Studies.

DBS encourages the ongoing review and enhancement of assessment practice. Learner performance and/or feedback is expected to inform proposals for changes to assessment. In some cases, this may result from a recommendation of the Examination Board.

A part of the ongoing monitoring and review of effectiveness, post changes to assessment, the Programme Report for the subsequent year is expected to note the impact of the change and draw comparisons with the previous years' assessment performance.

## 5.2 Continuous Assessment Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| *Document Name* | Continuous Assessment (CA) Policy |
| *Policy Document Number* | 021 |
| *Version Reference* | v1.0 |
| *Document Owner* | Registrar and Director of Campus Operations |
| *Roles with Aligned Responsibility* | Exams Manager, Exams Officers, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors |
| *Applicability* | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ) |
| *Approved by* | Academic Board & QQI |
| *Approval date* | 02/03/2023 |
| *Date Policy Becomes Active* | 02/03/2023 |
| *Revision Cycle* | A minimum of every five years |
| *Revision History/ Amalgamation History* | N/A |
| *Additional Information* | |
| *References/ Supporting Documentation* | • ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, Standard 1.3 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment'.[6]<br>• QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*, Part 2 'Foundations'.[7]<br>• QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Section 2.6.1 'Assessment of Learning Achieved.[8] |

### 5.2.1 Policy Overview

This policy outlines the principles and procedures in place in DBS in respect of continuous assessment (CA). The majority of academic programmes offered by DBS feature some element of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is used to provide insight into the learners' knowledge, skills and competences in areas that are not normally assessed in written examinations.

These policies for continuous assessment should be applied consistently across all modules and programmes to ensure fairness in the treatment of learners. It is the learner's responsibility to review the assignment specification and ensure that all assessments are submitted in accordance with the instructions in the specification.

[6] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

[7] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

[8] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

### 5.2.2 Policy Statement

#### 5.2.2.1 Creation of Continuous Assessment Strategies

Examiners are required to ensure that they are fully aware of the weightings attached to the CA elements in each module or subject they teach. The definitive source of the weighting allocated to CA in any given module is the current Approved Programme Schedule and module descriptor which can be obtained from the QA Officer. This will remain consistent throughout the validated period of the programme unless approval for change is secured from QQI. This would normally involve the consideration of a proposal by a peer review panel.

The module descriptor also provides the necessary information on the indicative nature/type and breakdown of CA proposed and approved at the point of first validation/revalidation. This is subject to change as a result of ongoing review and enhancement. The most recent breakdowns of CA weightings are recorded in the Student Information System and reflected on Moodle for the module concerned. Examiners must adhere to the current breakdown or request an amendment through the Board of Studies approval process. Where an examiner wishes to propose a change to the CA type or the weightings within the overall CA weighting the correct procedure for approval through the Board of Studies must be applied.

Additional or alternative assessments created in Moodle will not correlate with the Student Information System, and therefore will not populate the learner record. The option to add additional or alternative assessments to the relevant Moodle page is for the purpose of including diagnostic and formative assessments.

There are many possible formats for CA, and they should remain consistent with the requirements of the approved module descriptor, except where Board of Studies approval has been granted. Examiners are encouraged to be flexible when deciding what format to use.

Some typical examples are as follows:

- An essay in response to an exam-type question
- An essay in response to a question or statement not normally seen in examinations
- A critical review of a text (e.g. a newspaper article or book) or a case study
- A summary of a text (e.g. a book chapter)
- An in-class test, similar in scope to an end-of-stage examination
- An in-class Short-Answer Question (SAQ) examination
- An in-class Multiple-Choice Question (MCQ) examination
- An oral presentation based on a prescribed topic

- A literature review
- Case studies

A group-oriented task, requiring the production of a document or oral presentation by a small group of learners

The completion of a short work-package relevant to the academic discipline (e.g. the writing of a computer program or the designing of a website, etc.)

When selecting and developing the type of continuous assessment to use, Examiners are required to align the task to the intended learning outcomes of the module. These in turn have been aligned to the programme level and stage. An assessment may address only some or all module learning outcomes. The learning outcomes being assessed through the assignment task in question must be communicated to the learner.

All items of CA drafted by each Examiner are reviewed by a moderator to ensure that they are appropriate to the programme level and that they relate to identifiable learning outcomes of the relevant module. The moderator must also be satisfied that the learner workload involved is commensurate with the assessment weighting, and is not excessive at any particular time within the academic year (through reference to the assessment schedule for the programme).

#### 5.2.2.2 Group Work

In setting group work, programme teams should ensure the following:

- Assessment tasks are in keeping with the Approved Programme Schedule, Module Descriptor and Programme Assessment Strategy.
- There is an appropriate mix of assessment instruments across the programme.
- The assessment task is clearly defined in terms of:
    - Group size
    - Weighting breakdown, including any individual contribution (typically 10—20% of the assessment, but see below)
    - Whether the assessment is based on output or group process
    - How groups are identified (assigned or voluntary)
- Guidance should be provided regarding what is expected of learners, how the group should work collaboratively together and how final reports should be presented in terms of ownership.
- In the context where remote working is required, clear guidance on the use of technologies and practices to support this should be provided. Learners should be made aware that

common issues and problems that arise in group work may be exacerbated if groups are working remotely and provided with guidance for managing this.

- Alternative assessments are provided for students who cannot complete the assessment as part of a group.

A 'group' may be comprised of a minimum of two learners (i.e. pairs). Group size should allow learning outcomes to be met in an optimal manner. Group sizes are not prescribed at a policy level but must be given detailed consideration in assessment design.

***The Assessment of Group Work***

Where a module involves group work, the marking scheme should clearly provide detail on how individual learners' contributions will be assessed and rewarded. Each assessment must clearly stipulate the particular tasks and skills that are being assessed (e.g. presentation skills, contributions to discussion fora, etc.) and awarded as an individual mark, and what components are being assessed and awarded an overall group mark.

DBS takes the view that a one size fits all percentage is inappropriate. Nonetheless, module/ programme teams are encouraged to award an individual contribution mark within each summative group assessment of between 10 and 20 percentage marks. Individual programme teams will further keep this percentage mark under regular review.

***Managing Group Work***

Group work can often prove challenging for learners. Assigning individual students to particular groups can also prove a challenge and must be handled sensitively. The method used for assigning students to a specific group must be set out clearly and explained to learners well in advance.

Similarly, where a group leader is to be appointed, the method of selection of the group leader must be clear to all group members in advance of the assessment.

It can be helpful for learners to prepare a protocol, and agree and commit to rules on the management of their group work. This protocol should include agreed rules on how any issues or disagreements will be resolved and/or escalated to a member of Faculty.

Where issues or conflicts do arise, lecturers and module coordinators will often be the 'first responders'. In the event that an issue or conflict within a group should escalate, it is important for lecturers to notify module leaders/ Academic Directors at the earliest opportunity to ensure that matters can be resolved speedily.

See also *Quality Assurance Handbook* Part C Section 1.6.

### 5.2.2.3 Communication of Continuous Assessment Information to Learners

At the commencement of each module, learners will be provided with a clear and unambiguous written assessment specification. This will be posted on the Moodle page for the module.

The specification should normally include the following:

- Module name, code and details of examiner
- Nature of the coursework in detail
- Marking scheme to be applied
- Learning outcomes being assessed
- Specific deliverable(s) required from learners, including format required (e.g. type written) and word-count, if specified
- Percentage of marks allocated for that assignment and for each component deliverable, where there is more than one
- Dates on which the assignment brief is given to learners
- Penalty accruing for late or non-submission
- Maximum number of repeat opportunities
- Submission date for the assignment (or for each deliverable element where appropriate)
- Date feedback and assignment results will be available
- A link to the DBS Policy on Academic Integrity (QAH Part B Section 3.3)

### 5.2.2.4 Submission and Grading of Continuous Assessment

Where possible, continuous assessments are submitted through the online portal Moodle. The following steps are completed in order to submit online.

1. Learners complete a cover sheet which is added to the front of the assessment.
2. The learner then continues to the assignment submission area of the individual module page.
3. The learner uploads the file which contains their assignment.
4. Once the file has been uploaded the learner clicks the 'send for marking' button.
5. A message appears which states the following: '*By clicking on this button I am aware of the DBS policy regarding cheating, plagiarism and all other forms of academic impropriety. The coursework submitted is my own or my group's work and all other sources consulted have been appropriately acknowledged. I am aware that in the case of doubt, an investigation will be held*.'

6. When the learner agrees to the above, there is a final option to submit the assignment they have uploaded. In advance of the final upload learners are advised to view the Ouriginal report that has been generated.
7. The learner will then see that their assignment has been submitted with the date and time displaying at the top of the page.

Where submission of an assessment is through Moodle, lecturers should not accept submission through an alternative means except with explicit approval from the Exams Manager. This is to prevent unfair practice and ensure parity of assessment requirements for all learners.

