QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2023 Edition – Part C

Section 1: Learning & Teaching

2023

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Learning and Teaching

The quality of the learning experience is monitored on an on-going basis. Related policy states the provider's commitment to self-monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning on its education and training programmes, research and related services.

[…]

The provider has an open community that values critical reflection and fosters personal and professional development for both learners and staff. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. There are processes in place to ensure that the content of programmes reflects advances in the relevant disciplines and that the pedagogic style incorporates national and international effective practice.

QQI (2016)[1]

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages learners to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of learners reflects this approach.

ENQA (2015)[2]

This section of the *Quality Assurance Handbook* lays out the policies relating to:

- Recruitment, induction and development of teaching staff
- Approaches to teaching and learning
- Academic research

[1] QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Sections 2.5 'Teaching and Learning', https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf.

[2] ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guideline for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (2015), Standard 1.3, 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment', https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

1.1 Staffing of Academic Programmes Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C	
Document Name	**Staffing of Academic Programmes Policy**
Policy Document Number	**029**
Version Reference	**v2.0**
Document Owner	**Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production**
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Faculty Managers, Academic Dean**
Applicability	**All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online**
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	**Active date will be following approval by QQI**
References/ Supporting Documentation	• **ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, Standard 1.5, 'Teaching Staff'.**[3] • **QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Section 2.4 'Staff Recruitment, Management and Development'.** [4]

1.1.1 Policy Overview

This policy lays out DBS's processes and procedures to ensure that sufficient and appropriately qualified teaching staff are employed to meet academic quality and governance requirements. This policy lays out recruitment, selection, training and support procedures for teaching staff at DBS. DBS endeavours to ensure that all its activities are governed by principles of equality and opportunity, and that all staff and learners are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

DBS affirms the right of all staff and learners to work in an environment free from harassment and bullying and does not tolerate discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation of customers or employees by employees and non-employees. Behaviour of this kind may lead to disciplinary action and other sanctions at the discretion of the College.

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

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

In line with this commitment, DBS has a Dignity at Work Policy which is disseminated to staff. A copy of this policy is also available on the staff intranet.

1.1.2 Policy Statement

The success of DBS is based on the calibre and competence of the academic staff and the College's commitment to the continuing enhancement and encouragement of staff development. This ensures that staff involved in designing, delivering and assessing programmes are capable and competent to do so.

Every role at DBS is profiled and a job description created. This includes the purpose of the role, objectives, key tasks and a profile of the desired post holder.

Recruitment commences with the advertisement of all academic staff vacancies on online job sites. For each position advertised, the requisite academic qualifications and business experience are stated. Only candidates that satisfy the minimum criteria specified are considered for interview.

Applications are screened by a Faculty Manager and Academic Director and a short-list of qualified candidates is drawn up. Those on the short-list are invited to present for interview.

An appropriate interview panel is constituted which is normally chaired by the Faculty Manager or Academic Director.

For all lecturer appointments, candidates presenting for interview are required to give a 15–20 minute presentation on an allocated topic within their subject area.

All interview evaluation documents are returned to the HR Department and are retained on the personnel files of successful candidates. Each candidate is required to provide the names of two referees, which are followed up by HR.

1.1.3 Approval of Teaching Staff

It is DBS policy that all candidates for academic positions are presented to the Academic Appointments Sub-Committee (AASC) of the Academic Board for endorsement prior to an offer and contract being issued. This Committee comprises the following senior members of staff:

- Registrar and Director of Campus Operations
- Academic Dean
- Senior Academic Developer
- Assistant Registrar

The Quality Assurance Officer is Secretary to this Committee.

The Committee reviews CVs and interview notes of all candidates and will make one of the following recommendations:

- Approved (with standard Pathway)
- Approved (with Advanced Pathway – Teaching support and training)
- Approved (with Advanced Pathway – Supervision support and training)
- Further information required
- Limited (i.e. may teach at Level 6 only or some other constraint)
- Not approved

Regardless of conditions, endorsements will always note the level(s) at which the new appointment is approved to teach or supervise projects or dissertations.

If endorsed by this Sub-Committee, the Record of Academic Appointments is updated and an AASC Certificate is issued. The Record of Academic Appointments is sent to the Academic Board for formal ratification.

The AASC is convened online to remotely approve candidates. It meets quarterly to review appointments made and qualifications.

1.1.4 Teaching Staff Qualifications

- Lecturing staff are normally required to be qualified to a minimum of one NFQ level above the level at which they will be teaching.
- All undergraduate teaching staff are **usually** required to be qualified to **at least** Level 8 on the NFQ regardless of the level at which they are teaching.
- Lecturing staff for Master's programmes are **usually** required to hold a minimum of a full Level 9 award (Postgraduate Diploma or Master's).
- Staff supervising Master's dissertations must hold a Level 9 Master's qualification or a Level 10 qualification.
- For industry or professional-facing programmes, lecturers with lower level qualifications with significant relevant industry experience may be recruited to teach but will not be assigned ownership of a module as Module Leader, and will in all cases be assigned a teaching and assessment mentor.

  Such programmes may include but are not limited to:

  - Creative Media
  - Social Care
  - Counselling and Psychotherapy

- Data Analytics
- Financial Technology

The AASC will in all cases consider the experience of the individual with a view to ensuring the capacity to deliver content at an appropriate academic standard to facilitate learners in achieving the learning outcomes.

1.1.5 Employment Contract

On acceptance of an offer, a contract of employment is provided to successful candidates. In advance of a contract being issued HR will require to have references completed, identification provided, evidence of academic qualifications provided, Garda Vetting completed and be in receipt of the AASC Certificate.

Employment contracts are comprehensive and clearly outline the post to which the contract relates, salary, and all other terms and conditions, including obligations of both the employee and DBS with regard to confidentiality, data protection, health and safety, and other relevant employment factors. All contracts include a probation period, which is six months for full-time permanent staff.

1.1.6 Induction of Teaching Staff

All new members of academic staff undergo an induction process which is the responsibility of the relevant Faculty Manager with input from senior academic management. The induction comprises two parts, an initial academic/HR induction followed by localised IT and Library inductions. Areas covered in the induction include:

1. Introduction to the College; its background, ethos and culture; its structure and organisation; its development strategies and plans.
2. Roles and responsibilities of academic staff.
3. Course preparation and materials to be provided to learners.
4. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies.
5. Academic and administration procedures and regulations.
6. General terms and conditions of employment.
7. HR and staff development policies, procedures and regulations.
8. Introductory training on College computer systems.
9. Introduction to Library Services.

HR also arranges for new and existing staff members to conduct DBS Compliance Training on Security Awareness and Privacy Principles and Ethics and Code of Conduct on an annual basis. Non-academic staff appointees also receive a full staff induction coordinated by HR. HR policies are reviewed regularly to support the implementation of DBS's strategy and goals.

Peer-to-peer mentoring arrangements are available to new academic staff and in some cases an additional teaching or assessment mentor may be appointed subject to AASC recommendation.

1.1.7 Lecturer Absence

In the event of an unplanned lecturer absence the policy is to provide an alternative; postponement or cancellation is only used as a last resort. The appropriate Faculty Manager and Academic Director identify one of the following responses:

1. Substitute Lecturers – in cases where the module is delivered by more than one lecturer.
2. Substitute Class – by locally adapting the timetable with regard to cross listed modules.
3. Pre-Specified Work – all staff are required to supply academic operations with one hour of pre-prepared learning or assignments updated as the module progresses. This is then set or supervised by a lecturer from the same subject area.
4. Class Postponement – the class is rescheduled within one month.
5. Class Cancellation – by agreement with the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production, there should be no more than 4% of any module cancelled and only when it can be demonstrated that there is no impact on the achievement of learning outcomes.

Learners are made aware of any of the above interventions by web text in advance of the class where possible. This policy is overseen by the school management team, and incidences recorded by Academic Operations.

1.1.8 Staff Mentors

When a lecturer has been approved by the AASC they are deemed competent to deliver academic programmes at DBS and/or supervise projects or dissertations. In each case the subjects and levels are defined and held by the Faculty Manager's Office, the QA Officer, and HR. An academic contract cannot be issued without AASC Certification.

In some cases there are conditions associated with the AASC approval. These are:

- Approved with a Teaching/Assessment Mentor
- Limited to deliver at a specific level
- Limited to deliver a specific subject area, for example key skills for professional programmes.

