



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

## Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

<b>Provider</b>	Dublin Business School
<b>Programme(s) Reviewed</b>	Certificate in Social Care Skills (Health and Social Care Skills) NFQ Level 6 25 ECTS

### Independent Panel Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role on Panel</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Dr Paul Stynes	Chair	Dean of School Computing, National College of Ireland
Dr Emmet Tuite	Academic Representative	Programme Co-ordinator/Lecturer Social Care TU Dublin; Blanchardstown Campus
Roisin McKenna	Academic Representative	University Lecturer/Programme Director of BA Social Care Programme; MTU Kerry
Martina McGovern	Industry Representative	Social Work Team Leader, Health Service Executive (HSE)
Mary Mahony	Learner Representative	Student – Maynooth University BA Criminology with BA in Social Care
Trudi Barnett	Report Writer	Independent Consultant (FET)

All members of the independent panel declared their independence of Dublin Business School and that they have no conflict of interest

## Part 1. Introduction

Dublin Business School (DBS), established in 1975 and part of Kaplan Inc. since 2003, is one of Ireland's largest independent higher education providers. Hosting a diverse student body of over 9,000 learners from more than 80 countries, DBS offers an extensive portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes spanning business, law, psychology, arts, media, computing, and social sciences. Its multi-location city-centre campus in Dublin is equipped with modern teaching facilities, flexible learning spaces, and purpose-built environments to support on-campus, online, and blended modes of delivery.

Within its Psychology and Social Sciences discipline, DBS delivers programmes that respond to the evolving demands of the health and social care sector, placing emphasis on learner access, professional relevance, and inclusive pedagogies. In particular, the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills (formerly the Certificate in Social Care Skills) was developed as a Level 6 (25 ECTS) Special Purpose Award to offer a flexible, industry-relevant pathway for learners seeking initial or upskilling opportunities in care-related roles.

The programme was originally validated in 2021 as a micro-credential linked to the BA/BA (Hons) in Applied Social Care, and has since evolved into a standalone qualification supported by Springboard. It is targeted towards adult learners, including those returning to education, seeking to enter the health or social care workforce, or aiming to progress to further study. Delivered over seven months on a part-time basis, the programme includes modules focused on professional practice, care skills, social policy and law, and academic readiness.

The 2025 revalidation process was informed by comprehensive programme monitoring, data analysis, and multi-stakeholder engagement. Key areas reviewed included assessment structures, module content, workload balance, and learner support. As a result, the programme has undergone significant refinement, most notably, a credit increase to 30 ECTS, and the formal inclusion of the Learning to Learn module to support academic development.

These updates demonstrate DBS's responsiveness to regulatory shifts (including the protected title of Social Care Worker under CORU), sectoral needs, and learner experience. The revised programme reflects the institution's strategic commitment to accessible, high-quality, and professionally-aligned education that empowers learners to contribute meaningfully across diverse health and social care contexts.

## Part 2. Evaluation Process

### 2.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

	<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Document Name</b>
1.	Agenda Programme Review	Certificate in Social Care Skills NFQ Level 6, 25ECTS
2.	Programme Handbook	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills
3.	Programme Review Report	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills
4.	Programme Documents	DBS Response to Panel Queries for the SPA Certificate in Social Care Skills 3_DBS_BA (Hons)_Applied Social Care Modules Ab Final
5.	Annual Programme Reports	2021 Programme Board Human and Social Sciences Board of Studies Discipline Report Human and Social Sciences April 2022 Board of Studies Discipline Report Human and Social Sciences November 2022
6.	Learner and Industry Feedback	Class Representative Meeting Notes Industry Feedback (Responses) Social Care Certificate in Learner Feedback Survey 2024 (Responses)
7.	Independent Evaluation Report	IER Certificate in Social Care 2021
8.	External Examiner Reports	External Examiner Annual Report 23-24 External Examiner Annual Report 22-23 External Examiner Annual Report 21-22
9.	Exam Papers/ CA Samples (Module Documents - Samples)	Learning to Learn Social Care in Practice Professional Practice 1 Introduction to Care Skills and Support Social Policy and Law for Social Care 1
10	Demographics, Progression and Results	Progression Certificate Certificate in Social Care BCE06Sc Demogfx
11	Certificate of Validation	Copy of PG24528_ Cert of Validation_CerSocialCareSkills_2021- 25extension.pdf CertofValidation_CertSocialCareSkills_2021- 2024.pdf
12	Board of Studies	Minutes: 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24
13	Programme Team CVs	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills.pdf
14	Terms of Reference	2025 Certificate in Social Care Skills v4
15	Appendices	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills: Module & Assessment Document Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills.pdf Indicative Timetables.docx.pdf Industry Research.docx.pdf Programme Team CVs.pdf Class Recording Strategy.docx.pdf

		Programme Handbook Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills.docx.pdf
16	DBS Cover Letter Declaration	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills 2025
17	DBS Deed of Guarantee	Dublin Business School
18	DBS Fee Cover Note	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills 2025
19	PEL Refund Arrangements Document	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills 2025

1	Darragh Breathnach	Chief Operating Officer & Registrar
2	Lori Johnston	Academic Dean
3	Anita Dwyer	Assistant Registrar
4	Amy Hayes	Academic Programmes Manager
5	Dr. Rosie Reid	Academic Director
6	Dr. Pauline Hyland	Assistant Academic Director
7	Adam Crowther	Student Experience Manager
8	Naoise Finnegan	Student Welfare Officer
9	Collette Doogue	Careers Coach
10	Sarah Sharkey	Student Engagement and Retention Officer
11	Francisca Knight	Head of Academic Operations
12	Tanya Balfe	Admissions Manager
13	Trevor Haugh	Head of Academic Information and Resource Hub
14	Nicholas Kelly	Head of Faculty Management
15	Janine Jackson	Faculty Manager
16	Various Faculty Representatives	
17	Student Representatives Met	

## 2.2 Description of evaluation process

The panel's evaluation of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills (Level 6, 30 ECTS) was conducted in accordance with QQI's programme review and revalidation guidelines. The aim of this evaluation was to review the provider's programme review report, evaluate the evidence presented, and assess the appropriateness and coherence of the proposed programme changes for revalidation. This included determining the continued validity of the programme's purpose, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, and alignment with learner and sectoral needs.

The panel reviewed a comprehensive suite of documentation prepared by DBS, including the programme review report, revised programme and module descriptors, assessment briefs, learner and graduate feedback, external examiner reports, and internal QA data. Particular attention was given to the rationale behind the increase from 25 to 30 ECTS, the integration of the Learning to Learn module, and the implications of the revised programme title.

The panel engaged in dialogue with key stakeholders during the review process, including programme team members, current learners, alumni, and senior academic management. These discussions were instrumental in understanding how the programme has evolved since

its initial validation and how its redesign seeks to meet the changing demands of the health and social care landscape.

Learners reflected positively on the programme's flexibility, staff support, and real-world relevance, while noting the need for improved clarity in assessment timelines. Alumni provided feedback on their progression pathways and how the programme prepared them for roles in care environments. The programme team offered insights into curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and learner engagement strategies, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

The evaluation also focused on the programme's positioning relative to CORU registration, the accuracy of messaging in marketing materials, and the appropriateness of assessment and workload structures. The panel explored the alignment between learning outcomes and assessment methods and assessed the relevance of module content to the duties of Health Care Assistants and similar roles.

The panel concluded that the evaluation process was thorough and collaborative, enabling a full and fair assessment of the programme's strengths and areas for development. The revised Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills demonstrates clear responsiveness to stakeholder input and policy developments and is fit for revalidation with specified conditions and recommendations.

### Part 3. Panel Findings on Provider Programme Review Report

The following is the panel's commentary and recommendations on the provider's programme review report. It follows the section structure of the report in headings and in sequence.

References to specific parts of the provider report will use the relevant report reference e.g.