Following the marking and moderation process, provisional results may be communicated to learners by posting them on Moodle. These results are provisional as they are still subject to ratification by the relevant Examination Board. Results should be communicated to learners in a timely fashion to facilitate learners having a clear understanding of their progress in the module.

Where two or more learners present a joint assignment, then each learner in the group is required to submit and retain a copy of the entire assignment. Each member of the group will receive an individual grade for a group assignment.

The examiner is responsible for the safe-handling, storage and security of assignments or scripts. Examiners are required to take appropriate precautions to ensure that scripts/assignments should not be unnecessarily exposed to risk of access, loss, theft or destruction; for example, scripts should never be left unattended in a public area or in a vehicle.

To provide formative feedback to learners, the marked assignments should be made available to learners to allow them to review the marks awarded together with the comments of the examiner. This will normally be available on the original submission in Moodle.

However, for those assessments that are not uploaded to Moodle (such as presentations, exhibitions and events), feedback should be made available either in class or by way of a feedback report uploaded to Moodle. This feedback is provided to enable learners to better understand the academic requirements in question, to improve their subsequent performance and to make them aware of any shortcomings so that they can understand why they received the grade they received. It is good practice to include a section on how the grade could have been improved.

#### 5.2.2.5 Word Count for Continuous Assessment

The purpose of a word count limit is to give learners clear guidance on:

- The maximum length of a piece of assessed written work.

- The amount of effort expected, and the level of detail required.
- How they should allocate time to one assignment in relation to others.

Writing to set word count limits is a skill required within some professions, as well as being an academic skill. Word limits are set appropriate to the learning outcomes, the credit weighting of the assessment and the framework level of the module.

Other key elements are as follows:

- The assessment specification published for each assignment should clearly specify a maximum word count. In some instances, a minimum word count may also be outlined.
- Learners will not be penalised for an assessment that is within 10% of the word count.
- If an executive summary or abstract is required, then a separate word count for this should normally be specified.
- The penalty for exceeding the word count should also be clearly stated for learners.
- A failure to meet the maximum word limit may result in lower marks based on the quality of the work because the learner may not have included the necessary information required for the assessment to meet the learning outcomes.
- The word count includes everything in the main body of the text from the introduction to the conclusion, including headings, tables, citations, quotes, lists and footnotes.
- The word count does not include the cover page, table of contents, executive summary, reference list and appendices, unless it is clearly stated in the assessment specification that this assignment is an exception to the rule.
- Appendices should be kept to a minimum and only contain reference materials illustrating and supporting arguments fully made in the main body of the work. Any other material included in appendices, except where specifically requested in the coursework instructions, will not be marked.
- Learners should avoid attempts to work around the policy by excessive use of diagrams, hyphenation or the use of screen shots, except where specifically allowed.
- The actual word count should be clearly and correctly stated on the title page of the assignment submission by the learner.
- Where the word limit is exceeded, a line should be drawn in the submission by the examiner indicating the point at which the word limit has been reached.
- Where the word count of a submission is proportionally and unreasonably excessive with regard to the assessment brief, the examiner may deem that the submission does not meet the requirements of the brief.

### 5.2.2.6 Late Submission Penalty

Any CA must be submitted through Moodle by the specified submission deadline, unless an IT issue has precluded this. Any IT issue must be documented and notified to the Programme Coordinator in advance of the submission date.

A penalty of two marks per day will be applied per day or part thereof for an ongoing failure to submit beyond the submission deadline. For the purposes of these penalties, a day is defined as any day of the week, including weekends and public holidays when the College may be closed. An examiner has the right to refuse to mark the assessment if the submission instructions have not been observed.

- Where a late assessment, submitted within 14 days of the deadline, is of a passing standard (i.e. would achieve more than 40% in the normal scheme of things), the late penalty is capped such that the minimum grade that can be awarded is 40% for the late submission.
- Where a late assessment is submitted more than 14 days after the deadline, it will receive 0%. The lecturer may, at their discretion, review the submission for feedback.

Where an assessment is undertaken in a group, the piece of work should be submitted in its entirety, and any penalty for late submission incurred applies to all group members. Any learner who becomes aware that a group deadline will not be achieved through a lack of participation of another group member, should make this clearly known to the examiner in advance of the deadline.

The procedure applies to learners submitting summative continuous assessments (CAs) across all programmes.

Learners must be advised of their assessment submission date and time when the assessment is issued. Learners must also be notified of the penalty policy and a copy of the full policy should be made available to them.

Each lecturer with assessment responsibilities is responsible for the consistent and accurate application of the policy. In addition, lecturers should ensure they alert their learners to the existence of this policy. Academic Directors are responsible for assuring they themselves and the lecturing team for the programme is aware of the penalty policy and procedure.

This policy does not overrule the entitlement of all learners to seek an authorised extension where personal mitigating circumstances prevent completion and submission by the specified deadline. In such cases, no penalty shall be applied except where the agreed revised submission deadline is not met. Programme Coordinators in consultation with lecturers, must ensure that revised submission deadlines are clearly recorded in the applicable student record.

A formal policy and procedure for considering requests for extensions to CA deadlines is in place (see Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Part B, Section 4.3). Learners are required to familiarise themselves with the policy and take the correct steps specified in order to avail of an extension.

Retrospective claims for PMCs are only accepted in exceptional circumstances.

An electronic submission through Moodle is considered as a final submission ready for grading. The submission will receive a date and time stamp and once submitted, can no longer be amended nor changed. The internal examiner will note the date and time of assessment submission and will apply appropriate penalties as detailed within this policy.

Learners must be notified, by the examiner, of any late submission penalties that have been applied.

#### 5.2.2.7 In-class Test Deployment

In-class tests are organised and run by the module leaders and lecturers independently of the Exams Office. These can be multiple choice questions, problem based, short answer or essay tests. They may be undertaken in written format or be computer based

#### 5.2.2.8 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental component of meaningful assessments. The full Academic Integrity Policy is available in Part B Section 3.3.

#### 5.2.2.9 Reassessment and Repeating a failed Assessment

Where an assessment is failed, there will ordinarily be offered an opportunity to undertake a resit attempt, where this is allowed within the programme regulations and the learner has not exhausted their available opportunities. Further detail is set out within the programme documents, assessment specifications and strategy, and the Repeating a Failed Module Policy in Part B Section 5.5.

## 5.3 Examination Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| ***Document Name*** | **Examination Policy** |
| ***Policy Document Number*** | **020** |
| ***Version Reference*** | **v1.1** |
| ***Document Owner*** | **Exams Manager** |
| ***Roles with Aligned Responsibility*** | **Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors** |
| ***Applicability*** | **All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)** |
| ***Approved by*** | **Academic Board & QQI** |
| ***Approval date*** | **02/03/23** |
| ***Date Policy Becomes Active*** | **02/02/23** |
| ***Revision Cycle*** | **A minimum of every five years** |
| ***Revision History/ Amalgamation History*** | **N/A** |
| ***Additional Information*** | |
| ***References/ Supporting Documentation*** | • **ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, Standard 1.3 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment'.**[9]<br>• **QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*, Part 2 'Foundations'.**[10]<br>• **QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Section 2.6.1 'Assessment of Learning Achieved.**[11] |

### 5.3.1 Policy Overview

This policy outlines the principles and procedures in place in DBS in respect of examinations. While Continuous Assessment assesses learner knowledge, skills and competencies through longer-term assessment strategies and opportunities for feedback, Examinations are used to provide insight into the learners' knowledge and skills within the time-limited constraints of an exam sitting.

These policies for examinations should be applied consistently across all modules and programmes to ensure fairness in the treatment of learners. Unlike in-class tests, which are managed by the lecturer or examiner, examinations are coordinated by the Exams Office. It is the learner's responsibility to review and adhere to the requirements of the format of their examination, and

[9] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

[10] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

[11] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

ensure that all examination scripts and files are submitted in accordance with the instructions provided.

### 5.3.2 Policy Statement

Terminal examinations at the end of a module, semester or programme stage may take the format of a lab-based examination or a written examination paper.

The standard requirements for ensuring the fitness for purpose of assessment applies to examinations. In that regard examiners are reminded of the requirement to give due consideration to:

- Learning outcomes to be assessed
- The timing and weighting of the assessment
- The module assessment strategy overall
- The assessment workload and specifically the appropriate duration of the examination based on its credit value
- The requirement for moderation and external examining of examination papers
- Arrangements for repeat assessment
- Security, reliability and validity of the examination process

### 5.3.3 Implementation of the Examination Paper Production Process

Faculty Managers are responsible for distributing the Exam Paper and Exam Solutions template to the relevant lecturers with full instructions on requirements and submission dates, as agreed with the Exams Manager.