Where a teaching and/or assessment mentor is prescribed this function is taken up by an experienced member of the academic team. The mentor is responsible for ensuring that newly approved staff members are familiar with: the modules they are teaching and their integration into the programme; all DBS policies and regulations; the principles of assessment and other academic guidelines. The mentor provides support in setting assignments, writing examination papers and grading. The new academic is supported for at least one academic year and this is in addition to the

normal process of moderation etc. Further information is held with the AASC, coordinated by the QA Officer.

1.1.9 Policy on Dissertation Supervision

It is DBS policy that supervision for Master's dissertations may only be undertaken by experienced faculty with a full level-9 award, i.e. Master's-level.

Supervisors are assigned a maximum of 5 learner dissertations to supervise. Staff with fewer teaching hours may be assigned additional dissertations, *pro rata*. This is subject to agreement with the Dissertation Coordinator and Registrar and Director of Campus Operations.

Where a faculty member does not have previous supervision experience training they are mentored for the first year of their supervision.

1.1.10 Professional Development of Teaching Staff

When an offer of employment is made to an academic post the candidate is informed of the expectation that he/she will continue with their professional development in their subject area. For associate faculty – those who are not employed on a permanent contract by DBS – their professional development may be related to the accumulation of subject area expertise through their other employments.

Continued professional development of academic staff ensures that those involved in designing, delivering and assessing programmes are capable and competent to do so. It is widely acknowledged that knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in one's discipline area directly informs and enhances teaching.

DBS is committed to ensuring that:

- Academic staff have the academic and/or professional expertise to deliver their programmes.
- Academic staff have the opportunity to engage with the pedagogic development of their discipline.
- Staff development and appraisal opportunities are available to enable staff to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship.
- Staff are informed of, and provided with guidance on, policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review.
- Staff with key programme management responsibilities, e.g. Academic Directors have relevant experience and knowledge of curriculum development and assessment design and engage with such training courses as the College deems appropriate.

- Academic staff are encouraged to engage with the activities of other providers of higher education, or accreditation bodies by involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, etc.

During the year the academic leadership team runs a number of workshops or seminars on relevant academic subjects, e.g. how to publish academic research; learning how to write a module descriptor for a programme validation; and others. All academic staff are invited to these events as a means of developing their own academic knowledge.

DBS supports its academic staff to continue their professional development through such activity as representing and supporting projects of interest to DBS, and attendance at courses and conferences promoting pedagogical effectiveness. In addition, all lecturers are encouraged to attend external workshops such as those run by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Support in the form of financial assistance or reduction in teaching load may be made available to staff through an application process.

DBS, either directly or through the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA), has representation the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The National Forum is an important influence upon the pedagogical development at DBS.

Faculty Management is responsible for identifying CPD and staff training requirements through the performance appraisal process; this is a key tool in identifying knowledge gaps or training needs for individual faculty staff members. Staff development goals can relate to the acquisition of new skills or competencies, individual goals or the strategic goals of the School.

1.1.11 Appraisal of Teaching and Performance Management

Two formal learner surveys are conducted each year, one at the start of teaching of a module and one at the end. Learners are asked a number of questions on their experiences at those points, which includes a view on their learning experience with specific lecturer(s) teaching that module. This anonymised feedback is provided to lecturers and where specific issues need to be addressed this is done in conjunction with the Faculty Manager. A class rep system also exists where programme representatives are elected by the class in week 4. Regular meetings are held with class reps and lecturer-specific feedback is provided. Where specific issues need to be addressed with an academic staff member this will be done by the Faculty Manager in a performance management meeting.

1.1.12 Research Activity

DBS is committed to consolidating and expanding its research capacity so that learners learn in a research informed environment. Section 1.3 below for the College's Academic Research policies and practice.

1.2 Learning and Teaching Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C	
Document Name	**Learning and Teaching Policy**
Policy Document Number	**030**
Version Reference	**v2.0**
Document Owner	**Academic Dean**
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Academic Directors, Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production**
Applicability	**All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online**
Approved by	**Academic Board**
Approval date	**23/07/19**
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Revision Cycle	**A minimum of every five years**
Revision History/ Amalgamation History	**N/A**
Additional Information	**Active date will be following approval by QQI**
References/ Supporting Documentation	• **Department for Education and Skills (2011) *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*.[5]** • ***Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Higher Education – Governance and Quality Education 2013[6].*** • **ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, Standard 1.3 'Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment'.[7]** • **QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*, Section 2.5, 'Learning and Teaching'. [8]**

1.2.1 Policy Overview

DBS strives towards a multi-faceted approach to learning and teaching, using a repertoire of effective learning strategies in a way that assists learners in functioning as self-directed individuals. This is recognised as a supported life-long activity integrated into programmes, modules, curricula and assessments across all levels of the NFQ. The focus is on enabling and empowering learners to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes and modules while recognising diversity in learning styles.

The College understands that higher education supports social cohesion, economic growth and economic competitiveness and that good governance is instrumental for quality education. The DBS

[5] http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf

[6] https://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CoE-Min_130426HEL_final_declaration.pdf

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

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

Learning and Teaching Policy is informed by documents such as the ESG standards, the QQI Award Quality Assurance Guidelines, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* and stakeholder engagement such as employers and staff engagement with best practice in pedagogy.

The *Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Higher Education – Governance and Quality Education 2013* recalls the four main purposes of Higher Education:

- Preparation for sustainable employment
- Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies
- Personal development
- The development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad advanced knowledge base.

The DBS Learning and Teaching Policy continues to evolve according to institutional, Irish and international developments in higher education. DBS seeks to differentiate the College from other tertiary level institutions by placing our focus on learner-centred learning supported through excellence in teaching.

1.2.2 Policy Statement

The DBS Learning and Teaching Policy seeks to ensure that the approach:

- Impacts positively on the learner learning experience.
- Allows learners to fulfil their potential.
- Is learner-centred.
- Allows for diversity in methodology across schools and programmes.
- Embeds soft skills to develop learners as motivated and independent individuals.

In essence, the DBS approach to learning and teaching is based on a set of key principles and sets out specific goals and objectives for learning, teaching and assessment. Among the main goals are:

- Learning as a skill
- Learner achievement and progression
- Assessment to support learning
- Readiness for Employability
- Competency-based learning
- Flexible approaches to learning
- Holistic curriculum design
- Inclusive and accessible curriculum
- Internationally relevant curriculum
- Research informed curriculum
- Academic and pastoral learner support

- Staff development in pedagogy and learning science
- Professional development, scholarship and research.

1.2.3 Approaches and Methods

In DBS, teaching is seen as a multi-dimensional activity that seeks to promote quality learning through a learner-centred interaction between the teacher, learner and the curriculum. Teaching in DBS is strongly focused on enabling learners to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes and modules. The format of teaching at DBS is primarily face-to-face as expressed by contact hours on approved programme schedules, supported by a virtual learning environment (Moodle). Teaching and learning methods employed by DBS are intended to facilitate learners taking ownership of, and responsibility for, their own learning in partnership with the academic faculty. DBS programme teaching strategies are based on a combination of structured tuition and learner-centered learning. Methods adopted attempt to provide learners with varied learning opportunities and experiences, and include but are not limited to:

- Classroom-based delivery
- Guest lectures
- Formative assessment
- Problem-based learning
- Problem solving
- Inquiry-based learning
- Personal development portfolio
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Learner observation
- Group work
- Case study analysis
- Research and project work
- Laboratory/practical sessions
- Simulation activities (e.g. ICT-based business situation simulations)
- Use of other ICT-based interaction with learners – e.g. portfolio building activity, use of blogs and wikis, Moodle based self-test quizzes, etc.
- Video role play and feedback
- E-learning

- Field trips (including in company visits)
- Work-based learning

DBS aims to take a learner-centered learning approach under which lecturers introduce learners to subject areas and act as guides and facilitators to learners in their study of the subject.

As learners progress through the various stages, the subject matter of their studies becomes increasingly complex and challenging. The focus of learning moves from acquisition of knowledge and understanding to critical analysis and application of conceptual knowledge to practical situations. In the final stages, learners critically evaluate and apply knowledge and skills they have developed through earlier years of the programme. Ultimately, learners are brought to a position where they can demonstrate, through a variety of assessment processes, that they have achieved the learning outcomes of their programmes.