2.2.4 Programme Management

#### Section A. Context and Terms of Reference for the Programme Review

##### **Commentary:**

The Certificate in Social Care Skills (Special Purpose Award, Level 6) underwent a comprehensive internal review as part of Dublin Business School's cyclical programme review and revalidation processes, in line with the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the specific requirements for Special Purpose Awards.

This internal review was undertaken to ensure the programme continues to meet its intended purpose, remains relevant to the evolving needs of learners and the wider health and social care sector, and is fully aligned with DBS's strategic vision for lifelong learning and access-focused provision. The Certificate had originally been developed in 2021 to serve as a standalone micro-credential linked to the now-retired BA in Applied Social Care. Given changes in sectoral policy, learner demographics, and increased regulatory awareness, particularly regarding the professionalisation of care roles and the reserved title of Social Care Worker under CORU, the internal review was timely and necessary.

The review was carried out by the programme team in collaboration with academic management and quality assurance representatives. It focused on examining programme structure, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, teaching and learning methodologies, learner supports, progression opportunities, and feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. Specific attention was given to the formal inclusion of the ‘Learning to Learn’ module, which had been delivered to learners but was not previously credit-bearing within the validated programme structure.

The Terms of Reference for this internal programme review included:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its original objectives;
- Assessing the alignment of programme learning outcomes and assessment strategies with NFQ Level 6 standards and QQI policies;
- Reviewing learner feedback, performance data, and graduate outcomes across multiple cohorts;
- Reviewing the programme's role in supporting national policy on upskilling, lifelong learning, and employability in the care sector;
- Ensuring clarity regarding the award’s status as a non-professional qualification and its positioning relative to CORU registration;
- Evaluating the rationale and implications of the proposed programme title change;
- Proposing adjustments to strengthen academic coherence, accessibility, and progression pathways.

The internal review concluded that the programme has served learners well to date, but several enhancements were warranted to ensure continued quality, clarity, and alignment with the evolving health and social care landscape. These enhancements are detailed in the Programme Review Report submitted to the panel and inform the current revalidation submission.

**Recommendations: N/A**

## Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

### **Commentary:**

Dublin Business School (DBS) is a well-established private higher education institution operating within a defined academic governance structure that complies with QQI’s Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. Academic governance is led by the Academic Board, supported by institutional and programme-level committees including Programme Boards, the Quality Enhancement Committee, and the Board of Studies. These mechanisms ensure that all programmes, including Special Purpose Awards such as the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills, are developed, reviewed, and monitored within a robust quality assurance framework.

DBS's mission centres on preparing learners for employment and further study through high-quality, accessible, and flexible programmes. Its commitment to lifelong learning and inclusive education is particularly visible in its delivery of programmes aligned with national skills needs. The Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills exemplifies this commitment, responding to labour market trends, learner aspirations, and evolving sectoral requirements in the care domain.

This programme is funded under the Springboard+ initiative, which supports upskilling and reskilling opportunities for unemployed, previously self-employed, and returner learners. As such, the programme is designed to attract diverse adult learners seeking entry into the health and social care workforce or transition into further education. The Springboard+ context places particular emphasis on accessibility, flexibility, and learner supports - features that are reflected in the programme's blended delivery model, modular structure, and academic support systems.

The Certificate is housed within the Psychology and Social Sciences discipline at DBS and is overseen by an Academic Director, supported by Programme-Level Managers (PLMs) and academic coordinators. Originally validated in 2021 as a 25 ECTS Special Purpose Award linked to the now-retired BA in Applied Social Care, the revised programme now comprises 30 ECTS, with the formal integration of the Learning to Learn module. This supports learner preparedness, particularly for those returning to education or engaging in blended delivery for the first time.

The part-time structure and multimodal delivery are supported by DBS's learning infrastructure, including virtual learning environments, on-campus facilities such as a skills demonstration room, and academic supports tailored to adult learners. Ongoing engagement with learners, academic staff, and external stakeholders through Springboard+ evaluations, programme boards, and employer feedback channels has informed recent enhancements to the programme.

This internal review and subsequent revalidation process reflect DBS's strategic aim to maintain sectoral relevance, support national workforce development, and ensure that learners supported through Springboard+ receive high-quality, employment-focused, and academically coherent education.

**Recommendations: N/A**

## Section C. Baseline qualitative and quantitative information

### Programme Data Overview

*This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Applications, Enrolment, Attrition Transfer and Progression, Award Classification and Graduate Destinations*

#### **Commentary:**

The panel reviewed a comprehensive set of qualitative and quantitative data provided in the internal programme review report. This evidence, detailed across Sections 3.1.1.1 to 3.1.1.5 of the provider's submission, allowed the panel to assess patterns in application numbers, enrolments, attrition, award achievement, and graduate outcomes.

#### **Applications and Enrolments**

Section 3.1.1.1 indicates strong and consistent demand for the programme. In 2022/23, there were 340 applications, and in 2023/24, there were 217. Enrolments for these respective years were 62 and 70, marking an increase in the conversion rate from 19% to 32%. Early data for 2024/25 also suggests that interest in the programme remains robust. This trend reflects the continuing relevance of the programme within the Springboard+ framework and its alignment with labour market needs.

#### **Attrition, Completion, and Progression**

Section 3.1.3.1 provides a breakdown of retention and progression. The panel noted a high rate of attrition in some cohorts, particularly the September 2022 intake, where withdrawal was recorded at 39%. Completion data shows improvement, with a total award achievement rate of 61.3% in 2022/23 rising to 70% in 2023/24 (Section 3.1.4.3). While below DBS's internal completion threshold of 80%, the trajectory is positive and reflects the provider's ongoing efforts to support learner retention.

#### **Award Classification and Performance**

As detailed in Section 3.1.4.2, average grades achieved across modules ranged from 69% to 76.25%. The Professional Practice: Introduction to Care Skills and Support module yielded the highest average scores, attributed to its applied, experiential focus. Lower average grades were observed in theory-based modules. The panel acknowledged that the formal inclusion of the Learning to Learn module (see Section 3.1.3.4) is a welcome enhancement that should further strengthen academic readiness, particularly for adult learners returning to education.

#### **Graduate Destinations**

Section 3.1.5 confirms that graduate tracking is not yet systematised within DBS's data systems. While anecdotal learner feedback suggests successful transition into care roles or further study, formal data collection on learner destinations is lacking. The panel recommends that the provider prioritise the use of TSM or similar systems to enable tracking of graduate outcomes in future cycles.

The panel commends the programme team for their transparent engagement with programme data and their critical reflection on areas requiring development. In particular, the shift from 25 to 30 ECTS (Section 3.1.1.5), incorporating Learning to Learn as a credit-bearing module, is a proactive response to learner needs and progression barriers. Further development of learner induction, scaffolding of assessment literacy, and early intervention strategies may help reduce withdrawal and

improve completion. Monitoring of programme adjustments following revalidation will be important to ensure continuous quality improvement.

**Recommendations:** N/A

## Programme Delivery and Teaching & Learning Strategies

*This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Physical Facilities and Resources, Timetabling, Learner Workload, Attendance, Teacher Learner Ratios, Community of Practice Learning, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Learning Outcomes achieved, Assessment Strategies.*

### **Commentary:**

The Certificate in Social Care Skills has been delivered using a combination of face-to-face and Hyflex teaching modes, underpinned by a robust Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) 2018–2022. This institutional framework aligns with QQI award standards and is informed by learner and stakeholder consultation, digital learning developments, and emerging pedagogical trends.

### **Physical Facilities and Resources**

The programme benefits from DBS's physical and digital infrastructure. Classrooms are equipped with Zoom Room technology, audiovisual capabilities, and flexible layouts. The dedicated Social Care Room, which is essential for the Professional Practice 1 module, supports experiential learning and is capped at a 1:15 ratio. Additional resources include mobile Chromebook labs, quiet study areas, and 24/7 access to Moodle, ensuring comprehensive support for both on-campus and remote learners.

### **Timetabling**

Timetabling is managed by a dedicated DBS team using Celcat software. It is learner-focused, avoiding back-to-back sessions and enabling consistent access to classes. Due to the small group requirement for the Professional Practice 1 module, delivery is split across two evenings.