The lecturer(s) will set the exam question papers for all exam sessions as per the template and submit the paper(s) to the Examinations Office in accordance with the definitive Academic Calendar(s) which are available to view on the DBS Google Drive.

Where a programme does not follow the traditional semester, the Academic Director is required to agree the assessment schedule, and all key dates, in advance with the Exams Manager. This will then be communicated to the programme team.

Where unforeseen circumstances prevent submission by the stated deadline, written communication of this must be submitted to the relevant Faculty Manager in advance of the submission date. Normally, a maximum extension of two calendar weeks may be agreed. Where submission cannot be satisfied in this period, the Faculty Manager will seek agreement form the

Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production for an alternative examination paper author to be appointed.

Only the approved programme name and module name as per the Approved Programme Schedule agreed with QQI may be used on the exam question paper.

It is imperative that the agreed final exam question paper is checked for errors prior to submission.

It is essential that the following is correct:

- Template/format
- Spelling and grammar
- Exam duration
- Module title
- Names of all examiners including the External Examiner
- Examination session
- Page numbers
- Instructions to candidates
- Number of questions specified
- Questions numbered sequentially
- Instructions and the number of questions tally
- Allocation of marks
- Paper is complete, including any tables/graphs etc.
- Photocopied/scanned tables or attachments are legible and properly referenced

**The above checklist must be reviewed against the examination paper(s) by the authoring lecturer and should be further checked as part of the moderation process.**

Only one set of examination papers and solutions must be submitted per module, regardless of whether or not the module is delivered in different modes by different lecturers or on different programmes.

Where multiple sets of examination papers and solutions are submitted for one module, the Exams Manager will highlight this with the relevant Faculty Manager for resolution. Exam papers should be equivalent and any paper for a module can be used for any group of learners on that module.

Responsibility for the accuracy and proofing of exam question papers rests solely with the lecturing team. Papers are not subsequently checked by the Examinations Team.

### 5.3.3.1 Exam Duration Principles

The duration of the examination must be clearly stated on the front of the examination paper. Whilst recognising the nature of the subject and examination activity may influence examinations duration, the following applies as a general guideline:

- Examinations worth up to and including 5 credits are normally 2 hours in duration.
- Examinations worth greater than 5 credits and up to 10 credits are normally 3 hours in duration.

| **Credit size of Module:** ***Weight of Exam Component:*** | **5 ECTS** | **10 ECTS** |
|---|---|---|
| ***+50%*** | Normally 2 hours | Normally 3 hours |
| ***≤50%*** | In-class test | Normally 2 hours |

For example, an examination that is worth 50% of a 10-credit module will normally be 2 hours in duration. An examination that is worth 60% of a 10-credit module will normally be 3 hours in duration.

**Note: Examinations worth less than or equal to 50% of a 5-credit module should normally be conducted as an in-class test.**

### 5.3.3.2 Responsibility for the Exam Paper

The examination papers, marking scheme and grading criteria are drafted by the examiner responsible for the module. Where the module is taught by more than one lecturer, the module leader (as identified by the Faculty Manager) is the examiner and responsible for the assessment instruments for the module. Where lecturers make alternative arrangements on a local level, the agreed exam author must be communicated to the Exams Manager.

Whilst ownership of the paper remains with the examiner, where more than one lecturer is involved in the delivery of the module to the same group or to different groups of learners, they should also be consulted on the development of the examination paper and solutions.

The examiner is required to provide the initial examination paper and marking scheme and a repeat examination paper and marking scheme.

In instances of a module running for the final time, i.e. due to programme closure or changes resulting from programme review, an examiner may be asked to provide an additional examination paper and marking scheme to accommodate any deferred learners. This will be managed by the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production or relevant Faculty Manager. An alternative date

for the submission of the additional paper and marking scheme can be agreed with the Exams Manager.

All draft examination papers must be in the standard DBS house style and should normally be consistent with previous examination papers in the same module where the module has been assessed by examination previously. Details of the DBS house style for examination papers is available by request from the Examination Team.

The examiner is required to store the examination paper securely throughout the development stage.

In order to minimise potential for security breaches, printing of draft examination papers by examiners or moderators should be avoided.

Secure circulation and storage of draft examination papers is the responsibility of the module leader.

#### 5.3.3.3 Moderation and Finalisation of Exam Papers

The final draft of the paper is reviewed by the designated moderator. The moderator should establish that the paper is:

- Presented in the required DBS house style.
- Appropriate for the learning outcomes it seeks to assess.
- Set at the appropriate level as per DBS Guide to Levels 6–9 Grade Descriptors.
- Suitable in terms of content and presentation.
- Typographical or grammatical errors are identified and eliminated.

Any changes considered desirable by the moderator are discussed with the examiner. Differences of opinion should be resolved by consensus. It is expected that such differences of opinion will be the exception rather than the rule. However, should a situation arise where consensus cannot be reached the Academic Director should be notified sufficiently in advance of the submission date.

When the examination papers and marking schemes are agreed, the moderator completes and signs Part A of the *Internal Moderation Form*. This is retained by the lecturer/module leader in the first instance as it may be required for audit purposes, as evidence in a programmatic or institutional review or in the event of a learner appeal. The Moderation Form is included within the Documentation Checklist provided by the Examination Team.

The examiner then forwards the approved drafts of the examination papers to the examination submission link on Moodle. The submission includes the marking schemes, solutions and confirmation of moderation, to the Examinations Team where receipt is formally recorded.

When submitting the paper, the authoring lecturer is required to confirm the full check has been completed and they are satisfied with the accuracy of the examination paper.

The Examinations Team cannot accept exam question papers from lecturers that are not in the correct template format and that have not been signed off as having satisfied the requirements.

Submissions must be made by the agreed dates. This ensures that the external examining process, any subsequent amendments and then the final printing and collation of papers can be accommodated in a reasonable timeframe.

Papers submitted outside the specified secured system in Moodle may be considered a potential security breach and new papers and marking schemes may be requested as a result.

### 5.3.4 Online Exams

Online exams are defined as exams that take place remotely with learners logging into a platform (VLE or proctoring platform) to access and sit their exam and upload their completed answers.

This policy relates to all formal examinations which would normally be conducted under the remit of the DBS Examinations Office, for QQI awards, Kaplan Professional Awards and DBS Diplomas. It does not apply to in-class tests or other continuous assessments which are usually managed by the individual lecturer. This policy may, however, *inform* approaches to online in-class tests and CAs.

In carrying out examinations in the online environment, the following core principles apply:

1. Assessments should be compliant with the assessment strategy as detailed in approved programme and module documentation.
2. The integrity of assessment and, accordingly, learning outcomes, must be preserved.
3. Students should not be materially advantaged or disadvantaged by the online environment.

#### 5.3.4.1 Assessment Format

Exams deployed in the online environment will be consistent with the assessment strategy as laid out in the approved programme documentation. Where an assessment is considered to be difficult to deploy in the online environment, i.e. the lecturer considers it is not possible to design a suitable online exam that adequately demonstrates the achievement of learning outcomes, the matter will be referred to the Registrar's Office for review of acceptable alternatives under the scope of the validated programme/module. Such alternatives should be proposed by the lecturer.

Otherwise, exam papers for online exams should be developed in the same format as 'traditional' papers; i.e. the level, scope and structure (number of questions, time allowed and compulsory and choice questions) should be consistent with past papers or sample papers provided to students for standard exam-hall exams.

#### 5.3.4.2 Exams Process

The DBS processes for authoring exams, moderation and QA processes will be adhered to, with all papers moderated and submitted via the DBS Exams Office. Some additional oversight by the Registrar's Office may be required if assessments need to be adapted (as above).

Following the sitting of online exams, exam scripts will be made available to lecturers/faculty and the normal processes for marking and moderation will apply.

#### 5.3.4.3 Online Exam Platform(s): Moodle and Proctoring Software

Students will access online exams in the first instance via Moodle, DBS's Virtual Learning Environment.

The Moodle platform may be used to further link through to a secure online proctoring environment whereby students' activities can be monitored during the exam via a live stream.

#### 5.3.4.4 Exam Deployment

Instructions for sitting online exams will be made available to students via the module Moodle page in advance of the exam (a minimum of 2 weeks), along with any templates and practice areas for uploading submissions.

Online exams will be timed exams deployed from Moodle whereby a link to the exam and any other associated materials is made live for a discrete window of time as per the exam timetable.

Online exams are treated as formal exams and students are required to present for their sitting otherwise repeat/fail considerations as per standard exams policies apply.

#### 5.3.4.5 Exam Time

Online exams are scheduled, timed exams. An exam timetable will be published in advance for all exams and it is a student's responsibility to check this timetable and attend the exam in a timely manner.

Standard DBS policy for the duration of 2 and 3-hour exams based on ECTS weighting will apply (see **QAH Section B.5.3.3.1**).