1.2.4 Technology Supported Teaching and Learning

DBS is committed to using technology where it adds value to the learning environment and engages in active evaluation of new technologies on an ongoing basis. DBS uses Moodle as its online learning platform, to complement, enrich and support the more traditional learning environment. This has made it possible for lecturers to create new learning opportunities for learners and has encouraged innovative learning techniques. Adapting this technology as an integral part of teaching methodology has enabled lecturers to provide course material through a 'rich media presentation environment', and to accommodate learning activity outside the classroom and outside timetabled class times, thus enhancing effective self-directed learning.

1.2.5 Academic Support

A key feature of learning at DBS is the level of personal interaction, academic and other support for learners. The primary purpose of Academic Support is to provide assistance to learners in relation to programme-specific continuous assessment and examination tasks.

The general Aims of Academic Learning Support are to:

- Familiarise learners with standard academic research methods and conventions.
- Develop learners' ability to critically evaluate secondary data.
- Familiarise learners with the structure templates of required academic documents on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- Encourage learners to develop a critical perspective.
- Minimise instances of plagiarism.
- Assist learners in answering examination questions effectively.

Academic Support is embedded in all programmes and specifically timetabled in some. For example, in Master's programmes it is delivered as a module focusing on the inter-dependent dynamics of

research, argument, and expression and how these need to be successfully managed in order to produce high-quality scholarly work. In addition to introducing learners to the mechanics of research and writing (quoting, citation, constructing bibliographies, etc.), learners are guided in appropriating the conventions of academia in order to persuade their readers of the legitimacy of their perspective.

In addition, the Library in DBS provides a wide array of Academic Support for learners including:

- Information Skills classes
- Assignment Planning Software
- Urkund (text matching software) Training
- Research/dissertation support sessions
- Library services for learners with disabilities or additional needs.

1.2.6 Pre-delivery Information

At the commencement of the academic year, learners receive a Student Handbook describing their programme, its aims objectives and learning outcomes and links to important information and regulations. In addition the following module information is issued to learners via Moodle in relation to each module being studied:

- Module guide
- Assessment schedule
- Each assignment specification that forms part of the continuous assessment
- Reference to the DBS Academic Impropriety Policy
- Past examination papers
- Current reading list

Throughout the programme it is required that academic staff provide module content as lecture notes on Moodle in advance of the lecture. Providing case studies, worked examples and other supporting material is encouraged.

Learners are actively encouraged to utilise the learning resources indicated to enhance the depth and breadth of their knowledge and to enrich their assessment contributions.

1.2.7 Induction/Learner Orientation

At the beginning of the academic year, academic, library, computer services, and Student Services staff members participate in the induction/orientation of new learners, providing access to an array of information, encouragement and support which helps the learner to acclimatize, socialize and start to learn. This process continues into the academic year particularly at stage one of a programme or where there are direct entrants to later stages of programme.

1.2.8 Personalised Learning Support

It is acknowledged that learners have different learning styles and rates, and learners may be referred for academic support for a variety of reasons. For example, learners may be referred by individual lecturers to an assigned Academic Writing Tutor. The objective of this service is to diagnose individual learner writing difficulties as they relate to assignments and dissertations and provide feedback and guidance to learners in meeting academic performance gaps.

1.2.9 Learning and Teaching Committee

Learning and teaching support activities at DBS are coordinated by the College's Learning and Teaching Committee. The Committee meets regularly to review the general progress of the various support mechanisms and to initiate improvements where appropriate. The Learning and Teaching Committee provides a valuable forum for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the learning support system.

The objectives of the Learning and Teaching Committee are to:

- Oversee the preparation, review and enhancement of academic support documents such as assessment and marking rubrics, in a response to a need identified by the academic teams.
- Facilitate best practice in pedagogy at DBS by raising awareness of current learning initiatives.
- Promote staff development in pedagogy.
- Promote academic integrity through role modelling best practice.
- Implement and monitor learning support activities in DBS.

1.2.10 Quality Assurance in Learning and teaching

Learning and teaching in DBS is underpinned by a number of quality assurance and improvement initiatives and mechanisms:

- Annual school review
- Student retention reports
- Programme review
- External Examiner reports
- Learner surveys
- Class representative system
- Staff development initiatives and requirements
- Staff appointment standards and regulations

1.2.11 DBS Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement

In June 2018 DBS's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2018–2022 was approved through the Academic Board. In recognition of the rapid evolution of the educational environment arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, this strategy was revised early, into the Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE), 2020. In June 2023, the updated strategy, SLATE2, was approved through the Academic Board. See appendix C.1.3.

It is the remit of the Academic Dean to develop this strategy incorporating digital technologies and flexible delivery styles into the culture and practice of teaching to enhance the learning experience for all students and improve academic and employment outcomes.

1.3 Academic Research Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C	
Document Name	**Academic Research**
Policy Document Number	**031**
Version Reference	**v2.1**
Document Owner	**Academic Dean**
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Exams Manager, Quality Assurance Officer, Dissertation Coordinator, Chair of the DBS Applied Research and Practice Committee, Chair of the DBS Ethics Committee**
Applicability	**All programmes with a Research component (particularly postgraduate programmes); Academic staff research activities.**
Approved By	**Academic Board & QQI; v2.1 by Applied Research and Practice Committee (formerly Research Committee)**
Approval Date	**23/07/19; 27/10/2021**
Date Policy Becomes Active	**18/09/19**
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Additional Information	**Active date will be following approval by QQI**
References/ Supporting Documentation	• **ENQA (2015) *European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (2015), Standard 1.5.** • **QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (QQI, 2016), Section 1.5 'Teaching Staff'.** [9]

1.3.1 Policy Overview

DBS is committed to consolidating and expanding its research capacity so that students learn in a research informed environment. The College recognises the importance of research in enhancing the learning experience of students, in attracting and retaining faculty and in forging links with the wider academic community and industry. DBS is committed to further supporting subject specific academic research and action and industry-focused research.

1.3.2 Policy Statement

The College has invested in a number of supports to assist faculty in their research endeavours. These are

- The allocation of funds to faculty via the Applied Research and Practice Committee.

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

- The allocation of a number of research scholarships via the Applied Research and Practice Committee which provides faculty with the opportunity to reduce teaching hours to provide more time for research activity.
- The setting up of a Register of Scholarly Activity which records the research output of DBS faculty throughout their academic careers.
- The establishment of an open access institutional repository eSource to showcase the scholarly output of faculty and students at DBS.
- The appointment of dedicated Research Librarian. The Research Librarian provides individual consultancy with faculty as well as a programme of classes on publishing.

Register of Scholarly Activity

The DBS Library maintains the Register of Scholarly Activity which records the scholarly output of academic staff members. Categories of scholarly work on the Register are informed by practices at the University of Monash in Australia and University College Dublin. They include:

- Peer reviewed journal articles
- Journal articles
- Conference attendance
- Conference papers
- Books
- Book chapters
- Committee Membership
- External Examinership
- Creative works
- Consultancy

Institutional Repository

DBS has an open access institutional Repository, eSource, **https://esource.dbs.ie/** which showcases institutional research by students and staff. All final year student dissertations and project work with a mark of 2.1 upwards are routinely deposited on eSource, subject to the author's permission.

Annual Research Day

The Applied Research and Practice Committee organises an annual staff research day. All staff are invited to submit a research application to the Applied Research and Practice Committee that they would like to present on the day. These are evaluated by the Committee, and accepted applications are invited to present their research. The Committee draws up the programme for the day and disseminates this within the College. All members of staff in DBS are invited to attend the event. The Annual Research Day provides an opportunity for faculty to showcase their research activities to

their peers in DBS. Presentations arising out of the Annual Research day are submitted to the Research Librarian for display on eSource.

1.3.3 Library Research Supports

Details regarding research supports available from the Library for staff and students is available in the QAH Part B Section 2.6.

1.3.4 Student Research

Student research is a significant component of many academic programmes in the College. Level 8 Honours Bachelor programmes and Level 9 Master's programmes all contain a research project or dissertation/applied project as a capstone module. The format of this research is integrated in the programme design, as appropriate to the subject area, but can involve primary, secondary, qualitative and quantitative research. Increasingly, DBS has a policy of encouraging faculty to co-publish papers with students.

Research modules are overseen by the Dissertation Coordinator and each student is assigned a Research Supervisor.

Role of the Dissertation Coordinator

To coordinate the supervision of research modules (dissertations, research projects, theses, etc.), the College has appointed a Dissertation Coordinator. The Coordinator manages research modules through:

- Reviewing student numbers and engagement
- Assigning supervisors to students
- Facilitating communication channels between supervisors and students
- Mediating between the supervisor and second marker, if required
- Moderating samples of submissions and grades
- Supporting the Research Ethics Committees
- Supporting the development of guides and handbooks for staff and students.