### **Learner Workload**

Assessment workload is carefully structured. Linear 10-credit modules allow for distribution of assessment deadlines. Learners are informed of their schedules early in the academic year, promoting planning, time management, and reduced stress during peak submission periods.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is variable, with module attendance rates ranging from just under 15% to over 70%. Physical attendance is not mandatory, and while online attendance is more reliably captured, physical presence is more difficult to monitor. The Engagement Officer plays a key role in following up with learners who disengage and supports appropriate interventions, including deferral options.

### **Teacher-Learner Ratios**

Teaching ratios vary depending on the module. While larger theory-based modules may have a 1:150 ratio through Hyflex delivery, the Professional Practice 1 module maintains a 1:15 ratio to preserve quality and interaction in its applied learning context.

**Teaching and Learning Strategies**

The programme employs a range of teaching methods, including lectures, case studies, discussions, and group activities. Moodle is the primary learning platform, used consistently to share resources and support asynchronous learning. The use of Hyflex delivery is appropriately limited, with the Professional Practice module being retained as an in-person, hands-on learning experience. The panel notes the balance between flexibility and learner engagement and recommends continued monitoring to ensure consistent learner experience across formats.

The panel agrees that the delivery model and teaching strategies are appropriate, inclusive, and supportive of diverse learner needs. Continued attention to attendance, flexible scheduling, and pedagogical innovation will further strengthen the learner experience on this programme.

**Recommendations: N/A**

## Section D. Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

### Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

#### **Commentary:**

Learner feedback has been a consistent and valued element in the ongoing development and revalidation of the Certificate in Social Care Skills. According to Section 4.1.1, feedback mechanisms included both class representative systems (although these were not always operational for this programme) and targeted surveys conducted with learners from the March 2023 and 2024 cohorts. These surveys captured quantitative and qualitative reflections on programme quality, delivery, assessment, and learner experience.

Respondents generally expressed high levels of satisfaction with the programme, highlighting the practical aspects, quality of lecturers, and overall organisation of module content. Several learners referenced increased confidence and a clearer career trajectory following their participation in the programme, including entry into employment or progression to further study.

Specific feedback noted that continuous assessment enabled deeper engagement with subject matter. Learners welcomed the inclusion of the Learning to Learn module, with many highlighting its practical benefit in supporting reflective practice and academic readiness. For instance, one learner remarked: “I had my entire second assignment done before it was even released. Really helpful.”

Learners raised concerns about IT/online learning issues, the clarity of assessment deadlines, and inconsistencies in class delivery. These concerns were acknowledged in the report, with provider commentary outlining steps taken to address attendance recording, timetabling, and learner access to IT support.

**Recommendations: N/A**

### Evaluation of the programme by Staff

#### **Commentary:**

Staff feedback was captured through formal structures, including Programme Team meetings, Programme Boards, and Internal Examiner reports. These inputs are summarised in Section 4.2.1. Across these channels, staff highlighted strengths in the practical, applied nature of the programme and identified academic writing and referencing as areas where learners required more support. This directly informed the decision to formalise the Learning to Learn module and to audit word counts across assessments for equity and balance.

The panel noted that regular engagement with the teaching team has supported iterative refinements to teaching strategies and assessment methodologies. Meetings from April 2023 to February 2025 (detailed in Section 4.2.1) provided a solid foundation for the proposed revisions.

**Recommendations: N/A**

## External Examiner Feedback

### **Commentary:**

Throughout the current validation cycle, the Certificate in Social Care Skills has benefited from consistent oversight by two external examiners. As detailed in Section 4.4.1 of the programme review report, the external examiner reports were largely positive. They highlighted strengths such as the diversity of assessment methods, internal moderation procedures, and the learner-centred ethos evident in programme delivery and assessment.

The mixed-methods approach to assessment was commended for offering learners multiple ways to demonstrate their learning. The external examiner also noted the professionalism and responsiveness of academic staff in relation to programme quality assurance and assessment integrity.

Recommendations from the most recent external examiner include introducing peer mentoring opportunities, strengthening academic support for learners at risk of underperformance, and updating reading lists to better reflect the current Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers. Additionally, the examiner identified some inconsistencies in the formatting of assessment briefs and the application of marking rubrics.

Section 4.3.3 confirms that these recommendations have informed the internal review process. The programme team has since undertaken a systematic review of assessment materials and marking tools to improve clarity and consistency. Revised grading rubrics and realigned assessment briefs are now embedded within the revalidated programme structure.

### **Recommendations:**

A recommendation regarding the need to review and update the reading lists to reflect current and relevant literature is further detailed in the Independent Evaluation Report for Revalidation.

## Section E. Programme Quality Assurance

### Complaints, appeals and commendations

#### **Commentary:**

DBS implements institution-wide policies for complaints and appeals, which are applied at the programme level. Learners are informed of their rights and responsibilities through the Learner Charter, the Programme Handbook, and during induction. While no formal complaints or appeals have been recorded since the last programme validation, systems for learner feedback and resolution are clearly in place. These include formal methods such as Moodle surveys and class representative meetings, as well as informal channels including in-class discussions.

The panel welcomes the evidence of proactive engagement with learner concerns and the provider's commitment to resolving issues at the earliest opportunity. As part of the revalidation process, the provider reviewed and clarified its complaints procedures to ensure a clear distinction between informal and formal mechanisms, contributing to greater transparency for learners.

#### **Recommendations:**

A recommendation regarding the need to re-examine the implementation of the "fit to sit" policy and the "learner of concern" procedures to ensure clarity and consistency is further detailed in the Independent Evaluation Report for Revalidation.

### Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

#### **Commentary:**

All quality assurance procedures for the Certificate in Social Care Skills are governed by the DBS Quality Assurance Handbook, which aligns with QQI's statutory guidelines. These procedures encompass programme development and review, assessment practices, learner support, and governance structures.

The programme team demonstrated a strong culture of shared responsibility for quality assurance. Mechanisms such as regular team meetings, peer observation, and the mentoring of new teaching staff support consistency and reflective practice. The recent development of a departmental Teacher's Manual was identified as a positive step in formalising expectations and improving support for academic staff.

The panel also noted the clarity of academic governance and leadership. Oversight is provided through designated academic roles, and many teaching staff contribute across programmes or maintain links with industry, strengthening the relevance and delivery of the programme.

#### **Recommendations:**

A recommendation regarding the need to clearly outline the qualification requirements for staff delivering the Professional Practice module within the programme documentation is further detailed in the Independent Evaluation Report for Revalidation.

## Additional Quality Assurance Systems and Processes required (e.g. online delivery / assessment)

### **Commentary:**

The provider outlines a well-established infrastructure to support blended and online delivery, including use of Moodle, Zoom-enabled classrooms, and remote learner services such as the DBS Service Desk and access to digital libraries. According to the programme team, learners are supported through a combination of scheduled virtual sessions, recorded materials, and consistent access to learning content, which helps to mitigate barriers to participation.

The report notes that policies for extensions, deferrals, and academic support are uniformly applied across delivery modes. While quality assurance of online delivery is embedded at an institutional level, the review acknowledges areas for future development, particularly in terms of recording engagement, managing attendance in Hyflex sessions, and monitoring the consistency of learner experience across modes of delivery. These are recognised by the provider as emerging challenges that require ongoing attention as the programme continues to operate in a blended learning environment.

### **Recommendations:**

A recommendation regarding the need to ensure clarity in all marketing materials regarding the delivery mode of the programme is further detailed in the Independent Evaluation Report for Revalidation.

## Section F. Summary Analysis of the programme

### **Commentary:**

The provider has undertaken a comprehensive review of the Level 6 Certificate in Social Care Skills, drawing on a range of internal and external data sources. These include learner performance metrics, stakeholder feedback, and programme team reflections gathered over the five-year delivery cycle. Section 6.1 of the provider's review report presents a detailed SWOT analysis that captures both strengths and areas for enhancement.