Where students are required to upload files or otherwise 'complex' renderings for an exam (such as photographing handwritten content), reasonable extra 'administration time' will be allowed on top of the core exam time. It is to be emphasised that this is extra time for collation and submission of files, and students who use this for working on answers will not be afforded further time if they fail to upload/complete by the final close of the exam.

Generally, the extra administrative time allowed will be 30 minutes, but this is dependent on the exam type and advance agreement with the Exams Office and lecturer. It will be clearly stated in the exams instructions and published on the exams timetable.

#### 5.3.4.6 Academic Integrity in Online Exams

A core requirement is to preserve the integrity of examinations which are held online. There are obviously greater risks associated with security where exams are held remotely. These risks relate to firstly verifying the identity of the candidate taking the exam, and secondly mitigating for academic impropriety during the exam, such as cheating and collusion. There are a number of strategies to address these concerns, which can be used individually or in combination depending on the nature of the exam. In particular, DBS considers 'high stakes' exams to be exams at 'award stage' or which contribute to the award stage of a qualification, and which therefore warrant additional security.

Students are expected to proceed with integrity and all work presented for assessments should be their own. The purpose of time-limited exams is to assess learners' ability to concisely demonstrate knowledge and understanding within a specified time frame. The questions themselves are designed such that they can be reasonably answered within the time allowed.

It should be noted that DBS does not apply automatic penalties for suspected cheating, and all cases are individually assessed. Where used, the online proctoring platform is intended to be used, as with any on-site exam (including lab exams), provide reassurance that students are independently sitting their exam.

##### *5.3.4.6.1 Use of notes and external material in Online Exams*

As standard, copy-and-paste of either pre-prepared notes/solutions or third party materials is not acceptable and is considered cheating.

For 'open-book exams' students may refer to notes or materials during the exam. For online exams where specific software or platforms are required, students will be permitted to work in these platforms and upload files accordingly. In some circumstances, such as programming exams, this will involve writing code in an editor and copying into the exam answer.

Pre-preparing extensive answers to transfer into an answer document during the exam is essentially a form of cheating. If identified and upheld, this will result in a finding that Academic Impropriety has occurred, with associated penalties, which may involve capping of the module or award. As a minimum, pre-prepared answers are unlikely to adequately address the specifics of set questions, and may in fact result in a lower mark.

Whether proctored or not, all exam work should be students' own, completed during the time of the exam, and therefore it remains the case that reproducing the work of others, including over-reliance on lecturer notes, or using pre-prepared answers, is not acceptable. Nor should students consult any third party during the exam.

#### *5.3.4.6.2 Online Exam Word Count*

A guideline of a maximum of 1,000 words per hour is considered reasonable as an upper limit, depending on the nature of the questions. Quality over quantity remains a fundamental expectation.

#### *5.3.4.6.3 Verification of Identity*

In many cases, lecturers know their students' individual 'voices' and abilities through working with them in the classroom and marking continuous assessments. It is reasonable for lecturers to raise concerns about a piece of assessment on the basis that it is inconsistent with other work by a candidate.

Students submitting online exams via Moodle are required to complete a statement within the exams answer document to confirm that the exam is all their own work. They are further required to confirm the work is their own when uploading it into the system.

Students sitting exams on the online proctoring platform will be required to provide student ID on commencement of the exams. This is captured on camera and included in the proctoring report.

### 5.3.4.5 Question Design

Questions which require simple definition-style or theoretical answers may lend themselves more to rote learning and, in turn, cheating. In writing questions, assessors should consider the demonstration of higher-ordered critical engagement and skills and competencies. This will obviously be impacted by the level of the exam/award of the NFQ (EFQ or Ofqual equivalent) but should be a consideration in writing and moderating exam papers.

#### 5.3.4.6 Text Comparison Software

DBS currently uses Ouriginal text-matching software and all assessments submitted directly through Moodle are automatically submitted via Ouriginal and a report generated regarding similarities with other texts. Please note, DBS may change from Ouriginal to another equivalent software and in that event, this policy will apply in full.

#### 5.3.4.7 Oversight in Moodle

For any exams deployed directly from the Moodle platform, Moodle reporting will be used to verify student activity, i.e. that exam candidates have recently accessed Moodle and those submitting exams have accessed the exam paper.

#### 5.3.4.8 Online Proctoring

From January 2021, DBS introduced live proctoring software to increase security for online exams. Learners will be notified if their summative examinations are to be deployed as live online proctored exams.

##### *5.3.4.8.1 Proctored Exam Process*

- Exam papers are 'built' and held within the proctoring environment.
- A timed link to the exam paper in the proctoring environment is uploaded to the relevant module Moodle page by the DBS Exams Team. The DBS Exams Team is responsible for checking all settings in the proctoring platform and within Moodle to ensure (a) security is maintained and (b) correct deployment of all elements of the exam (e.g. paper is correct, settings are correct, instructions are clear).
- Students are required to complete a compatibility check for the proctoring platform in advance of their exams. This is to ensure they have a browser installed that works with the software, and a functioning webcam. All instructions are provided in Moodle on the relevant module page.
- The link to the exam is automatically set live in Moodle at the appointed exam time.
- Students have access to a 'live chat' function and a contact phone number in Moodle whereby they can contact the DBS Exams Team and support staff should they require help. The proctoring provider is also available via phone to take queries should DBS staff be unable to resolve any issues locally.
- Upon entering the proctoring platform from the link in Moodle, students are required to present their photo ID to the camera.

- The exam is then launched from the proctoring platform. Options for uploading include typing the answers directly into the platform, or upload of files such as a Word document (depending on the type of exam).
- Student activity during the exam will be captured via their webcam and by recording their computer screen activity. If this is to be used to evidence possible infringements, students will be specifically notified in advance of the exam. Recordings will be deleted after verification of results.
- Video monitoring will be used to support any students who have issues during the exam; for example the team may view the student's computer screen to help identify and resolve technical issues.
- Features of the proctoring platform such as browser/window/software lock down may be used to control the exam environment. As above, students will be specifically notified in advance of the exam if restrictions are to be in place.
- Notwithstanding restrictions enforced through the online proctoring service, students are required at all times to comply with DBS policies with respect to plagiarism and cheating (see DBS QAH Part B Section 3.3, and 5.3.4.6).
- An announcement will be made 30 minutes before the close of the exam and again 5 minutes before the close of the exam to warn students to complete uploads.
- If students do not submit their complete answers before the end of the exam time, the exam will auto-submit in the platform.
- Submissions after the close of the exam will not be accepted.
- Notwithstanding the above, for any student experiencing severe technical difficulties, an option to submit via Moodle may be made available during the exam, but acceptance of the submission will be subject to further verification and approval after the exam by the Exams Manager or Quality Assurance Officer.
- Students must make contact with DBS Exams Team via approved channels during the exam to notify and seek help with any technical issues. Issues not notified during the exam cannot be taken into account retroactively or in support of appeals. Approved channels include: the Live Chat function in Moodle, IT Helpdesk phone number, or messaging in the proctoring platform.
- Students must not contact lecturers directly during exams.

#### 5.3.4.9 Sitting the Exam and Supports

Students are advised to prepare to sit online exams in as close as possible to an exam hall environment. They should find a quiet work place where they will not be interrupted. As above, contact details for supports via live chat functions and phone are available during all exams.

### 5.3.5 Additional Documents

- *Proctored Exam Instructions of the online proctoring service provider*
- *Missed (Online) Exam Submission report form (can be requested from **exams@dbs.ie** )*

## 5.4 Repeating a Failed Module Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| ***Document Name*** | **Repeating a Failed Module Policy** |
| ***Policy Document Number*** | **022** |
| ***Version Reference*** | **v2.2** |
| ***Document Owner*** | **Exams Manager** |
| ***Roles with Aligned Responsibility*** | **Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors** |
| ***Applicability*** | **All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)** |
| ***Approved by*** | **Academic Board & QQI** |
| ***Approval date*** | **23/07/19, v2.2 02/03/2023** |
| ***Date Policy Becomes Active*** | **18/09/19** |
| ***Revision Cycle*** | **A minimum of every five years** |
| ***Revision History/ Amalgamation History*** | **N/A** |
| ***Additional Information*** | |
| ***References/ Supporting Documentation*** | • **QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised* 2022.**[12] |

### 5.4.1 Policy Overview

This policy provides learners with a fair and transparent mechanism whereby they can repeat a previously failed module. It applies to all programmes offered by DBS and to all learners, with the exception of those learners who are permitted to 'trail' a module or modules.

Learners must complete each programme stage before progression into the next programme stage.

This policy is therefore applicable to:

- Learners who have to repeat a module or a constituent element of same.
- Learners who have an elapsed module deferral.
- Learners who have an elapsed programme deferral.