Role of the Research Supervisor

The role of the Supervisor is to assist, advise and guide learners in the planning, implementation and presentation of the project or dissertation. The Supervisor may discuss and debate theories, ideas, approaches, applications etc. **The Supervisor does not read, proof or otherwise assist the student in the actual writing of the Dissertation**.

This style is intended to allow students to fully explore all the material issues in and surrounding their research and assist in ensuring significant/ relevant materials are not omitted. This practice is also intended to reduce the likelihood that Supervisors may find themselves contributing to the piece of work. Supervisors are the first marker for the dissertation and must therefore retain their objectivity.

Within reason, students are expected to initiate contact with the Supervisor as often as they feel advice is needed and the Supervisor is available. Supervisors are not responsible for leaners' work. This responsibility rests exclusively with learners themselves. Learners are expected to use their own initiative in finding materials and in the progressing of their project or dissertation.

The College strongly recommends that there should be a minimum of 4 meetings and a maximum of 6 meetings. These can take a variety of formats.

All correspondence with students should be copied or retained and, in particular, all meetings should be documented as evidence of the process.

Responsibilities of Supervisor in Dissertation Process

Supervisors will act as mentor and guide to the learner and will take a keen professional interest in their work.

Supervisors should ensure that:

- Adequate time is available for supervision and encouragement.
- Learners fully comprehend the proposed task and the level at which they have to deliver in terms of standard of research, analysis and academic writing (including referencing).
- Learners focus the work in the intended direction and do not go off-track.
- Learners and the College are aware of any ethical, legal or political problems associated with the work, and the work has gone through the formal ethical approval process, if needed.

Role of the Learner

Learners should ensure that:

- An appropriate amount of time and effort is applied to the project or dissertation.
    - It should be noted that a project or dissertation module can frequently carry the same credits and weighting as an individual semester and therefore requires the same amount of time and effort.
- They are receptive to counsel from the supervisor.
- They properly acknowledge text, material and ideas created by others

- The final product is their own work.
- They meet all DBS regulations.
- They communicate any problems likely to prejudice the quality or timeliness of the work to the Supervisor as and when such problems arise.
- They initiate and arrange meetings, date and time with Supervisors.
- They retain a copy of all raw primary research data (e.g. copies of questionnaires, interview transcripts, etc.) until after the process is completed and the grade has been received.
    - Learners may be asked to produce these. If possible, primary data should be uploaded to Moodle along with the final research project or dissertation.
    - Where primary research data is not provided, a Supervisor is entitled to request verification of the existence of this data. A lack of primary research data may be interpreted as an indication that research was not conducted appropriately, and the research project or dissertation may be deemed inadmissible and not awarded a grade.

Viva Voce

DBS reserves the right to carry out a *viva voce* examination for Master's Dissertations or any assessment of a significant weighting. Details of the viva voce process are outlined in the QAH Part B 3.3.6.

1.3.5 Faculty and Staff Research and CPD

Procedures for Applying for Support for Research

Applications for conference attendance, attendance at a short course or for research scholarships are submitted for consideration to the Applied Research and Practice Committee. Applications to attend a conference or short course must be submitted to the Faculty Manager in the first instance and once approved by the Faculty Manager can be submitted to the Applied Research and Practice Committee. Application details for research scholarships or support are issued with the relevant call.

Support for Academic Programmes of Study

The application form for funding for staff to undertake an academic programme can be located on the Human Resources intranet.

Applications for programmes of other providers:

Where funding is approved the following policy applies:

- Funding for educational courses is at the discretion of the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production for academic staff, or the relevant line manager for other staff, and is

approved where it can be demonstrated that the course is of benefit to both the employee and the College.

- If an employee leaves employment with the College within one year of completion of their course, they are liable to repay the last year's fees paid.
- Funding of the course does not mean the employee is entitled to study leave, and generally employees are expected to arrange their timetables in such a manner as to ensure that there is no interference with their DBS commitments.
- The Faculty Manager/Department Manager must ensure that the employee signs an Acknowledgment Form (confirming commitment to repayment of relevant fees in the eventuality of their leaving DBS employment), prior to their commencement on the programme. The form must be returned to the HR Department prior to registering for a course.

Applications for DBS programmes:

Where funding is approved for a course based at DBS the following policy applies:

- Approval for educational courses is at the discretion of the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production for academic staff, or the relevant line manager for other staff, and subject to available spaces available on the course.
- Employees must register with the appropriate academic department prior to undertaking a course.
- Employees are not entitled to study leave for internal DBS courses.
- Attendance must not interfere with their DBS commitments.
- If an employee leaves employment with the College within one year of completion of their course, they are liable to repay any external cost incurred by DBS in relation to their place on the course.
- If an employee leaves employment with the College prior to the completion of a course, they are liable to repay the fees for the current year.

The Faculty Manager/Departmental Manager must ensure that the employee signs the Acknowledgment Form which confirms their commitment to repayment of fees in the eventuality of leaving DBS employment. This form must be signed prior to commencement of the programme. The form must be returned to the HR Department prior to registering for a course.

1.3.6 Applied Research and Practice Committee

The Terms of Reference of the Applied Research and Practice Committee are outlined in the QAH Part A Section 1.3.13.

1.3.7 Ethical Guidelines

All research, whether undertaken by students or staff, should be conducted in an ethical manner. This requires researchers to reflect on the nature of any planned research and identify the key ethical issues involved. The aim of this document is to describe the procedures for ensuring that research conducted at Dublin Business School meets the required ethical standards. This document is written as a guide to students conducting research required by undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and as a guide to staff engaged in research to further their own professional development and/or to meet the requirements of the relevant professional accrediting bodies. These guidelines should also be read in conjunction with the appropriate subject-specific professional guidelines. All students must discuss the ethical issues inherent in any proposed research with their supervisor prior to submitting their proposal to the School Research Filter Committee. Staff research proposals should be directly submitted to the School Research Filter Committee. Applicants should note that they are solely responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the appropriate ethical and legal guidelines and that granting of ethical approval by any Human Research Ethics Committee does not absolve them from being cognisant and compliant with such guidelines.

Guiding Principles

Research with human participants is central to many fields of study and therefore many disciplines, as well as national and international bodies, have issued documents on the principles of ethical research. However a key document is the 'The Belmont Report' (1979), which was published by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research and outlines key ethical principles for the protection of human research participants (see https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html). The Belmont Principles of respect of persons, beneficence and justice represent the three core principles that are used to judge the appropriateness of research with human participants.

1. **Respect for Persons:** This principle focuses on the need to treat individuals as autonomous agents thus respecting their rights, including their right to make judgements about participation in research. However this principle also directs researchers to protect those individuals with "diminished autonomy", whether permanently or temporarily incapacitated.

2. **Beneficence:** This principle focuses on the need to ensure the well-being of individuals in two ways, by not directly harming participants and, where there is a potential risk to participants, to minimise this risk and maximise the potential benefits of the study.
3. **Justice:** The final Belmont Principle focuses on the way in which researchers should balance the costs and benefits of research and participation in research. This principle relates to, among other things, the way in which participants are selected for research and the way the findings from research are used to benefit people.

In many ways these principles represent the starting point for any individual considering research with human participants. However, these are general principles and it is important to consider the way in which these principles have been applied or operationalised. One way in which these principles have been operationalised is in the Codes of Conduct of professional bodies such as:

- The Psychological Society of Ireland - https://www.psychologicalsociety.ie/footer/Code-of-Ethics
- The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - www.irish-counselling.ie/
- CORU - https://coru.ie/health-and-social-care-professionals/codes-of-professional-conduct-and-ethics/
- Irish Law Society - https://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/Regulations
- King's Inns - https://www.kingsinns.ie/about/about-kings-inns
- The Library Association of Ireland - https://www.libraryassociation.ie/professional-standards-committee/
- Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland (APPI) - https://appi.ie/about-appi/
- CPA Ireland - https://www.cpaireland.ie/
- The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) - https://www.ieee.org/about/ethics/index.html
- The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) - https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics

While it should be noted that these codes are not specific to research, they consider many issues relevant to research and should be consulted where necessary. The Belmont Report itself identified issues in the application of the three principles described above, and highlighted three areas of consideration; *informed consent*, *risk/benefit assessment*, *and the selection of subjects of research*.