The programme's strengths lie in its practical focus, relevance to sectoral needs, and its accessibility to mature learners seeking reskilling or entry into the care field. Learner feedback has been consistently positive, especially regarding the applied nature of modules and the support provided by teaching staff. Completion and pass rates for engaged learners are deemed satisfactory, and external examiners have consistently affirmed the academic integrity and relevance of the programme.

The review identifies areas of concern relating to attrition rates and the need for enhanced academic readiness supports. These concerns are being proactively addressed through the formalisation of the Learning to Learn module, which had previously been delivered outside of the validated programme structure. Additionally, learner feedback highlights ongoing challenges related to assessment workload and tight deadlines, which have informed proposed refinements to assessment design and scheduling.

Opportunities for future enhancement include greater integration of digital literacy within teaching and assessment strategies and increased engagement with industry through DBS's Social Sciences Industry Advisory Board. However, the review also acknowledges constraints around staffing and the recruitment of subject-matter experts, particularly for practice-based delivery. As such, ensuring sustainable resourcing and clear progression pathways for learners will be critical to the programme's long-term success.

Overall, the programme is performing well, fulfilling its intended purpose, and demonstrating responsiveness to learner and sector needs. The proposed revisions reflect a clear trajectory of enhancement, with a strong commitment to quality assurance and learner-centred provision.

**Recommendations: N/A**

## Section G. Revision of the programme

*In this section the panel will respond to any proposals made by the provider in respect of changes to the programme arising from the review. The revised programme's readiness for validation will be reported on in more detail in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.*

### **Commentary:**

The panel has reviewed the proposed revisions to the Certificate in Social Care Skills (to be retitled Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills) and confirms that the changes reflect a well-evidenced, learner-centred, and sectoral responsive evolution of the programme. The programme has moved from a micro-credential linked to a former BA (Hons) degree to a standalone Special Purpose Award at Level 6, 30 ECTS. This increase in credit weighting results from the formal inclusion of the Learning to Learn module (5 ECTS), which had previously been delivered but not validated. The inclusion of this module strengthens learners' academic and reflective skills and supports their transition into higher education, particularly for adult learners returning to study.

In line with the revised purpose of the programme and the retirement of the associated BA programme, the programme team has proposed a name change to Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. Module title changes have been made accordingly, including:

- Professional Practice 1: Introduction to Care Skills and Support revised to Professional Practice: Introduction to Care Skills and Support
- Social Policy and Law for Social Care 1 revised to Social Policy and Law for Social Care

The number of Major Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPOs) has been reduced from five to four through integration and rewording, allowing for more macro-level, non-repetitive learning outcomes and better alignment across the curriculum. Similarly, Module Intended Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs) have been adjusted across modules to ensure consistent structure and reduce cognitive load, supporting assessment practices aligned with principles of Universal Design for Learning.

The intake model has been revised from three intakes per year (up to 300 learners) to two intakes per year (maximum 60 per intake), reflecting resource constraints and the need to maintain quality of learner experience, especially in practical modules requiring 1:15 teacher–learner ratios.

These changes are well rationalised within the provider's report and are underpinned by a clear commitment to streamlining the programme while enhancing learner preparedness, engagement, and progression. The panel is satisfied that the proposed revisions represent an appropriate and necessary realignment of the programme and that the revised programme is on track to meet validation requirements.

However, the panel has identified several key areas where further work is required to ensure the revised programme meets professional and regulatory expectations. The panel stipulates the following four conditions to be addressed prior to programme validation:

#### **1. Attendance Policy**

Clearly articulate and communicate the attendance policy (if any), including the

minimum attendance threshold and the actions to be taken if this threshold is not met.

2. **Programme Title**

Review and revise the programme title to better reflect its focus on Health Care Assistant roles and related graduate opportunities.

3. **CORU Requirements**

Review all programme documentation and promotional materials to ensure it is made explicitly clear that this programme does not meet the requirements for CORU registration.

4. **Progression Arrangements**

Clarify and ensure consistency in the documentation regarding progression opportunities available to graduates of this programme.

**Recommendations:**

A range of recommendations have been made regarding the programme's modules. These recommendations, along with their corresponding rationale and proposed actions, will be detailed further in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation, which will outline a clear timeline for compliance and further development.

## Part 4. Overall Findings

In this section, the panel will give its overall feedback on the conduct of the review and the findings therein. This feedback will inform future provider review processes and will also contribute to the refinement of any programmes being proposed for revalidation following this review process.

### Section A. Commentary on review process:

The panel acknowledges the structured, transparent, and reflective approach taken by DBS in its review of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. The internal review was clearly informed and demonstrated a genuine commitment to enhancing programme quality and learner experience. The process was underpinned by a clear rationale for revision, comprehensive data analysis, and meaningful stakeholder engagement, including current learners, graduates, academic staff, and quality assurance personnel.

The review process demonstrated strong academic governance, supported by experienced leadership at programme and faculty levels. Learner performance data, feedback insights, and module-level evaluations were integrated into the analysis in a coherent and responsive manner, further reinforcing the provider's intention to ensure the programme remains current, sector-relevant, and pedagogically inclusive.

### Section B. Recommendations on review process:

To support ongoing improvement in future programme reviews, the panel offers the following recommendations:

- Continue to embed reflective, learner- and evidence-informed practice at the centre of the review process.
- Build on strong stakeholder engagement by formalising feedback mechanisms with graduates and employers, particularly in short-cycle programmes.
- Ensure consistency and accuracy across documentation, including version control, module titles, and alignment of learning outcomes with assessment methods.

### Section C. Commentary on programme revisions:

The panel affirms that the proposed revisions to the Certificate in Social Care Skills are appropriate, well justified, and clearly focused on improving learner preparedness, experience, and outcomes. The formalisation of the Learning to Learn module into the validated programme structure reflects a responsive and inclusive pedagogical approach. The adjustment from 25 to 30 ECTS and the restructuring of MIPLOs and MIMLOs provide stronger academic coherence and improved scaffolding of learning across the programme.

Overall, the programme revisions demonstrate a clear trajectory of enhancement, based on robust internal analysis and guided by national policy priorities including learner access, care sector workforce needs, and flexible learning pathways.

#### Section D. Recommendations on programme revisions:

The panel supports the revalidation of the Certificate in Social Care Skills (to be re-titled Health and Social Care Skills), subject to the implementation of the four conditions and recommendations specified in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation. These address key areas including programme title clarity, progression pathway communication, and documentation alignment with regulatory expectations.



**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Panel Chairperson:

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025



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Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland

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

## Part 1. Provider details

<b>Provider name</b>	Dublin Business School
<b>Date of site visit</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2025
<b>Date of report</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> April 2025

## Section A. Overall recommendations

<b>Principal programme<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Title</b>	Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills
	<b>Award</b>	Level 6
	<b>Credit</b>	30 ECTS
	<b>Recommendation</b> <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

<b>Embedded programme 1<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Title</b>	N/A
	<b>Award</b>	-
	<b>Credit</b>	-
	<b>Recommendation</b> <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	-

<sup>1</sup> Replace throughout with actual programme title.

<sup>2</sup> Replace throughout with actual programme title. Copy and paste this table for any additional embedded programmes.

## Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Paul Stynes	Chair	Dean of School Computing, National College of Ireland
Dr Emmet Tuite	Academic Representative	Programme Co-ordinator/Lecturer Social Care TU Dublin; Blanchardstown Campus
Roisin McKenna	Academic Representative	University Lecturer/Programme Director of BA Social Care Programme; MTU Kerry
Martina McGovern	Industry Representative	Social Work Team Leader, Health Service Executive (HSE)
Mary Mahony	Learner Representative	Student – Maynooth University BA Criminology with BA in Social Care
Trudi Barnett	Report Writer	Independent Consultant (FET)

## Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (FT)	Maximum number of learners (PT)
Dublin Business School	N/A	120

Proposed Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	Duration	Intakes per Annum	Enrolment i.e. learners per Intake	
			Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Full-Time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-Time	Sep 2025	7 months/1 calendar year	2	5	60
Intake Schedule e.g. January September		September and March			

### Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

The panel has reviewed the proposed enrolment structure for the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills and finds it to be both reasonable and well-aligned with the programme's objectives. The programme will be offered on a part-time basis over 7 months, within a single calendar year, allowing learners to balance their academic commitments with professional and personal responsibilities.