Modules are elements of all DBS programmes and it is a requirement that learners successfully complete each overall module to at least the minimum standard. The minimum standard is outlined in each specific programme document; however a grade of at least 40% is usually required. This policy is specifically designed to aid learners to take responsibility for their successful progression through the specific stages of a programme of study.

[12] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

DBS recognises that learners may find themselves in the position of having failed to meet the assessment requirements of a module or programme. In line with QQI requirements, DBS affords learners a limited number of repeat assessment opportunities to rectify their failure of a module or module component as applicable.

Repeat opportunities are limited per module rather than per programme. In the first instance DBS will provide learner support to assist learners to recover failure. Such supports include access to lecture material and a subject lecturer as well as academic writing study skills support provided by the DBS Library Service. However, in keeping with best practice, where repeated and consistent failure is apparent DBS will counsel learners to reconsider their study intentions.

Learners are advised to consult their Programme Handbook to confirm the specific requirements for their programme. The provision of repeat opportunities may not be automatic, and the College reserves the right not to provide a repeat opportunity in circumstances where it is deemed in the best interest of the College, the learner or other parties impacted by the undertaking of any such assessment. Programme-specific policies on entitlement and access to repeat opportunities will be communicated to learners by the programme team and via the programme assessment schedule.

### 5.4.2 Policy Statement

There are a variety of varied and sometimes complex reasons why a learner may not successfully complete a given module at the initial or subsequent attempt.

Failure in a given module can occur for a variety of differing reasons which may include: poor examination performance, poor attempt at continuous assessment (CA) or non-submission of same. In limited cases, it can include a mixture of all the above reasons.

Learners may also defer part or all of a given module(s). Consequently, these learners will have to successfully clear these modules before progression into the next programme stage. It is vital that in each instance, learners are correctly identified and added to class groups with all administrative and programme personnel notified.

#### 5.4.2.1 Repeat Regulations

- Learners wishing to avail of a repeat assessment opportunity are required to pay the associated fee in order to be registered for the assessment. Non-payment of the fee will result in the assessment not being arranged (where for example placement or lab facilities are required) or marked.
- Learners who do not avail of assessment opportunities, except where authorised exceptions have been agreed, will be deemed to have foregone the assessment opportunity and a mark

of 0% will be recorded. It is the learner's responsibility to make themselves aware of the repeat schedule.

- A learner that exhausts all assessment opportunities as a result of failure or non-participation including due to non-communication with DBS regarding intentions or circumstances will be presented to the Examination Board as such with a recommendation they are withdrawn due to programme failure.

**Repeating Modules on Undergraduate Programmes**

Learners on undergraduate programmes are normally provided with a maximum of three repeat opportunities following an initial non-submission or fail of an assessment, except where the programme validation document specifies any deviation from this.

Repeat opportunities are normally offered in the format of repeat assessment without attendance (also known as retake) for repeat attempts one and two, and repeat assessment with attendance (also known as resit) for the final repeat opportunity.

Specific requirements of individual programmes are outlined in the Student Handbook.

**Repeating Modules on Postgraduate Programmes**

Learners on postgraduate programmes are normally provided with a maximum of three repeat opportunities following an initial non-submission or a fail of an assessment arising out of a taught module, except where the programme validation document provides for any deviation from this.

Failed assessments will by default be scheduled to be offered a repeat opportunity in the programme intake's relevant Repeat Period. Repeat sittings should not interfere with the opportunity to complete ongoing taught modules, and the only exception to being offered a resit opportunity in the programme intake's relevant Repeat Period will be subject to approval by the Exams Manager. An application to attempt a repeat sitting in advance of the Repeat Period must be submitted to the Examinations Office in writing (***Form B.5.5.1***), and will be reviewed on the following criteria:

- Another sitting of the assessment is already scheduled to take place in the proposed assessment period, in advance of the Repeat Period;
- The learner has not failed more than 10 ECTS credits, which are to be re-attempted;
- The learner has an overall grade of 50% of higher for all other completed modules.

The Repeat Period for September-intakes will be the July-August (Autumn) period.

The Repeat Period for January-intakes will be the November-January (Winter) period.

The Repeat Period for April-intakes will be the March-May (Summer) period.

Subsequent Repeat opportunities will be aligned to the next available sitting of each module.

Learners on a postgraduate programme are normally only provided with one repeat assessment opportunity for a research project/dissertation/thesis module. The Academic Director is responsible for ensuring that learners are aware of restrictions on re-assessment and aware too of the implications of repeat attempts for all modules as part of the assessment schedule. These restrictions and the implications must be communicated at the outset of the programme or stage.

Repeat opportunities are normally offered in the format of repeat assessment without attendance (also known as retake) for repeat attempts.

Specific requirements of individual programmes are outlined in the Student Handbook.

### 5.4.3 Management of Failed Assessments, Non-Submissions and Issuing of Repeat Opportunities

Learners are reasonably expected to attempt all programme assessment components. Failure to do so may have implications for their status on the programme or their final award.

Any learner failing to successfully pass an assessment within the repeat opportunities offered will be deemed to have failed the programme and, therefore, be withdrawn from the programme. Standard exceptions apply to this where pass by compensation applies or where the learner has recognised personal mitigating circumstances accepted by the College in line with the relevant policy.

Failure to complete a required assessment component, or failure to achieve an overall Pass grade in a module within the maximum number of repeat opportunities provided, may disqualify a learner from passing the programme or progressing to the next stage.

Failure to complete or submit assessment requirements by the appropriate submission deadline may impact a learner's timetable of programme completion i.e. the timeframe for completing the programme or stage may be extended and progression prevented until such a time as the failure has been recovered. Consequently, this may impede a learner graduating with their class group.

Learners who achieve a fail grade, fail to submit a continuous assessment or sit an examination will receive a grade of 0% for non-submission.

Learners cannot pass a Research Methods module or component in order to proceed to the primary research activities, without ethical approval for their proposed project. Learners without ethical

approval may be disqualified from progressing to the data collection phase or the Capstone stage of their programme.

Repeat assessment opportunities will be determined by the Examination Board depending on the specific regulations of the module and programme concerned.

Learners who achieve a Fail grade in an assessment component of a module that has multiple assessment components may be required to repeat the failed component if the combined overall module grade falls below 40% or Pass by Compensation cannot be applied.

Repeat-attempt marks will be considered for the calculation of the overall module mark and final award where Pass by Compensation cannot be applied.

Module marks for repeat attempts will be capped at 40%.

Repeat attempts for modules that do contribute to the final award calculation will be capped at 40% and repeat attempt marks will be considered in the award calculation, in line with QQI *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022,* Sectoral Convention number 3.

Where a learner fails to submit a continuous assessment component and subsequent repeat attempts, they will be academically withdrawn from the programme.

It is the learner's responsibility to be fully aware of the impact (both on their marks and their subsequent award classification) of failing to submit or failing to pass assessment components at the first attempt.

It is the responsibility of the Academic Director to ensure the assessment schedule including information pertaining to regulations and awards is communicated to the learner or that they are directed to its location.

### 5.4.4 Implementing the Repeating a Failed Modules Policy

The repeat opportunities policy promotes the principles of fairness and consistency in the assessment process and ensures the application of the QQI Sectoral Convention 3.

As part of their induction to the College, learners should be advised of the assessment regulations, the opportunities available to repeat assessments and the implications of failing to comply with the assessment regulations.

For clarity, non-submission refers to a learner not sitting an examination at the scheduled date and time or not completing and putting forward for marking an assessment task by the scheduled date.

In the event of non-submission, a mark of 0% will be applied and an assessment attempt recorded.

In the event of failure of an assessment or examination, the examiner will normally include the assessment in the sample for moderation.

All learner marks, including 0% for non-submission are recorded on the learner record in the Student Information System.

DBS is obliged to keep an accurate record of all assessment attempts and grades awarded for each learner.

It is the learner's responsibility to be fully aware of the impact on their final award of failing to submit CA components or failing to pass assessments and modules at the first attempt. It is the responsibility of the Exams Manager to ensure this information is made available to learners.

All assessments submitted electronically through Moodle on or before the specified deadline are confirmed as being put forward for grading, are date and time stamped and may not be amended or changed after they are submitted.

Repeat opportunities are only authorised where a learner needs to recover failed module(s).

**Any request to repeat an assessment merely with a view to improving a performance that has met the standard of Pass are not authorised in any circumstances.**

Where a learner achieves an overall module mark of 35–39%, Pass by Compensation may be applied subject to the specific requirements of this as outlined in QQI *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022* and any special regulations of the programme concerned.

Pass by Compensation can only be applied to first-attempt grades and cannot be applied to a module within a programme where an overall Fail grade has been recorded against any module on that stage.

Learners who demonstrate a pattern of poor performance or a significant drop in performance are brought to the attention of the Academic Director or Level Manager to arrange for a meeting with the learner concerned to establish any circumstances that may be impacting performance and to advise of supports available. It is the learner's responsibility to avail of any supports provided. Any learner is entitled to appeal a fail grade in accordance with the DBS Academic Appeals Policy.