1. **Informed Consent:** This application requires that individuals who are invited to take part in research are allowed to decide whether or not to take part, in so far as they are considered able to do so. In this case special consideration has to be given to individuals who are not able to give consent due to factors such as age or intellectual capability.

In general circumstances, participants (or their guardians) are invited to consent having been given all the necessary information to make that decision. While it is sometimes necessary to withhold some information on the nature of the research prior to participation (generally called 'deception'), this is generally only acceptable when it is necessary to the validity of the research, when any associated risk is minimal, and when the participants will be fully debriefed afterwards.

An additional element of this issue is the responsibility to ensure that the information is presented in a way that is fully accessible to the participant, whatever their age or other circumstances. Finally, researchers must consider the extent to which participants can voluntarily accept or decline to participate in the research. This refers to situations where the participant may be or feel under pressure to decide either way. This could occur in situations where inappropriate influence or inducement is used either intentionally or unintentionally.

2. **Assessment of Risks and Benefits:** The second issue for consideration when applying key ethical principles is the evaluation of the potential risks and benefits associated with the research to be conducted and participation in that research. This includes considering the potential benefit to understanding and practice from the findings, whether this justifies any potential risk to participants, and the procedures in place to minimise risk, and where necessary, the arrangements to provide appropriate support to participants.

3. **Selection of Participants:** The final issue highlighted by the Belmont report is the way in which human participants (referred to as subjects in the document) are selected to participate in the research. This is linked to the principle of justice and focuses on the use of fair practices in selecting individuals for invitation.

Keeping in mind the general nature of both the Belmont Principles and the guidelines for application considered in the Belmont Report, researchers are encouraged to examine the guidelines issues by the relevant professional body or other relevant institution for more detailed consideration of specific points of application. In addition, when designing a piece of research, researchers must consider both general ethical issues and those that are specific to the population and the methods being employed. This is particularly important if the research is being conducted with a specialist population or in an organisational setting. For example, for individuals considering research with persons with disabilities, the National Disability Authority (www.nda.ie) has published a document on ethical research on its website. Considering the demands of particular methodologies, qualitative research methods that involve audio and video recording will introduce challenges around protecting participants' privacy

and anonymity, and in relation to the ethical management and use of data. Preparing to conduct a piece of research involves a detailed consideration of all of these issues.

Committee Structures

In order to support undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as staff, in the ethical completion of research, Dublin Business School has formed a College Human Research Ethics Committee, which is considered a subset of the College Applied Research and Practice Committee, with a more specific and formal remit. This is made up of no less than five representatives drawn from the Schools/Departments where research with human participants is typically conducted, including representatives from the Applied Research and Practice Committee. These representatives have experience across the fullest range of research methodologies and populations. These members will draw their authority, not solely from their scholarly experience, but also from the approval of their nomination to the College Human Research Ethics Committee by their Heads of School and the DBS Executive. In addition, a lay person, without academic experience, and an individual with legal expertise sit on the committee.

The College Human Research Ethics Committee monitors national and local legislation and practice to ensure that these are implemented in accordance with the needs of the College, its staff and students. In exceptional circumstances, the Chairperson may co-opt temporary members onto the College Human Research Ethics Committee to advise on certain applications.

In order to support the efficient review of material, a number of School Research Filter Committees have been established. These school-level committees comprise no fewer than five members reflecting the range of specialisms conducted within the School. Each respective School may subsequently further split into Department Research Filter Committees should research throughput necessitate as such. There would not appear to be any need to make any further distinction between a School Research Filter Committee and a Department Research Filter Committee other than this. These filter committees review and approve research proposals which are of a low ethical risk (see categories below), but not those of significant ethical risk.

Each Filter Committee submit a report to the Chair of the College Human Research Ethics Committee on applications considered and decisions made. In general, the College Human Research Ethics Committee effectively only approves and reviews research which may have an ethical risk, with a view to recommendations made by the relevant School Research Filter Committee. It is therefore the responsibility of the School Research Filter Committees to ensure that it passes to the College

Human Research Ethics Committee all the proposed research of significant ethical risk which it has received and have not filtered out any proposed research which could fall into that category.

Ethics Application Process

The staff member or student, following consultation with his/her supervisor, should complete a Research Application Pack and submit this initially to the appropriate School Research Filter Committee (see Appendix for a more detailed Process Chart).

The Research Application Pack entails completing or preparing the following documents:

- Research Ethics Application Form.
- Research Proposal form
- Research Ethics Review Exemption Form (if included, provided ethical approval paperwork from other institution)
- Participant Information Sheet(s)
- Participant Consent Form(s)
- Garda vetting and Children's first e-learning course where relevant

The School Research Filter Committee determines the category into which the research falls. The categories are as follows:

- **Research category 00** – Research not involving human or animal participants or collection of data relating to humans or animals.
- **Research Category OX** – Research not involving human or animal participants but which may include collection of secondary data relating to humans or animals
- **Research category A** – Research involving human volunteers but not including; clinical trials of investigative medicinal products or other therapeutic interventions; studies using new methodologies; studies involving certain vulnerable populations (detailed below); studies requiring deception of the participant or any significant risk to anyone involved in the research.
- **Research category B** - Research involving human volunteers including; studies involving therapeutic interventions (but not including clinical trials of investigative medicinal products); studies using new research methodologies; studies involving vulnerable populations (detailed below); studies requiring deception of the participant or any significant risk to anyone involved in the research.

- **Research Category C** – Research involving human volunteers who are service users, patients, staff, records, etc., within the sphere of the HSE or similar setting (but not including clinical trials of investigative medicinal products).
- **Research Category D** - Clinical trials of investigative medicinal products involving patients or healthy volunteers.

For research in Category A, a favourable opinion from a School Research Filter Committee will be sufficient for the research to proceed while research in other categories will require consideration by the College Human Research Ethics Committee.

Decisions from Filter Committee:

- Approved, to be stored at Programme / Research Centre / Academic Subject level
- Approved pending minor / major changes by the applicant
- Approval required by Research Ethics Committee, completed form to be forwarded to the Research Ethics Committee
- Not approved, referred back to applicant for amendment

Vulnerable Groups

This refers to any groups that require consideration of unique ethical challenges including:

- children
- the very elderly
- people with an intellectual or learning disability or other groups who might not understand the research and consent process or the implications for them of agreeing or declining to take part
- individuals or groups receiving help through the voluntary sector
- those in a subordinate position to the researchers such as employees or students (where the teacher or lecturer is conducting the research)
- Other groups might also be included in this category depending on the nature and context of the research.

Furthermore, in the case of a student with proposed research in category A, it is the duty of their supervisor to ensure that the participants of their project do not comprise a particular vulnerable group known to them individually (e.g. their employees).

Similarly, in the case of a staff member with proposed research in category A, it is the duty of the Filter Committee to ensure that the staff member's participants do not constitute a particular vulnerable group known to them.

Research with Children

Please consult with the DBS Child Protection Policy and Garda Vetting policy when conducting research with under 18s. See also guidelines from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Ethical Review and Children's Research in Ireland (2010) and in the associated guidance document Guidance for developing ethical research projects involving children (2012).

Students or staff working with children must complete Garda Vetting in advance of ethical approval and are advised to conduct the Children's First E-Learning course, an online course provided by Tusla.

You will need to provide a copy of the certificate of completion for consideration for ethical approval

Information: https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/

Training link: https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/

Position of Power

In the case of research where the researcher is in a position of power or authority in comparison to their participants, there is an issue of consent, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw. This can occur in the context of the staff-student setting, manager-employee, among others. Considering this, it will be required that such studies be reviewed by the College Ethics board. Efforts should be made to ensure the participant understands the voluntary nature of their participation, that participation is not compulsory and that they have the right to withdraw without penalty or grievance.

Conflict of interest

When applying for ethical approval, all conflicts of interest must be declared. These can occur when evaluating a researcher's own business, intervention or programme, to name a few. This can also be extended when evaluating such work by an employer, friends and family. To avoid bias and ensure objectivity, measures should be taken to demonstrate how the research will be conducted and full disclosure must be made with regard to the relationships that exist in the research setting.

Debriefing

Debriefing of participants should occur as soon as possible, that is, once participation is complete for each phase. In the case of longitudinal studies, with multiple stages of participation, the researcher should debrief the participant where possible. Although it may be necessary to keep the participant

naive to the later details of the study which are required to be retained for the integrity of the study, it is important to debrief the participant at each phase with the relevant information for that stage.