The provider plans for two intakes per year, one in September and one in March, ensuring flexibility for learners wishing to start at different times of the year. The panel has noted that a minimum of 5 learners and a maximum of 60 learners per intake are proposed, which appears appropriate for maintaining the quality of learning and providing a manageable cohort size for the staff to offer personalized support and guidance.

Additionally, the programme is available through the Springboard+ initiative, which offers funding to eligible learners. This enhances accessibility for individuals seeking to enter or

upskill within the health and social care sector. The panel supports this funding mechanism, as it helps increase opportunities for learners, particularly those from non-traditional educational backgrounds or those seeking to re-enter the workforce.

This proposed enrolment strategy supports the provider's commitment to delivering a high-quality, learner-centred programme, ensuring that each learner receives the necessary attention to successfully complete the course. The panel is confident that the proposed enrolment numbers are appropriate for the resources available and the nature of the programme, allowing for effective delivery and support while ensuring optimal learning outcomes.

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

The Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills provides an introduction to the knowledge, skills and competencies for social and health care practice and is an introduction to the suite of skills necessary in the social and health care profession. Key skills include: person-centred planning, basic law, safeguarding, skills of daily living, infection control and a knowledge of basic principles of care and communication. Learners will gain a grounding in these core professional care skills and will also learn the principles of professional social care practice, rooted in ethical and human rights principles. Learners will also develop knowledge and understanding of social policy and law as it applies to social care in Ireland and elsewhere. Additionally, training will be provided in important administrative skills such as needs analysis, risk assessment, and report writing. These are essential skills not only for those working as Social and Health Care Assistants or in support roles, but also as a basis for potential progression, should learners decide to pursue further studies that would lead them to further qualifications in social care work.

The Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills (Level 6, 30 ECTS) programme is comprised of four modules (*Professional Practice: Introduction to Care Skills and Support*, 10 ECTS; *Social Care in Practice*, 5 ECTS; *Social Policy and Law for Social Care*, 10 ECTS; *Learning to Learn* 5 ECTS). It has been designed for those who wish to acquire introductory core skills and knowledge required for an applied setting in social care and/or for those who may use this special purpose award qualification as a possible 'stepping stone' to a Level 7 qualification, reskilling or upskilling in the area of applied social and health care skills.

***This programme does not fulfil the full scope of requirements for the Standards of Proficiency regulated by CORU for the title of Social Care Worker/Practitioner.***

**Target learner groups**

The Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills (Level 6, 30 ECTS) is a special purpose award programme that is targeted towards learners who wish to gain essential knowledge and skills in practical health and social care. It has been designed for those who wish to acquire the skills and knowledge required for an applied setting in a role as a Social or Health Care Assistant or support worker and/or for those who may use this special purpose award qualification as a possible 'stepping stone' to a Level 7 qualification, reskilling or upskilling in the area of applied social care skills. Upon successful completion of this programme, learners will be able to apply their skills and knowledge effectively, and understand how to integrate social care skills into a health care or social care setting. Learners will be well positioned to pursue roles within organisations that require social care skills-related tasks. It may also appeal to those who are unemployed from a related role, or in employment and who require cross-skilling or up-skilling in this area.

<b>Approved countries for provision</b>	Ireland
<b>Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time</b>	Part-time

<b>The teaching and learning modalities</b>
<p>The teaching and learning modalities include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Classroom-Based Lectures:</b> On-site Face to Face/Synchronous Online.</li> <li>2. <b>Practical Workshops:</b> On-site sessions.</li> <li>3. <b>Asynchronous:</b> On demand content.</li> </ol> <p>These modalities reflect a blended learning approach, combining face-to-face and online elements to suit diverse learner needs.</p>

<b>Summary of specifications for teaching staff</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Profile</b>	<b>WTE</b>
Academic Director (AD)	The AD is responsible for the overall management and development of the discipline, the coordination of the organisation and delivery of programmes in the discipline.	1
Assistant Academic Director	The Assistant Academic Director works alongside the Academic Director across many of their duties, including the management and development of the programme, the coordination of the organisation and delivery of the programme, and the management and support of learners on the programme. The Assistant Academic Director also works in a student-facing capacity, through teaching and supporting students more generally throughout their time as DBS.	1
Programme Level Manager	The Programme Level Manager (PLM) provides professional leadership and management for an allocated subject area in order to facilitate teaching and learning and to secure effective use of resources. The key responsibility of the PLM is the management and delivery of the programme(s) for which they hold responsibility. They have knowledge and experience of the delivery of a Health and Social Care Skills programme, with appropriate academic and management skills as well as making a significant contribution to the programme. They have the Programme(s) as their major commitment and are free to devote sufficient time to ensure the efficient and	1

	<p>effective running of that programme. This includes undertaking teaching duties as appropriate to the requirements of a programme and consistent with the area(s) of expertise, keeping up to date with teaching and learning developments and being alert to best practice, providing guidance to colleagues on content, methodology and resources regarding the subject area and answering subject specific queries from students. They consider the roles that other Programme Team members may take in relation to the leadership and coordination of the programme as part of their staff development strategy, particularly in connection with longer-term succession planning or to support the development of leadership potential. Allied to this is the need for contingency plans to ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced individual has been identified who can deputise for the Programme Chair/Director should the need arise.</p>	
Lecturer	<p>There are currently four members of staff employed in the programme. Many lecturers are also module leaders for their corresponding modules and are responsible for any modules allocated to them. The primary function of a Module Leader is therefore to prepare and deliver module material, assessing learners on designated subjects or modules at programme level. Duties and responsibilities include those matters that relate to teaching, assessment, and completion of the module. The Module Leader also has responsibility for ensuring that the module content is regularly reviewed and updated.</p>	4
Administrative/Professional Services Staff	<p>Currently there is one Programme Coordinator working with this programme, and this person works with the wider Springboard programmes also.</p> <p>Secretarial/Clerical: Further support from Head of Academic Operations and the Academic Affairs Department as required.</p>	1
Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU)	<p>DBS has established a Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU) which aims to help all new students at DBS transition</p>	2

	successfully to Higher Education. Starting in the first year of college is a transition in everyone's life. SESU is there to help students make this transition, so if students are having difficulty in settling into college or simply making a start in their programme, SESE is there to help There are two members of staff on this team that work with programmes across the college.	
Student Experience team and Careers Officers	<p>The DBS award winning Student Experience Team's main objective is to ensure that DBS students have the best possible college-life experience and to promote a DBS community and culture that is focused on student wellbeing and success.</p> <p>The Student Experience Department encompasses Careers, Student Services, and International Student Services. They work to enhance the experience of students at all stages in their journey through DBS by providing a range of support services in a student-friendly, accessible way. There are 10 people working in this team</p>	10
Disability and Inclusion Officer	The purpose of the Disability and Inclusion Officer therein, is to ensure that programmes and facilities are accessible to students with a disability or a specific learning difficulty. The Disability and Inclusion Officer aims to provide support for students with disabilities and to assist in their achievement of educational goals. There is one person in this post that works with programmes across the college.	1

<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Ratio of learners to teaching staff</b>
Classroom Sessions	1/60
Online Lectures	1/60
Practical Sessions	1/60

**Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:**

The panel commends the well-structured design of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. The programme outline is logically organised, with modules that build progressively, ensuring that learners acquire essential knowledge and skills in health and social care. The inclusion of key topics, such as professional practice, care skills, and health and safety, ensures the programme addresses fundamental aspects of care delivery while providing practical, hands-on learning opportunities. Furthermore, the Learning to Learn module supports learners' readiness for academic study, particularly beneficial for adult learners returning to education.

The teaching team is a significant strength of the programme. The staff are highly qualified, combining academic expertise with relevant industry experience. This blend ensures that students receive both theoretical grounding and practical insights into the field of health and social care. The staff members' ongoing professional development ensures that teaching is informed by the latest practices, guidelines, and regulatory standards in the health and social care sector.