**Points to note**

1. Learners are reminded that, in the absence of a module deferral, opportunities are accrued.
2. Learners who do not clear a module in the first instance should usually complete the failed component(s) at the next available opportunity within the following assessment cycle. In most instances, this will fall within the semester one and two periods of the following academic year.

3. There are a number of considerations that dictate whether a learner should have to complete the taught element of a module again or just partake in the failed assessment component. This is of particular importance where a learner has been identified as weak regarding knowledge and competence in the subject matter within a given module(s). DBS has a significant infrastructure in place to successfully guide motivated learners to successful completion of previously failed modules (such as the Student Engagement & Success Unit, SESU).
4. It is important that a learner notifies the Programme Coordinator in advance of commencement of the module re-sit period of an intent to participate in a module that has previously been failed. Two distinct options are available for learners to avail of:
    - **Attending Classes** –fees will need to be settled for the new classes and a learner will attend those classes with the next appropriate student cohort in order to cover the subject material again. This is recommended, and may be required, for those learners on their second or third repeat opportunity.
    - **Taking Without Attendance** – this carries repeat examination fees, but not the full tuition fees of retaking classes, but learners are given access to the Moodle page and lecture notes of the next appropriate student cohort. This assists the learner in revising and engaging with repeat assessments or exams (as required). This option requires greater self-regulation by repeating learners who will need to keep up with class content and deadlines. The responsibility rests with the student to adhere to assessment requirements and submission dates. Not all repeat learners are entitled to avail of this option, and some modules may require attendance in class to meet the learning outcomes.
5. Those learners repeating must further confirm with their Programme Coordinator which registration type (taking with or without classes) they wish to undertake during the re-registration period. Some repeat learners may be required to attend classes again, and may not be able to avail of the Taking Without Attendance option if the College considers it necessary to enable the successful completion of their repeat components.
6. If learners do not re-register within the appropriate window (one calendar month from the commencement of the new academic cycle), they may be withdrawn from the College.

## 5.5 Progression with ECTS Deficit (Trailing) Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| *Document Name* | Progression with ECTS Deficit (Trailing) Policy |
| *Policy Document Number* | 023 |
| *Version Reference* | v2.1 |
| *Document Owner* | Exams Manager |
| *Roles with Aligned Responsibility* | Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors |
| *Applicability* | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ) |
| *Approved by* | Academic Board & QQI |
| *Approval date* | 23/07/19, v2.1 02/03/2023 |
| *Date Policy Becomes Active* | 18/09/19 |
| *Revision Cycle* | A minimum of every five years |
| *Revision History/ Amalgamation History* | N/A |
| *Additional Information* | |
| *References/ Supporting Documentation* | • QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised* 2022.[13] |

### 5.5.1 Policy Overview

This policy details the necessary steps required when a learner is eligible to 'trail' a module, or modules, from one stage of a programme into the following programme stage. This policy only applies to learners who have failed a module in the first instance and subsequently failed the repeat opportunity.

This policy applies to all full-time programmes offered by DBS. The arrangement where a learner may 'trail 'a module usually applies to only substantial programme stages of at least 60 ECTS credits.

This process highlights a relatively small number of learners who may have failed a module after the completion of the repeat examination attempt.

It is incumbent upon DBS to ensure that learners are given clear and consistently fair options regarding their progression on given programmes of study. DBS is aware that even though QQI regulations allow for the possibility of a learner 'trailing', it is vital that decisions are taken in a manner that will ensure no learner is subsequently overburdened while completing the next

[13] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

programme stage. All learners who are allowed to 'trail' a module must actively take part in the repeat session classes.

### 5.5.2 Policy Statement

The regulatory process that underpins the ability of DBS to offer the option of allowing a learner to 'trail' a module is outlined in Section 4.4.3 of the revised QQI *Assessment and Standards*, Revised 2022. The term 'trailing' is commonly used to indicate the progression of a learner into the next programme stage with an ECTS credit deficit. This deficit should be no more than 10 credits per 60-credit stage. In addition, all modules that have a prerequisite in the previous stage must be completed successfully and cannot be considered as an option to 'trail'. Learners must also have attempted all components of the previously failed module.

### 5.5.3 The Decision-Making Process

If the programme team, in conjunction with the Exams Manager, deem a learner eligible to 'trail' a given module, the learner will be notified within a reasonable timescale.

If opportunities/attempts are exhausted in the trailed module, learners will be subject to withdrawal from their programme of study, regardless of any modules successfully completed at a subsequent stage.

### 5.5.4 Learner Responsibilities

Learners who 'trail' a module from one programme stage to another are taking on a significant extra workload. In addition to this additional workload, learners are also expected to be aware of the following:

- It is expected that a reasonable effort has been made in the initial and repeat opportunity of a failed module(s) i.e. that all components of a module have been attempted. The Academic Director may in exceptional circumstances make exception where this stipulation has not been met.
- The learner will have to complete a repeat examination at the next available opportunity. For a repeat continuous assessment (CA) submission, the learner will have to submit to the timescales outlined by the relevant lecturer/examiner.
- If a clash is noted on a published examination timetable, the learner will in all cases sit for the module not being 'trailed'.
- It will be the responsibility of the learner to make themselves available for the next repeat opportunity of the module being 'trailed'.

## 5.6 Feedback on Examinations Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| ***Document Name*** | **Feedback on Examinations Policy** |
| ***Policy Document Number*** | **024** |
| ***Version Reference*** | **v2.1** |
| ***Document Owner*** | **Exams Manager** |
| ***Roles with Aligned Responsibility*** | **Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Heads of Department, Academic Directors** |
| ***Applicability*** | **All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)** |
| ***Approved by*** | **Academic Board & QQI** |
| ***Approval date*** | **23/07/19, v2.1 02/03/2023** |
| ***Date Policy Becomes Active*** | **18/09/19** |
| ***Revision Cycle*** | **A minimum of every five years** |
| ***Revision History/ Amalgamation History*** | **N/A** |
| ***Additional Information*** | |
| ***References/ Supporting Documentation*** | • **QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised* 2022.**[14] |

### 5.6.1 Policy Overview

Where a learner wishes to avail of the opportunity to secure feedback on examination performance, they are entitled to view their examination scripts and discuss them with the examiner or the Exams Manager where the examiner is not available. This policy does not apply to continuous assessments, projects or other assessment work including in-class tests. In such cases, feedback is provided automatically as part of the assessment process and where a learner requires further feedback, they are required to contact the examiner directly to arrange this.

### 5.6.2 Policy Statement

Affording learners an opportunity to view their examination scripts contributes positively to their academic progress and development. It serves as an important feedback tool. This is particularly important for those learners who are required to repeat an examination due to an earlier failure.

The viewing of examination scripts under this policy does not form part of, nor inform, any verification or appeal process whereby a learner seeks to query or challenge the accuracy of a mark or the assessment process itself.

[14] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

In order to play an effective role in contributing to a learner's academic development, DBS will seek to ensure that all requests to view examination scripts are processed in a timely manner. This is defined as no more than one calendar month following submission of their request, with the exception of cases where the learner script may have been forwarded off site to an appointed External Examiner.

DBS will endeavour to ensure that the examiner who marked the script is available to discuss the examination script and the result awarded with the learner in question. However, DBS reserves the right to arrange for an alternative examiner or moderator to discuss the examination script, where necessary.

Where examinations take place remotely or the learner is located remotely to where the script is stored (due, for example, to their having returned to their hometown or country, or due to their undertaking a programme of online learning, etc.) alternative arrangements may be made for a telephone discussion or additional written feedback to be provided, with the learner having the right to raise further questions for clarification.

The feedback provided by the examiner (or nominee) to the learner is intended to facilitate a more detailed understanding of the mark awarded and assist in identifying areas for further improvement. This should include the examiner (or nominee) identifying where the learning outcomes were satisfied, where they were exceeded and where they were not addressed or not fully addressed.

The review of an examination script and the opportunity to receive feedback is just that - it is not an opportunity for learners to challenge the mark awarded for the assessment.

### 5.6.3 Procedures for Viewing Examination Scripts

Under GDPR regulations, and to allow for learning opportunities derived from the assessment, all learners are entitled to view their corrected examination scripts. In addition, learners have a right to obtain a copy of their script:

T*he written answers submitted by a candidate at a professional examination and any comments made by an examiner with respect to those answers constitute a candidate's personal data, to which he has … a right of access.*

Court of the Justice of the European Union (2017)[15]

[15] Court of the Justice of the European Union (2017), Press Release No 140/17, https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-12/cp170140en.pdf

There are two types of View Examination Script options available to learners:

- Request to View Script (within the Appeal Window)
- Request to View Script (Right of Access)

Only the registered learner may view the examination script and only on production of a valid DBS student card (for existing students), or photographic ID (for graduates or other individuals who have discontinued their programme of study).