Identifiable data

As much as possible, data should be collected anonymously. However, in the case of studies where signed consent forms are required (qualitative studies, experiments etc.), where the participant is identifiable through the consent forms, every effort should be made to store the data de-identified. In the context of qualitative data, pseudonymisation is a useful approach or interviewee numbers.

Retention of data

The main researcher for a research project has the responsibility for the storage and retention of all the associated data and materials. As the data controller for the study the main researcher is responsible for the protection of the data under the Data Protection Act (2018). Particular care must be given in the context of identifiable data to ensure that the participant understands that it will be de-identified and understands the duration that the data will be retained for.

Under the data retention policy for DBS, records may be retained for up to five years, this also includes research data and materials. Retention periods may vary depending on the research area and nature of the data. However, the timeframe of which the data will be retained must be agreed at the start of the project and communicated to participants prior to participation.

All data should be retained and stored appropriately for five years unless otherwise indicated. However, when and where possible, hard copies should be destroyed in the appropriate manner. Once the period of retention has lapsed, the research data and materials should be destroyed or deleted in a confidential and secure manner.

External Applications

External applications should first contact the college Registrar and Director of Campus Operations for permission from the college to collect data or access data from the college. Following approval to do so, the researcher should apply for ethical approval to conduct the study in DBS. Where ethical approval has been attained at another institution, the researcher may apply for an exemption from full review as detailed in the next section. Please note ethical approval from the DBS College Ethics Committee does not guarantee participation on behalf of the staff or students.

Exemption from Full Review

In a limited number of situations, a researcher can apply to the relevant School Research Filter Committee for exemption from full review. These situations include but are not limited to; research

that is conducted under the jurisdiction of another ethics committee; research conducted using data that already exists in established archives; research that is conducted using data that exists in the public domain. In these situations, the researcher must submit an Ethics Review Exemption Form to the School Research Filter Committee detailing the conditions under which the applicant feels an exemption is relevant. The application must also include the ethical approval paperwork from the approved institution.

Ethics Application and Appeal Process

After each meeting, the Chairperson of the College Human Research Ethics Committee will return a decision for each application based on the committee's decision.

The College Human Research Ethics Committee may make the following decisions as regards the ethics of the project (see Process Chart in Appendices):-

- Approved (no further correspondence necessary)
- Conditional approval (minor revisions, to be accepted by the Chair)
- Conditional approval (major revisions, to be approved by a quorum of the committee electronically)
- Rejection/Invitation to resubmit to next sitting of committee

Appeals against a decision of the College Human Research Ethics Committee must be made in writing within ten working days to the Chair. The Chair will ask a quorum of the College Applied Research and Practice Committee (none of whom will have reviewed the initial application) to review the appeal with any additional information the applicant wishes to submit. When this meeting convenes, overseen by the Chair of the College Applied Research and Practice Committee, it shall comprise an extraordinary meeting of the College Human Research Ethics Committee and its decision will be final.

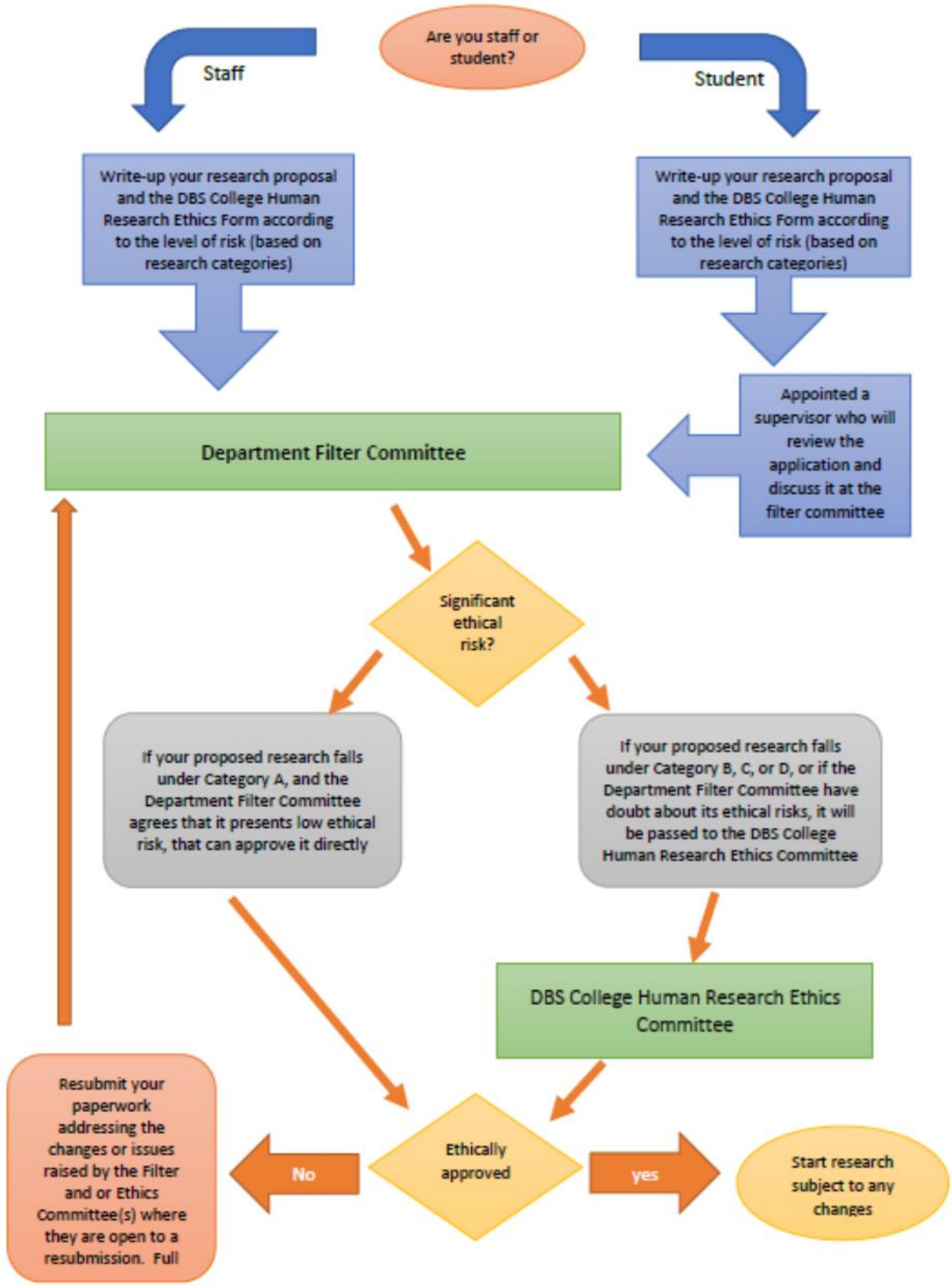

Figure 1: Process Chart for Ethical Approval

1.3.8 DBS Research, Enterprise and Innovation Strategy

In June 2018 DBS's Research, Enterprise and Innovation Strategy 2018–2022 was approved through the Academic Board. It is the remit of the Academic Dean to develop this strategy.

1.3.9 Additional Documents

- Ethics_1: Process Chart for Ethical Approval
- Ethics_2: Research Ethics Application Form
- Ethics_3: Research Ethics Review Exemption Form
- Ethics_4: Sample Participant Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s)
- Ethics_5: Points to note for completion of the Research Ethics Application Form
- Ethics_6: Filter Committee Form
- Ethics_7: Ethics Committee From

1.4 Blended Learning Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C Section 1	
Document Name	**Blended Learning Policy**
Policy Document Number	**035**
Version Reference	**v1.0**
Document Owner	**Academic Dean**
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Learning Technologist, Academic Online Lead**
Applicability	**All programmes: NFQ L6 to L9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online**
Approved By	**Academic Board**
Approval Date	**26/9/19**
Date Policy Becomes Active	**01/10/2019**
Revision Cycle	**A minimum of 18 months from initial approval date**
Revision History/Amalgamation History	**N/A**
Additional Information	**Active date will be following approval by QQI**
References/ Supporting Documentation	• **QQI (2018) *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*.**[10] • **National Forum (2018) *Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning*[11]** • **QQI (2016) *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines*, Section 2.1, 'Documented Policies and Procedures'.**[12]

1.4.1 Policy Overview

This policy document outlines the DBS blended learning policy as it relates to the development, approval, delivery and monitoring of programmes of study, and learner support and assessment therein. This policy document should be used by all stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and support of blended learning programmes and modules.