Overall, the panel is confident that the programme outline and staffing arrangements meet the required standards. They contribute to providing a high-quality learning environment that prepares graduates for successful careers in health and social care, where practical experience and knowledge of best practices are essential.

<b>Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)</b>		
<b>Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Last enrolment date</b>
PG24528	Certificate in Social Care Skills	August 2025

## Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

In reviewing the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills programme, the panel identified several noteworthy features that enhance the programmes' overall effectiveness and alignment with learner needs. These features contribute significantly to the overall learner experience and the programme's responsiveness to evolving sectoral needs;

- **Blended Learning Model:** A key feature of this programme is the hyflex delivery model, allowing learners the flexibility to engage with both in-person and online learning environments. This ensures that learners can tailor their educational experience to fit personal and professional schedules while maintaining high engagement levels.
- **Support for Non-Traditional Learners:** The programme has integrated features that support non-traditional learners, such as adult learners and those returning to education. The inclusion of the Learning to Learn module is an example of how the programme supports academic readiness, helping learners to adjust and succeed in a higher education environment.
- **Workplace Learning:** The programme also includes workplace learning opportunities through placement modules. These provide learners with the hands-on experience essential for developing practical skills in a real-world care setting, bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- **Springboard+ Funding:** The programme's availability through Springboard+ funding enhances accessibility for learners, particularly those seeking to reskill or upskill. This funding mechanism supports a diverse group of learners, providing financial accessibility to those who may otherwise be unable to pursue education in this sector.

The panel acknowledges these strengths and their potential to positively impact learner outcomes and employability.

### Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable).

Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

N/A

## Part 2 - Evaluation against the validation criteria

*This includes QQI's 12 validation core criteria. When making a judgement on achievement of a core criterion, the panel should use the sub-criteria as guidance. Non-achievement of relevant and significant sub-criteria will mean non-achievement of the core criterion. The panel will apply its expertise and experience in determining 'relevance' and 'significance' of sub-criteria to a particular programme.*

*The panel should complete this section with commentary against each criterion to support the recommendation given in the 'Satisfactory?' column i.e. Yes, No, or Partially.*

*If 'Yes', there should be a comment citing the evidence for this finding. Likewise, there should be an explanation as to why the panel have concluded that the criterion has either not been met or only partially so.*

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

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills (Level 6, 30 ECTS) against the criteria (a-c), based on the evidence presented in the provider's programme review documentation, supporting materials, and direct engagement with the DBS team during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel confirms that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DBS is an eligible provider to apply for validation of this programme in accordance with QQI's established requirements.</li> <li>• The Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills meets the scope of awards standards and aligns with the intended purpose, level, and credit volume of a Level 6 Special Purpose Award.</li> <li>• The programme has been developed and maintained within a mature, functioning quality assurance system that is demonstrably aligned with QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.</li> </ul> <p>The provider has evidenced an ongoing commitment to quality enhancement and has demonstrated the capacity to manage and review programmes effectively. Based on this, the panel affirms that Criterion 1 has been met.</p>

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

<p>a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.</p> <p>b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.          (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.</p> <p>c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).</p> <p>d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's Policy and Criteria for Making Awards.</p> <p>e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p> <p>f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are          (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.          (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>g) For each programme and embedded programme          (i) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.          (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.</p> <p>h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</p> <p>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</p> <p>j) For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills against this criterion, based on the provider's revised programme documentation, self-evaluation report, and discussions during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The programme aims and objectives are clearly articulated and aligned with the QQI Level 6 Special Purpose Award. The minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) are coherent, measurable, and consistent with national standards. The revised structure and module learning outcomes (MIMLOs) contribute to a well-organised and purposeful programme of learning that supports progression to further study or employment in entry-level care roles.</p> <p>However, the panel finds that <b>Criterion 2 is only partially met</b>, due to concerns relating to the appropriateness and clarity of the programme title and its representation in relation to regulatory expectations. Specifically:</p> <p><b>Condition 1: Programme Title</b>          The panel requires the provider to <b>review and revise the programme title to better reflect its focus on Health Care Assistant roles and related graduate opportunities</b>. The current title may lead to misinterpretation regarding the scope of the programme and the nature of potential employment or educational pathways.</p> <p><b>Condition 2: CORU Requirements</b>          The provider must <b>review all programme documentation and promotional materials to ensure it is made explicitly clear that this programme does not meet the requirements</b></p>

		<p><b>for CORU registration.</b> This clarification is necessary to prevent misleading expectations among prospective learners and stakeholders regarding professional recognition.</p> <p>Once these conditions are addressed, the panel is satisfied that the programme will meet the full requirements of Criterion 2.</p>
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**Criterion 3. The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)**

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

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against this criterion, taking account of stakeholder feedback, programme documentation, external examiner input, and discussion with the provider team. The provider has demonstrated clear evidence of consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including learners, academic staff, graduates, and the Social Sciences Industry Advisory Board, as outlined in the internal review report. These inputs have meaningfully informed the programme's revision.</p> <p>The programme rationale is sound, with a clear emphasis on addressing workforce development needs in the health and social care sector. Learner demand for the programme remains high, and completion rates among engaged learners are encouraging. There is also evidence of graduate progression to employment or further study.</p> <p>However, the panel concludes that <b>Criterion 3 is only partially met</b>, citing issues identified as those under Criterion 2. In particular, under <b>sub-criterion (b)</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The panel finds that the <b>programme title</b>, as currently framed, may not accurately reflect the programme's focused alignment with entry-level care roles and could lead to misinterpretation regarding its professional scope and intended learner outcomes. This is addressed in <b>Condition 1: Review and revise the programme title to better reflect its focus on Health Care Assistant roles and related graduate opportunities.</b></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similarly, the provider must clarify that the programme <b>does not meet the requirements for registration with CORU</b>, the statutory regulator for social care workers in Ireland. This clarification is critical to ensuring accurate interpretation of professional alignment and is captured under <b>Condition 2: Review all programme documentation and promotional materials to ensure it is made explicitly clear that this programme does not meet the requirements for CORU registration.</b></li> </ul> <p>Once these issues are addressed, the panel affirms that the programme will be fully aligned with Criterion 3 and its sub-criteria, including the requirement to meet validation-related expectations attached to the applicable awards standards.</p>
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#### Criterion 4. The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

<p>a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied.</p> <p>b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.</p> <p>c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR<sup>3</sup>) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that <b>target learners</b> are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the <b>recognition of prior learning</b> for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).</li> <li>(ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;</li> <li>(iii) Has long-lasting significance.</li> </ul> <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills against this criterion, drawing on programme documentation, internal review findings, and provider discussions. The programme demonstrates a strong commitment to widening participation and supporting adult learners, including those entering through Recognition of Prior Learning. Entry requirements and learner support structures are clearly articulated and underpinned by DBS's broader access and progression policies.</p> <p>However, the panel finds that <b>Criterion 4 is only partially met</b>, with issues arising under sub-criteria (a) and (b). While progression opportunities are referenced throughout the documentation, the panel found inconsistencies in how these are described across learner-facing materials, particularly regarding clarity on what formal progression pathways exist. Therefore, the provider is required to meet the following condition:</p> <p><b>Condition 3: Progression Arrangements</b> Clarify and ensure consistency in the documentation regarding progression opportunities available to graduates of this programme.</p>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf) (accessed 26/09/2015)

		<p>In support of this condition, the panel also makes the following recommendation:</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Ensure clarity in all marketing materials regarding the delivery mode of the programme so that prospective learners are fully informed about participation requirements and learning formats.</p>
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### Criterion 5. The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