### 5.6.4 Requesting to View Script Within the Appeal Window

Applications to view corrected examinations scripts must be submitted to the Examinations Office not later than seven working days after the date of the publication of results, or in the case of an unsuccessful appeal, not later than ten days after the date of the publication of the result of the appeal. The Application to View Scripts form is available in DBS Student website.

The application to view a script must be made via e-mail to **exams@dbs.ie**.

The learner will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their application within five working days.

Where the exam was held online in a digital platform, or on site and the script was digitised for submission, digital annotations or feedback will be shared directly to the learner by the Exams Office, by email. The learner is entitled to seek additional clarification from the examiner, but it is not a requirement for examiners to retain extensive feedback commentary on exam scripts.

Where the exam was held on site and not digitised for submission, arrangements will be made for the learner to meet with the examiner and discuss the physical examination script/result at an examination script discussion meeting. The meeting will be held not more than one calendar month from the date of their application.

The discussion meeting will take place at DBS premises, or another location as specified by the College. This will usually be the normal place of delivery for the programme concerned. Discussion arrangements can be organised by telephone or by e-mail.

The learner can reasonably expect a minimum of three working days' notice of the examination script discussion meeting.

Where a learner requires the meeting to be re-scheduled this will be arranged by request on one occasion only. Any subsequent re-arrangement is at the discretion of the College and the examiner concerned. The College is not obliged to provide subsequent opportunities.

Should a learner not attend the re-scheduled meeting, the examiner's feedback will be issued in writing and the process will terminate at that point.

Where a physical meeting is not feasible, arrangements will be made for a telephone or e-mail exchange.

In the case of discussions taking place by e-mail, the examiner will provide initial feedback on each aspect of the examination paper. The learner will then have five working days during which to identify any further points of clarification for the examiner to respond to. Communications within the five working days should not be excessive but are not explicitly limited. An examiner may wait until the end of the five-day period to respond to all clarification requests together. In such cases, the response should be provided in the subsequent five working days.

**Key regulations in viewing scripts:**

- Learners may view their scripts in the presence of the examiner or nominee.
- Learners may not be accompanied except in the case of those learners who have been identified as requiring additional support to assist with communication, e.g. sign language interpreter or other assistance.
- Learners may not annotate, take an image of, or remove any examination material.
- Learners are not permitted to take notes or to record the meeting in any format. If written clarification of the feedback provided is required, this should be requested from the examiner who is reasonably expected to oblige.

### 5.6.5 Requesting to View Script as a Right of Access

Applications to view corrected examinations scripts must be submitted to the Examinations Office within the College's Retention Period for physical examination scripts (see Section 5.7 below). Examination scripts are securely destroyed at the end of this retention period, in compliance with GDPR regulations.

The Application to View Scripts form is available on the DBS Students website.

Where the Appeal window for a particular examination sitting has closed, physical examination material is archived, and subsequent requests to View Scripts must be retrieved from archival units, so arrangements to make these scripts available may take up to one calendar month following the application being received.

The applicant will be notified by a member of the Examinations Team of the availability of the examination script, and the applicant will be provided an opportunity to agree a mutually suitable date and time to meet with a member of the Examinations Team, to view their script.

A request to view an examination script after the closure of the Appeal window does not entitle an applicant to additional feedback regarding their assessment performance from the Examinations Team or their examiner. This opportunity to view the examination script is limited to reviewing their written examination answers, and any feedback or annotations provided by the examiner on their script.

**This viewing does not provide an extension to the Appeal window or process.**

The College retains the original copy of the examination script(s) and cannot leave an applicant unaccompanied with the physical examination script(s).

Upon the completion of the script viewing, the member of the Examinations Team returns the script to the appropriate archiving unit, where it remains subject to the original Retention Period.

## 5.7 Access, Retention and Destruction of Examination Scripts Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| ***Document Name*** | **Access, Retention & Destruction of Examination Scripts Policy** |
| ***Policy Document Number*** | **025** |
| ***Version Reference*** | **Version 2.1** |
| ***Document Owner*** | **Exams Manager** |
| ***Roles with Aligned Responsibility*** | **Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, QA Officer, Heads of Department** |
| ***Applicability*** | **All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ)** |
| ***Approved by*** | **Academic Board & QQI** |
| ***Approval date*** | **23/07/19, v2.1 02/03/2023** |
| ***Date Policy Becomes Active*** | **18/09/19** |
| ***Revision Cycle*** | **A minimum of every five years** |
| ***Revision History/ Amalgamation History*** | **N/A** |
| ***Additional Information*** | |
| ***References/ Supporting Documentation*** | • **EU (2016) *General Data Protection Regulation* 2016/679 (GDPR)**[16] |

### 5.8.1 Policy Overview

This policy and stated procedure detail the mechanisms that DBS utilise to manage physical materials associated with the assessment of learners subsequent to convening of applicable Examination Boards or ongoing investigation. Physical assessment material may include but is not limited to examination scripts, continuous assessment material and/or physical project items and posters, etc.

The access, retention and subsequent destruction of physical assessment documentation related to the assessment of learners is a vital process within the overarching fulfilment of quality assurance activities. This policy is underpinned by the requirement to provide access to assessment evidence throughout the periods where a learner may be involved in an ongoing DBS investigation, appeals application or complaint.

### 5.8.2 Policy Statement

DBS provides access to assessment material to a wide variety of stakeholders as part of the completion and fulfilment of quality assurance activities. These stakeholders include:

- Internal Examiners
- Internal Moderators
- Quality Assurance Officer

[16] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj

- Exams Manager
- External Examiners
- Members of the DBS Examination Team

The DBS Examinations Team retains overall responsibility for the collection, management and storage of examination scripts throughout the academic cycle. This policy consistent with the requirements of the DBS Records and Data Retention Policy.

All learner examination scripts are retained by DBS for a period of thirteen calendar months from the time of module completion. Physical examination scripts are held throughout this period in a permanently locked location, which can only be accessed by Examination Team personnel.

### 5.8.3 Destruction of Examination Scripts and Continuous Assessment Documentation

All examination scripts and physical continuous assessment documentation will be destroyed by secure shredding after a period of no less than thirteen months. DBS and Kaplan UK Data Protection Policies are available internally on the staff Drive.

### 5.8.4 Accessibility of Learner Grades and Transcripts of Results

DBS recognises that it is in the interest of each learner to receive timely notification of grades and overall programme classifications.

Each learner will be provided with their provisional grade through the VLE Moodle, upon completion of the Examination Board convened to review the grades. Release dates are usually notified to learners in the Academic Calendar.

In cases of programme completion, learners are provided with a final transcript of results. In cases where a failed module, or modules, is impeding progression from stage to stage or for programme completion, learners receive a failed module correspondence from the Programme Coordinator which details the failed element(s).

It is the responsibility of the learner to take the required action should any of the above communications not be received.

## 5.8 Verification of an Assessment Result Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| *Document Name* | Verification of an Assessment Result Policy |
| *Policy Document Number* | 026 |
| *Version Reference* | v2.0 |
| *Document Owner* | Exams Manager |
| *Roles with Aligned Responsibility* | Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Assistant Registrar, QA Officer, Exams Officer |
| *Applicability* | All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Study Abroad modules from NFQ programmes, Professional Programmes, Kaplan Professional Awards (English RFQ) |
| *Approved by* | Academic Board & QQI |
| *Approval date* | 23/07/19 |
| *Date Policy Becomes Active* | 18/09/19 |
| *Revision Cycle* | A minimum of every five years |
| *Revision History/ Amalgamation History* | N/A |
| *Additional Information* | |
| *References/ Supporting Documentation* | • QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised* 2022.[17]<br>• QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Section 2.6.1 'Assessment of Learning Achieved.[18] |

### 5.8.1 Policy Overview

DBS offers all learners undertaking programmes the entitlement to seek verification of an assessment result and the accurate recording of all component marks and the overall mark.

A verification request may be submitted in respect of any assessment tool, e.g. continuous assessment, examination, project, etc.

### 5.8.2 Policy Statement

A verification is the re-checking of the accuracy of the calculation and recording of marks throughout the assessment process in respect of the assessment in question.

Learners are advised that a verification is an administrative rechecking process and is **not** an appeal of an assessment result. Refer to the QAH Part B Section 3.5 for the DBS Appeals Policy.

Learners are advised that an assessment result may 1) remain unchanged, 2) be upgraded or 3) be downgraded as a result of a verification application.

[17] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

[18] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

When making a verification of an assessment result request, it is the learner's responsibility to be aware of the correct procedure, timeframe and means of communication involved.

The Exams Manager is responsible for ensuring appropriate checks are carried out in response to a verification request and, where applicable, corrective action is taken to accurately record a result that has been incorrectly recorded.