[10] https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf

[11] https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/publication/guide-to-developing-enabling-policies-for-digital-teaching-and-learning/

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

1.4.2 Policy Statement

DBS is committed to ensuring the best possible learning and teaching experience for learners and faculty. DBS sees the introduction and development of blended learning modules and programmes as key to its strategic vision for innovation, academic quality and growth.

The approach of DBS to blended learning is based upon the definition of blended learning as 'the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences' as defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) and referenced in the QQI 2018 Guidelines. However, in further developing its approach, DBS has identified a range of learning and teaching tools, and suitable mechanisms, that can be utilised in the delivery of programmes and which fall within the category of 'blended learning'.

The key aim for DBS in developing blended learning programmes is to ensure a rich learning experience for students, whereby constructivist approaches are used to ensure deep learning is scaffolded and higher order outcomes supported.

While DBS does not commit to the use of any specific technologies through its Blended Learning Policy, it is recognised that as new technologies emerge, it will be necessary for the DBS policy and approach to blended learning to evolve. The DBS Blended Learning Policy will therefore be monitored and updated on a regular basis. In addition, innovative approaches to learning and teaching will be examined on an on-going basis. Robust quality assurance checks will be in place to ensure the integrity and consistency of the learner experience.

At all times, blended learning will be used to support and enhance the learning experience for students and staff. Blended learning will not be utilised in any way that would compromise the student experience or learner outcomes. Teaching staff will also be supported in developing digital literacy and digital teaching capacities.

Initially DBS will introduce blended learning in pilot form, and with a limited and clearly defined scope.

Before commencing blended learning delivery, DBS carried out a gap analysis against the *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* (QQI, 2018) to ensure compliance with the guidelines under the following headings:

- Organisational Context
- Programme Context

- Learner Experience Context

1.4.3 Quality Assurance of Blended Learning

DBS standard QA policies will apply in all cases with respect to:

- Development and validation of new programmes
- Recruitment of staff
- Teaching staff qualifications
- Teaching staff development
- Delivery of programmes
- On-going monitoring and review of programmes (annual reporting, programme review, etc.)
- Governance and reporting
- Learner supports
- Learner conduct
- Assessment of programmes
- Exams processes (moderation, External Examiners, Exam Boards)
- Awards

Additional considerations relating specifically to blended learning are set out within this policy document. Where any policy considerations are not explicit, the standard Quality Assurance policies at DBS will apply.

DBS has used the National Forum's *Guide to Developing Enabling Policies for Digital Teaching and Learning* (National Forum, 2018) as a foundation for the development of this policy.

Curriculum Design

- Initial proposals for new programmes involving blended learning must include analysis of rationale, resourcing and capacity.
- Programmes incorporating blended learning are subject to the internal DBS Programme Approval process as laid out in the QAH Part C Section 2 as well as external QQI approval.
- In piloting blended learning, no more than one third of a stage of a programme in terms of ECTS will utilise blended learning. This may be increased after the initial pilot phase, subject to internal review and approval.

- DBS may develop elements of QQI validated programmes as blended learning where this does not directly contravene a condition of validation.
- Where the introduction of blended learning constitutes a significant change to the essence of a programme, DBS will seek permission from QQI, and if necessary re-validation of a programme to incorporate blended learning.
- Blended learning modules will be carefully designed in accordance with the DBS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy.
- Delivery and outcomes of blended learning modules and programmes, particularly learner outcomes, will be closely monitored.
- All changes in module or programme delivery that affects the blend between online and face-to-face delivery will be referred initially to the programme team, approved by the Academic Director and Board of Studies, and finally ratified through Academic Board.
- Blended learning programmes will be developed and delivered in collaboration with the Blended Learning Development Team.
- Blended learning programmes will be developed in accordance with the principles of Universal Design.13
- DBS is committed to ensuring that blended learning and assessments are accessible to learners with disabilities.

Technology-Enabled Assessment (TEA)

- TEA will be carried out in accordance with the DBS Quality Assurance standards and policies on assessments.
- TEA will be used to enhance and support learners' experience.
- TEA must provide opportunities for authentic and valid learning.
- TEA will be carried out only through approved, secure platforms.
- Teaching staff must be supported in the design of TEA.
- Stakeholders must have the ability to access TEA and the digital competencies to engage with them.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

- DBS is committed to making its VLE an open access repository within the institute, accessible by all learners and staff.

[13] http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/

- DBS retains the Intellectual Property Rights and copyright of content created by DBS faculty for use on DBS programmes unless otherwise stated.
- DBS will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that all online content used to develop and deliver blended learning programmes complies with Intellectual Property and Copyright laws.

Learner Support

- DBS commits to ensuring a safe online environment for its faculty and learners.
- Learners and faculty on all blended learning programmes will sign up to a Netiquette code of conduct for online behaviour.
- DBS acknowledges the rights of both faculty and learners not be available online 24/7.
- Programme teams have responsibility for monitoring and measuring the amount of online work required by learners and faculty to avoid 'digital overload'.
- As part of induction and orientation, learners will be provided with IT training in order to engage with blended learning courses.

Faculty Support

- DBS commits to resourcing a Blended Learning Development Team to collaborate with faculty on the development of blended learning courses. The team consists of, but is not restricted to, a Learning Technologist, an Academic Online Lead (blended learning pedagogical advisor) and an Instructional Designer. The blended learning team is an embedded and integral part of DBS.
- As part of its recruitment of faculty staff, DBS recognise the need to prioritise the pedagogical and IT skill-set required for the development and delivery of blended learning content.
- Training in the development and delivery of blended learning tools will be provided by DBS and is mandatory for all faculty engaged in blended learning.
- DBS commits to ensuring that its faculty are provided with the necessary professional development and training support systems to successfully develop and deliver blended learning courses. Blended learning CPD will further be incorporated into DBS's Academic CPD strategy.

Technical Infrastructure

- DBS commits to providing the on-campus IT infrastructure necessary to develop and deliver blended learning.
- DBS commits to providing faculty and learners with the necessary IT infrastructure on campus to engage with blended learning.
- All technologies used to support and deliver blended learning will be licensed by DBS.
- Under no circumstances are faculty permitted to use non-DBS licensed educational technology in the development or delivery of blended learning.
- All online teaching and learning content and activities utilised for blended learning will be accessible for learners through the DBS Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Administrative and IT Support

- Learners enrolled on modules and/or programmes offered through blended learning will be entitled to the same level of administrative and IT support that is provided to all learners in the College.
- DBS commits to monitoring and assessing its blended learning support and resourcing accordingly and to take proactive steps to address any issues that should arise.

1.4.4 Definitions and Terminology

- ABC approach to lesson design

Developed by UCL Digital Education,14 ABC is a quick and easy hands-on workshop to 'storyboard' the proposed development of a blended learning module or programme.

- Blended learning

Within its statutory guidelines, QQI refer to Garrison and Kanuka's 2004 definition of Blended Learning, i.e. 'the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences'.

[14] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2018/jun/designing-programmes-and-modules-abc-curriculum-design

- Contact Time

Contact time is defined as direct interaction between teaching staff and students. This may be traditional classroom based face-to-face contact, live online classes, chat rooms, discussion groups or e-mail discussions.

- Face-to-face learning

This term refers to any teaching and learning that takes place in a physical environment and is typically used to refer to a traditional classroom teaching environment.

- E-learning/Online learning/Directed e-learning

E-learning refers to the use of digital objects to facilitate learning. The term is not really in use any more among the educational technology community. More commonly used terms are Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), online learning and learning with digital technology, although all of these terms can be interpreted slightly differently but are also frequently used interchangeably. The key aspects to e-learning are that it involves learner interaction with digital objects. At its most basic, e-learning is frequently used to complement in-class learning.

- Flipped classroom

The 'flipped classroom' refers to a learning model whereby learners, having engaged with an appropriate level of directed digital content and having undertaken learning activity prior to coming to class, can confidently participate with in-class activities in an informed and meaningful manner. Typically, learner effort in a flipped classroom scenario is easy to quantify and the link to the in-class activity and the MIMLOs is obvious and clearly defined. With the flipped classroom, learners engage with the digital objects and activities online prior to coming to class. A very basic passive example of the flipped approach would be for the student to watch a video of a lecture before coming to class. Another, more engaging example would be a fixed series of animations, videos, active presentations, quizzes and other activities brought together in an interconnected and meaningful way. Often an authoring tool, such as 'Articulate Storyline', can be used to bring these objects together, so that the student can click through the multi-format online unit in a self-directed or 'on-demand' manner. Learners may further be required to engage in some form of social peer learning through an online discussion forum, for example, based on what emerged from the study of the digital objects. These objects may have voiceover or be scripted with captions. With a flipped classroom, the lecturer

effort can be much greater, however, these objects tend to be constructed by a team of people, including the lecturer.