<p>a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.</p> <p>b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme <b>duration</b> (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its <b>fulltime equivalent contact time</b> (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the structure, content, and delivery of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills against this criterion. The programme is well-structured and aligned with its intended learning outcomes. The curriculum is designed to provide a clear pathway for learners, integrating theory with practical application in a logical and coherent sequence. The inclusion of the <i>Learning to Learn</i> module, formalised in the revised programme, supports academic readiness, especially for learners returning to education.</p> <p>The programme allows for some degree of choice for learners, particularly through its practical placements and assessment methods, ensuring that learners can align their educational experience with individual learning needs. The panel commends the programme for balancing flexibility with the core requirement of competency in care skills, which remains central to the award.</p> <p>The content of the modules, as described in the revised curriculum, is appropriately detailed and aimed at achieving the programme's learning outcomes. The objectives of each module and the programme as a whole are clearly articulated and accessible to both learners and teaching staff. The programme duration and contact hours align with expected learning outcomes, ensuring that learners are provided with adequate time to master both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.</p> <p>While the curriculum is comprehensive and systematically documented, the panel recommends that;</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2:</b></p>

		<p>The provider review and update the reading lists to reflect the most current literature.</p> <p>The recommendations will ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and up-to-date in an evolving sector.</p> <p>The panel is confident that the programme, as currently structured, is well-suited to meeting the educational and training needs of its learners and will provide them with the competencies required for entry into the care workforce.</p>
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**Criterion 6. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned**

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners’ achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme’s staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development opportunities.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>		
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the staffing arrangements and qualifications for the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. The provider has outlined a detailed staffing structure, specifying the qualifications, professional licenses (where applicable), and experience required for staff involved in delivering and assessing the programme. These specifications align with the programme's goals and ensure that learners have access to qualified professionals who can support their academic and practical development.</p> <p>The panel notes that the complement of staff currently available to implement the programme is well-qualified and meets the requirements outlined in the programme documentation. Furthermore, the provider has established internal mechanisms to ensure that staff performance is regularly reviewed, with opportunities for professional development and training to maintain the capability to fulfil their roles.</p> <p>However, the panel recommends the following:</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> The provider clearly outline the qualification requirements for staff delivering the Professional Practice module.</p> <p>The above recommendation will clarify the competencies of staff delivering and assessing the practical aspects of the programme, aligning them with the expectations of the module, while providing greater consistency and transparency regarding staff qualifications, particularly in relation to the programme’s practical and experiential learning components.</p>

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

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme’s learning environments including the workplace learning environment)</li> <li>(ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)</li> <li>(iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment</li> <li>(iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable</li> <li>(v) technical support</li> <li>(vi) administrative support</li> <li>(vii) company placements/internships – if applicable</li> </ul> <p>c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Planned intake (first five years) and</li> <li>(ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.</li> </ul> <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the physical resource requirements for the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills and finds that the provider has adequately specified the resources required to implement the programme. The physical resources, including accommodation, equipment, and technology, are aligned with the programme’s purpose and meet the expected resource-to-learner ratio.</p> <p>The provider has identified and outlined the physical resources necessary to deliver the programme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Premises and accommodation:</b> The learning environments are suitable, ensuring the comfort, safety, and wellbeing of learners. The facilities used for practical learning, such as care environments, align with sectoral expectations for experiential learning.</li> <li>• <b>Information technology:</b> DBS has an adequate complement of IT resources, including educational technology and access to a virtual learning environment (VLE), supporting both blended learning and assessment needs.</li> <li>• <b>Printed and electronic materials:</b> The provision of relevant teaching, learning, and assessment materials (including software) supports learner engagement and successful assessment.</li> <li>• <b>Specialist equipment:</b> For practical modules that may require specific equipment (e.g., health care training environments), suitable resources are available.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Technical and administrative support:</b> The programme is well-supported by appropriate technical and administrative teams to assist in the delivery and day-to-day management of the programme.</li></ul> <p>Overall, the panel is satisfied that the physical resources available for the programme are sufficient to support its delivery and the achievement of intended learning outcomes.</p>
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**Criterion 8. The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners**

<p>a) The programme’s physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme’s learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.</p> <p>c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.</p>		
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the learning environment in which the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills is delivered. The programme’s physical, social, cultural, and intellectual environments are aligned with the intended learning outcomes, supporting an inclusive and accessible learning experience for all learners.</p> <p>The provider ensures that the learning environments (both on-campus and workplace) are designed to meet the diverse needs of learners, including those with varying educational backgrounds and learning preferences. The inclusion of both physical resources and virtual environments allows learners to engage with content flexibly while being supported by a range of digital tools and educational technology.</p> <p>The programme fosters collaborative learning, with structured opportunities for learners to interact with their peers, teaching staff, and, where applicable, supervisors and practitioners. This interaction is essential for promoting peer learning, knowledge exchange, and reflective practice.</p> <p>The workplace learning component is well integrated into the programme, with appropriate safeguards to ensure that it meets the same academic rigour as other parts of the programme. These arrangements are essential for ensuring that the programme's workplace-based learning is coherent and aligned with the overall curriculum.</p> <p>The panel is confident that the learning environment for the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills effectively supports learners in achieving the intended programme learning outcomes, while promoting inclusive, interactive, and rigorous educational experiences.</p>

### Criterion 9. There are sound teaching and learning strategies

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the teaching and learning strategies used in the delivery of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills.</p> <p>The programme's teaching strategies are designed to support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, with a strong emphasis on authentic, practical learning experiences. These strategies incorporate a combination of theory-based learning, practical application, and learner engagement to ensure learners gain both the knowledge and skills required for professional practice in the health and social care field. This ensures that learners are able to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, which is vital for achieving the programme's outcomes.</p> <p>The panel appreciates that learning progress is consistently monitored and supervised, with mechanisms in place to ensure that learners are supported throughout their educational journey. This includes both formal assessment and informal checkpoints to gauge learner understanding and provide feedback.</p> <p>Individualised guidance and formative feedback are regularly provided to learners to help them progress effectively within the programme. This ensures that learners receive the necessary support to address any challenges they encounter, while also fostering their autonomy and self-regulated learning.</p> <p>Overall, the panel is confident that the teaching and learning strategies used in the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills are robust, learner-centred, and well-aligned with the programme's intended outcomes.</p>

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

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently</p> <p>b) The programme’s assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written <b>programme assessment strategy</b> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.</p> <p>f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.</p>		
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the assessment strategies employed in the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills.</p> <p>The programme adheres to established best practices for assessment, ensuring consistency and fairness in evaluating learners’ achievement of the intended programme and module learning outcomes. The assessment procedures are well-aligned with QQI’s approved quality assurance standards, ensuring that all assessments are conducted according to clear, transparent processes.</p> <p>The programme includes a range of formative assessments designed to support learning, providing learners with timely feedback that enhances their ability to meet the programme’s outcomes. Summative assessments are clearly structured, with sample assessment instruments, marking schemes, and related evidence provided for each award-stage assessment. These elements confirm that the assessments are both valid and reliable, supporting the credibility of the programme’s qualification.</p> <p>The assessment strategy is fully documented, with module-level assessment strategies ensuring coherence and alignment across all stages of the programme. The provider has clearly articulated the mechanisms for moderation of summative assessment results, ensuring consistency and fairness in final evaluations.</p> <p>The panel notes that the programme only puts forward enrolled learners for certification once they have been assessed against the standards for the specific QQI award. This ensures that all learners who complete the programme successfully meet the necessary qualifications and requirements.</p> <p>The panel is confident that the assessment strategies used in the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills are robust,</p>

		comprehensive, and fully aligned with both programme outcomes and national standards.
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**Criterion 11. Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for**

<p>a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.</p> <p>e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.</p> <p>f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i> and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.</p> <p>j) The programme’s learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider’s premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme’s locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).</p>		
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the arrangements for informing, guiding, and supporting learners enrolled in the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. The provider has established robust systems to ensure that learners are well informed about the programme, including clear communication of the schedule of activities and assessment timelines. This allows learners to engage effectively with the programme and plan their academic workload accordingly.</p> <p>Learner supports are clearly outlined, with information on available resources shared with students early in the programme. This includes guidance on both academic and personal support services, ensuring that learners have access to the necessary resources to succeed. Furthermore, programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures are communicated transparently to learners, fostering a sense of fairness and security.</p> <p>The programme is also sensitive to the individual needs of its learners. This includes providing tailored support for students based on prior learning, maturity, and capabilities, ensuring that the programme is accessible to a diverse learner population. In particular, the programme offers special education and training supports for learners with disabilities or special needs, making reasonable accommodations to facilitate participation.</p> <p>Supervision and individualised support are available to learners throughout the programme, and extra care is provided to learners identified as needing additional assistance. This</p>