### 5.8.3 Procedures for Applying for a Verification

A request for verification must be submitted within ten days of the formal publication of results.

A request for verification must be submitted in writing using the correct form available from the DBS student website and may only be submitted by the learner concerned. All requests must be submitted to the Examinations Office and must be accompanied by proof of payment of the appropriate per module fee.

Any application that does not comply with the requirements outlined within this policy will not be accepted and may result in the entitlement to a verification being treated as expired.

Upon receipt of the verification request, the Exams Manager will arrange for the appropriate rechecking of the assessments concerned.

The learner will be notified of the outcome of the verification process, normally not more than five working days following the deadline for submission of applications. Where a learner requests multiple verifications this may impact on the response time, and the ability to respond within the proposed timeframe.

All verifications will however be carried out in a timely manner and responded to as a priority.

Where the outcome of the verification process identifies an inaccuracy of greater than 1% (or less if it impacts on a borderline outcome) the verification fee for the assessment in question will be reimbursed in full.

The learner will be notified in writing of the outcome of the verification process.

The outcome of the recheck is the final grade recorded. No further recheck opportunity will be granted.

## 5.9 Assessment Marking, Feedback and Moderation Policy

| *Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B* | |
|---|---|
| ***Document Name*** | **Assessment Marking, Feedback and Moderation Policy** |
| ***Policy Document Number*** | **042** |
| ***Version Reference*** | **v1.0** |
| ***Document Owner*** | **Academic Dean** |
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| ***References/ Supporting Documentation*** | **ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, Standard 1.3 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment'[19].**<br>**QQI (2022) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022*, Part 2 'Foundations'[20].** |

### 5.9.1 Policy Overview

This document details the requirements for marking, feedback and moderation of assessments within DBS to ensure adherence to best practice for consistency, transparency and fairness.

### 5.9.2 Policy Statement

The purpose of marking and moderation is two-fold:

- To reliably establish and confirm the achievement of learners against the assessment criteria and brief;
- To provide learners with constructive feedback to allow them to assess their own learning and areas for improvement.

It should be noted that the marking and moderation policy applies to all forms of summative assessment, including all types of continuous assessment and examinations. Innovation in

[19] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf
[20] https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf

assessment is encouraged, and the marking and moderation process must be fully considered in the individual assessment design and wider assessment strategy for a programme, bearing in mind that grading and moderation of some assessment types may present specific requirements (e.g. recording of presentations or assessments delivered through other media). Where possible and appropriate, learners may be brought into the marking process through self- and peer- assessment, where this does not present any conflict of interest.

The following core principles are always applied in grading and moderation:

- Clear grading criteria specific to the assignment or exam should be provided.
- Grades are awarded based on the individual's performance against the grade criteria and learning outcomes.
- Grades for academic programmes are never norm-referenced (e.g. quotas applied for each grade band/marked to a bell curve).
- Assessments are graded across the whole range of 0–100% and are designed such that it is possible to achieve any grade within this range.
- A basic 'Pass' mark (normally 40%) for an assessment task indicates threshold attainment of the learning outcomes that are being assessed. A mark above Pass level is an indication of the extent to which the threshold has been exceeded.
- Awarding a grade below the approved pass mark for the assessment indicates work of an unsuccessful standard, where the learner has not achieved the learning outcomes associated with the assessment.
- Current policy states that learners are not required to pass all weighted components of the assessment to pass the module, so long as they achieve a pass mark overall, unless otherwise stated in the approved programme schedule.
- Feedback should be provided in a clear and consistent format for both continuous assessments and exams.
    - It should be noted that learners are entitled to view marked exam scripts and to ask for feedback on exams.
- Internal grade moderation by a second lecturer is always carried out to ascertain consistency of first marker feedback and grades awarded for an assessment across the range of grade bands.
- External grade moderation by External Examiners is always carried out on accredited programmes to ascertain consistency of grades awarded for an assessment across the range of grade bands.

### 5.9.3 Feedback

Feedback is provided to learners on formative and summative assessments in order to support and guide the learners in successfully achieving the learning outcomes of the module, and therefore, in

turn, the programme. Feedback can be delivered in a number of formats. Feedback should always be constructive.

Examiners are required to provide learners with evaluative comments and constructive, developmental feedback that corresponds constructively to learning outcomes and the specific marking criteria employed and that reflects the grade given.

All feedback should relate to the learning outcomes being measured. Action points for further development should be noted. This feedback needs to be fit for purpose and of value to the learner in planning their progression through a programme of study.

Details of the allocation of marks, in line with the marking scheme, must be clearly apparent to second markers, External Examiners and learners, as appropriate.

As a guide, assessment feedback should be:

- Specific and relevant to the assessment and its learning outcomes and the individual piece of work.
- Constructive, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment including guidance as to how the learner can improve.
- Focused and not attempt to address too many different aspects at the same time.
- Unambiguous.
- Timely and provided within four working weeks and before the start of the next semester.

By contrast, it is necessary to ensure that feedback:

- Is not too general, vague or brief.
- Is not subjective – 'I don't like the way that you...'
- Is positive
- Does not criticise or penalise a learner for failing to show knowledge or understanding in their answer of material that was not called for, either implicitly or explicitly, through the question asked.
- Does not criticise or penalise a learner for a particular style or structure if no preferred style or structure was specified.

Assessing/grading a submission is an informed, professional judgement, based upon the completion of a task against set learning outcomes. Therefore, both the task and the learning outcomes should inform and direct the feedback. Feedback should enable a learner to build on success and identify actions for improvement.

### 5.9.4 Grading Process

Procedures for ensuring academic standards and the standardisation of assessment may vary between providers and indeed within providers. The underpinning requirement is that assessment

procedures are expected 'to be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative' and 'to not rely on the judgements of single examiners' (*QQI Assessment and Standards*, Revised 2022).

The minimum process for due diligence in grading summative assessment requires three stages: first marking by the lecturer or assigned member of faculty; internal grade moderation by another lecturer; and external moderation by the External Examiner.

Additional processes may involve second and third marking. Second marking applies for particular (usually capstone or other high-stakes) assignments. Third marking may be utilised in exceptional circumstances where there is disagreement or other cause for concern.

**First Marking**

First marking of any assessment is usually carried out by the internal examiner who sets the assessment (in the case of continuous assessments or exams) or the supervisor (in the case of capstone projects at Level 8 or dissertations or applied projects at Level 9). In cases where more than one lecturer is involved in delivering a module each lecturer will usually carry out first marking for their particular cohort.

**Internal Grade Moderation**

Grade moderation is a process of review carried out by a second lecturer to check consistency of grades awarded for an assessment, through sampling the assessment grading across the range of grade bands and, rather than second mark to determine a precise mark, confirm whether or not the final grade awarded is reflective of the standard of work expected of the grade classification.

**External Examination**

All summative assessments are subject to the external examination process as laid out in the *QAH Part B Section 6.1.* It mirrors the internal grade moderation process through provision of a sample of assessments across grade bands to an appointed external independent academic.

**Second Marking**

Second marking is carried out for all projects/dissertations as standard. Second marking may also be carried out where a moderator has identified anomalies or has concerns about a grade or grades.

Second marking is carried out as blind marking, concurrently with and independently of the first marker, with neither marker having access to the other's grades until the marking is complete. Markers then share their marks and feedback and reach an agreed mark.

**Third Marking**

Third marking should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances for high-stakes assessments (projects, dissertations) whereby there is a significant discrepancy between marks awarded by first and second markers (i.e. a grade band or more) and agreement cannot be reached with the two markers. It should be carried out as a blind marking exercise initially. Third-marking should be carried out by an experienced examiner at Level 9 with significant subject knowledge in the area.

Agreement should then be reached between the three markers.

All third-marked assessments should be provided to the External Examiner, along with an explanation of how marks were awarded and agreed, signed by the markers.

**Disagreement between assessors**

Grades awarded within the same grade band are considered to be in agreement.

It is considered that an agreement has not been reached in the case where two markers' grades differ by a grade band or more, or where two grades fall on either side of a threshold of a grade band. In these cases, it can be helpful to review grade band criteria and seek to establish the level of the assessment such that:

- Is the work of sufficient quality to warrant a passing grade, i.e. have the minimum intended learning outcomes been met?
- If the minimum intended learning outcomes have been met, what grade band does it fall into?

Should any disagreement on marks arise, it is important that a discussion is raised in order to reach a consensus that all assessors are comfortable with. The professional perspectives of all assessors must be respected, and decisions made based on achievement of learning outcomes and evidence of the same.

### 5.9.5 Additional Documents

- *QAH Part B Section 5 Assessment Regulations*
- *QAH Part B Section 6.1 External Monitoring of Programmes Policy*

**[END OF PART B SECTION 5]**