1.4.5 Additional Documents

- *DBS Guidelines for Developing Blended Learning*
- *DBS Procedure for Developing Blended Learning*
- *DBS Online Lesson Template for Blended Modules*

1.5 Recording Learning Activities Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C	
Document Name	**Recording Learning Activities Policy**
Policy Document Number	**038**
Version Reference	**v1.0**
Document Owner	**Academic Dean**
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Registrar and Director of Campus Operations, Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production, IT Manager**
Applicability	**All programmes: NFQ L6 to L9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online**
Approved By	**Academic Board**
Approval Date	**23/07/2020**
Date Policy Becomes Active	**01/08/2020**
Revision Cycle	**A minimum of 12 months from initial approval date**
Revision History/Amalgamation History	**N/A**
Additional Information	**This policy replaces the previous Policy on Lecture Capture (internal policy)**
References/ Supporting Documentation	• **DBS Privacy Statement (2020)**[15] • **DBS Complaints Policy (see Part B, Section 3.6)**

1.5.1 Policy Overview

This policy provides guidance on the use of all technologies used to record learning activities that take place either in-class or online.

This policy is for lecturing staff but can also be used by administrative and support staff who use recording technologies for the purposes of learning. This policy is subject to ratification by the Academic Board and will be reviewed at the end of each academic year.

As part of Strategic Area 2: Innovative Teaching (DBS, 2018), DBS is committed to supporting the practice of recording online and in-class teaching and learning activities, and will:

- install lecture capture in lecture theatres and classrooms where required and feasible
- ensure that faculty have technical support and guidance on using applications recognised by DBS as suitable for recording learning activities
- provide training and technical support to all staff who want to use the applications to record learning activities

[15] https://www.dbs.ie/privacy-policy

- support the exchange of knowledge and experience of staff using applications to record learning activities
- provide facilities onsite for lecturers to deliver and record online learning activities
- ensure lecturers are aware of how best to deliver and record online learning activities remotely.
- seek to capture feedback from staff and students to inform the need to adapt to changing pedagogical models of delivery in the future to ensure an inclusive environment for the learner

1.5.2 Policy Statement

- DBS acknowledges that applications to record learning activities can be used to enhance the teaching and learning environment in a number of ways, including:
    - the potential for increased understanding by allowing learners to repeatedly reflect on the learning experience at a time, place and pace of their choosing
    - greater access to the learning experience for learners with additional educational needs or whose first language is not English
    - increased learner perception of having their learning experience supported
- DBS adopts an opt-out approach to recording learning activities, whereby all learning activities are recorded unless a decision is made with the Academic Director to opt out of recording or to not make recordings available.
- Guest speakers retain the right to have their talks recorded or not.
- Learners are to be made aware of DBS's recording of learning activities via the DBS Privacy Statement.
- Access to recordings will occur in consultation with the lecturer responsible for making the recording.
- The recordings of learning activities are for the current cohort of learners and will not be made available to learners in future cohorts.
- Recordings of learning activities will only be made available via the Learning Management System (LMS).
- Students will be able to stream recordings of learning activities but will not be able to download recordings and view offline or distribute.
- Students will have access to recordings of learning activities that have been made available to them for as long as they have access to their modules on LMS
- Recordings of learning activities are subject to the DBS Data Retention Policy (2018), which states that all LMS module content is archived after two years.
- The existing Learner Complaints and Appeals Procedure will be used for dispute resolution with regard to the recording of learning activities.

1.5.3 Additional Documentation

DBS Data retention policy (2018) [Available for DBS Staff on the College All Staff Drive]

DBS GDPR FAQ (2018) [Available for DBS Staff on the College All Staff Drive]

DBS Privacy Statement (2020) https://www.dbs.ie/privacy-policy

DBS Learner Complaints Policy (2019), *Quality Assurance Handbook*, Section B, Part 3.6

DBS Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (2021) https://www.dbs.ie/about-dbs/strategic-plan

1.6 Group Work Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part C	
Document Name	**Policy on Group Work**
Policy Document Number	**039**
Version Reference	**v1.0**
Document Owner	**Registrar and Director of Campus Operations**
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	**Quality Assurance Officer, Academic Dean, Academic Directors**
Applicability	**All programmes: NFQ L6 to L9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online**
Approved By	**Academic Board**
Approval Date	**01/12/2020**
Date Policy Becomes Active	**02/12/2020**
Revision Cycle	**A minimum of every five years from approval date**
Revision History/ Amalgamation History	**N/A**
Additional Information	**N/A**
References/Supporting Documentation	● Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2018) *Quality Assuring Assessment – Guidelines for Providers*, 2013 (Version 2, revised 2018). Dublin. QQI. [16]

1.6.1 Policy Overview

This policy document sets out, at a high level, considerations for learner group work and group assessments at DBS. It should be used as a starting point by all stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and assessment of group work within academic and professional programmes. This policy is intended to lay out areas for consideration in group work design and is not intended to be prescriptive in terms of specific assessment design at different levels. Assessment design should be integrated into the overall Programme Assessment Strategy which is developed as part of the construct of a programme and with appropriate consideration of Intended Learning Outcomes at programme and module level.

DBS adheres to the principle that all assessment should be valid, reliable, fair, transparent and authentic.

[16] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2C%20Revised%202013.pdf

DBS is committed to ensuring the best possible learning and teaching experience for learners and Faculty, and this policy is intended to encourage and support a consistent and transparent approach, particularly to the assessment of group work. The policy should also be read in conjunction with the DBS Strategy for Learning, Assessment and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE2, see appendix C.1.3).

1.6.2 Policy Statement

Group work is widely recognised as providing learners with valuable opportunities to enhance their soft skills, and serves to develop a raft of transferable skills relating to employability. Group work assists in the development of a broad range of skills, including:

- Communication
- Observation
- Leadership
- Problem-solving
- Morale-building
- Self-awareness and self-evaluation
- Time management

As such, group work is seen as a valuable aspect of any programme of study and it is envisaged that all major awards would include some elements of group work as a minimum.

Definition of Group Work

DBS defines group work as follows:

> *Group work is an assessed or non-assessed learning activity that involves learners collaborating on a particular project, assignment, task or assessment. A 'group' may be anything more than a single student (i.e. could involve working in pairs, or larger groups, as appropriate to the task at hand). Group work should always be designed to ensure that learning outcomes can be achieved on an individual level.*

General Principles for 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.

Group size and individual components

Group size

- 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.

Individual Assessment

- Typically, an individual mark should be awarded for group assessments. As a guide, this may be 10—20% of the assessment, but again should form part of the assessment design.

Managing Group Work and individual learners

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.

1.6.3 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.

1.6.4 Academic Integrity

Group work by definition involves collaboration. It is important to note that, in the context of individual assessments, collaboration is considered Academic Impropriety, and may lead to disciplinary action. It is therefore important that teaching staff and learners are very clear about assessment requirements and what reporting should look like in the context of group work.

Hints and Tips for Managing Group Work

- Bear in mind that a key purpose of group work is to learn how to manage collective projects – therefore it will not automatically be straightforward, and dealing with this is part of the process and learning.
- Agree an overall protocol/ group charter. Refer to the *DBS Learner Charter* here also (See **Part B, Section 3.1** of the *Quality Assurance Handbook*, for the Learner Charter).
- Identify clear roles within the group – these do not have to be static, i.e. someone appointed as overall group leader, but could rotate.
- Ensure the assignment tasks are clearly assigned across the group with similar workloads/input required.
- Agree a schedule of meetings/working groups as needed.

- Ensure all meetings and tasks are documented. This will in many cases be useful supports or a requirement for the final submission, but is also extremely helpful if there is any difficulty within the group such as a member of the group not fulfilling their tasks.
- If the group is not functioning effectively, take early steps to address it as a team.
- If the group is meeting remotely, i.e. via online meetings, bear in mind that behaviours, feelings and issues can be exacerbated in the online environment. Be aware of this and constantly check your own behaviours.

[END OF PART C SECTION 1]