	<p>approach is integral to ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to achieve the programme's learning outcomes.</p> <p>The panel has reviewed the current arrangements for attendance management within the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills programme. While learners are well supported through various guidance and monitoring mechanisms, the panel has noted that the attendance policy, if any, could be made more explicit. Clear and consistent guidelines on attendance will help ensure that learners are fully aware of programme expectations and the consequences of non-compliance, thus fostering transparency and fairness in the learning environment;</p> <p><b>Condition 4: Attendance Policy</b>  The provider is required to clearly articulate and communicate the attendance policy (if any), including any minimum attendance thresholds and the actions to be taken if these thresholds are not met.</p> <p>This is essential to ensure transparency and consistency for learners regarding programme expectations.</p> <p>The panel has carefully considered the provider's current "fit to sit" policy and the "learner of concern" procedures. While these procedures aim to support learners in managing their academic and personal challenges, the panel has noted that there is a need for greater clarity and consistency in how they are implemented.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b>  The panel recommends that the provider re-examine the implementation of the "fit to sit" policy and the "learner of concern" procedures to ensure clarity and consistency.</p> <p>Clear guidelines will help ensure that learners fully understand the processes and expectations around these policies, ultimately fostering a fairer and more supportive learning environment.</p>
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**Criterion 12. The programme is well managed**

<p>a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider’s general or institutional procedures.</p> <p>b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider’s QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI’s statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.</p> <p>c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme’s staffing requirements and can be added to the programme’s complement of staff.</p> <p>d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme’s complement of supported physical resources.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance is intrinsic to the programme’s maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI’s statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>		
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills	Yes	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the management and governance structures of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. The programme demonstrates clear governance procedures, ensuring that quality assurance (QA), learner assessment, and access, transfer, and progression arrangements align effectively with the provider’s broader institutional procedures.</p> <p>The programme's governance structure includes clearly defined processes for managing staffing, resources, and quality assurance, all of which functionally interface with the provider's established QA procedures. The panel is satisfied that programme-specific criteria for staff selection and physical resources are well articulated and consistent with the needs of the programme, ensuring that both staffing and resource requirements are appropriately met.</p> <p>The panel notes that the programme's quality assurance processes are well integrated into the provider's overall QA framework. These processes are aligned with QQI’s statutory QA guidelines, ensuring the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programme delivery and outcomes. The programme's operational management and documentation are clear, comprehensive, and fit for purpose, providing transparency in how the programme is run and evaluated.</p> <p>The panel is confident that the programme management system ensures continuous reflection and adaptation, addressing all aspects highlighted in the validation criteria and maintaining a high standard of educational delivery.</p>

## Part 2. Overall recommendation to QQI

### 2.1 Principal programme:

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

#### Reasons for the overall recommendation

Following a thorough evaluation of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills, the panel finds that the programme generally meets the criteria for QQI validation. The programme demonstrates strong alignment with the intended learning outcomes, industry expectations, and learner needs, with a clear focus on providing learners with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for the field of health and social care.

However, the panel has identified four key conditions that must be addressed before final validation can be granted. These are outlined in the ‘Special Conditions of Validation’ section below.

#### Commendations

The panel commends the programme team on a robust and professional defence of the Certificate in Health and Social Care Skills. We acknowledge the substantial work undertaken in the development of this programme and wish to commend the team for their evident knowledge, skills, and competence in compiling a comprehensive and coherent suite of documentation.

In particular, the panel commends the academic team for:

1. Designing a programme that effectively addresses industry needs, particularly in relation to the Health Care Assistant role.
2. Developing authentic assessments that are relevant and applicable to real-world practice.
3. Broadening access and promoting inclusivity for students returning to education.
4. Incorporating additional academic supports through the ‘Learning to Learn’ module.

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

The panel stipulates the following four conditions to be addressed prior to programme validation:

##### Condition 1: Programme Title

The panel requires the provider to review and revise the programme title to better reflect its focus on Health Care Assistant roles and related graduate opportunities.

### Condition 2: CORU Requirements

The provider must review all programme documentation and promotional materials to ensure it is made explicitly clear that this programme does not meet the requirements for CORU registration.

### Condition 3: Progression Arrangements

Clarify and ensure consistency in the documentation regarding progression opportunities available to graduates of this programme.

### Condition 4: Attendance Policy

The provider is required to clearly articulate and communicate the attendance policy (if any), including any minimum attendance thresholds and the actions to be taken if these thresholds are not met.

### Embedded programme: N/A

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

### Reasons for the overall recommendation

1.

### Commendations

1.

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

1.

## Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

### **Condition 1: Programme Title**

The panel requires the provider to review and revise the programme title to better reflect its focus on Health Care Assistant roles and related graduate opportunities.

### **Condition 2: CORU Requirements**

The provider must review all programme documentation and promotional materials to ensure it is made explicitly clear that this programme does not meet the requirements for CORU registration.

### **Condition 3: Progression Arrangements**

Clarify and ensure consistency in the documentation regarding progression opportunities available to graduates of this programme.

### **Condition 4: Attendance Policy**

The provider is required to clearly articulate and communicate the attendance policy (if any), including any minimum attendance thresholds and the actions to be taken if these thresholds are not met.

## Summary of recommendations to the provider

### **Recommendation 1:**

Ensure clarity in all marketing materials regarding the delivery mode of the programme so that prospective learners are fully informed about participation requirements and learning formats.

### **Recommendation 2:**

The provider review and update the reading lists to reflect the most current literature.

### **Recommendation 3:**

The provider clearly outlines the qualification requirements for staff delivering the Professional Practice module.

### **Recommendation 4:**

The panel recommends that the provider re-examine the implementation of the "fit to sit" policy and the "learner of concern" procedures to ensure clarity and consistency.

## Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Prof. Paul Stynes

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

### 2.2 Disclaimer

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

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

### Part 3. Proposed programme schedules *(post panel feedback and consequent amendments, if any)*

1B.3a Proposed Programme Schedule(s) PART TIME														
Name of Provider:		Dublin Business School												
Programme Title (Principal)		Certificate in Applied Care Skills			QQI Award Title			Certificate in Applied Care Skills			ECTS		30	
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)		Award	Exit Award Title (if relevant)			N/A			Stage ECTS		30			
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓one as appropriate.		Face to Face			Blended			Online			Workplace Learning			
Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓one or more as appropriate.		In-person face-to-face			Synchronous Hybrid			Synchronous Online			Asynchronous		Work Based	
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓one or more as appropriate.		Continuous Assessment		Proctored Exam – in person			Proctored Exam – online		Project	Practical Skills Demonstration			Work based	
Modules in this stage (add rows as required)														
Total Student Effort Module (hours)									Assessment – Allocation of Marks <i>(from the module assessment strategy)</i>					
Module Title	Semester	Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)	Credits (ECTS)	Total Hours	In person *	Hybrid	Independent Learning (Asynchronous, Directed-Learning, etc)	Work Based	Continuous Assessment %	Proctored Exam – in person %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project %	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %
<i>Learning to Learn</i>	1	M	5	125	1.5	16.5	107		100					
<i>Social Care in Practice</i>	2	M	5	125		18	107		100					
<i>Professional Practice: Introduction to Care Skills and Support</i>	1 and 2	M	10	250	36		214		40				60	
<i>Social Policy and Law</i>	1 and 2	M	10	250		36	214		100					

\*Learners will attend Professional Practice: Introduction to Care Skills and Support fully on campus. Those learners timetabled for this module on a specific evening will also attend the other complimentary module timetabled on the same evening, in person.