



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

Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

Provider	Dublin Business School
Programme(s) Reviewed	Higher Diploma in Science in Computing: NFQ Level 8, 60 ECTS Certificate in Information Technology: NFQ Level 8, 15 ECTS

Independent Panel Members

Name	Role on Panel	Affiliation
Dr Josephine Browne	Chair	Former Head of Faculty of Enterprise and Humanities, IADT
Dr Michael Gleeson	Academic Representative	Faculty of Science and Computing, South East Technological University
Dr Natalie Culligan	Academic Representative	Faculty of Science and Engineering, Maynooth University
Dr Merim Dzaferagic	Academic Representative	School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin
Seamus Minogue	Industry Representative	Head of Information Technology, Enterprise Ireland
Nagasai Chintalapati	Student Representative	TUS Athlone
Trudi Barnett	Report Writer	Independent Consultant

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 institutions. With a diverse student population of over 9,000 learners from more than 80 countries, DBS offers a broad portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across business, law, psychology, arts, media, and computing. The institution has a strong reputation for delivering accessible, learner-centred, and industry-informed education. Its multi-site city centre campus in Dublin includes modern teaching facilities, specialist IT labs, flexible learning spaces, comprehensive library services, and digital infrastructure to support both on-campus and blended learning environments.

The School of Computing at DBS plays a key role in responding to Ireland's growing demand for digital skills. Through targeted programmes, it supports national priorities in reskilling, upskilling, and lifelong learning, with a focus on developing practical competencies aligned with industry needs.

The Higher Diploma in Science in Computing is a 60 ECTS, Level 8 programme designed to support graduates from non-technical disciplines in reskilling or transitioning into the ICT sector. It is delivered on both a one-year full-time and two-year part-time basis and includes an embedded minor award, the Certificate in Fundamentals of Computing, for learners who exit after Stage 1. The programme combines foundational computing knowledge with practical modules in areas such as programming, systems analysis, databases, networking, and web technologies.

Originally validated in 2016 and most recently revalidated in 2019, the programme has proven successful in attracting learners seeking career change or progression into technology roles. It has consistently aligned with both learner expectations and industry demand for adaptable, work-ready computing professionals.

This revalidation follows an in-depth review of programme content, delivery, and outcomes. Key updates include the rationalisation of module content, improved sequencing to support learner progression, and revised learning outcomes to enhance clarity and alignment with Level 8 standards. A stronger focus on applied learning has been embedded through increased use of continuous assessment and practical project work.

The review process has been shaped by engagement with learners, graduates, academic staff, and industry stakeholders. The revised programme reflects DBS's commitment to quality, relevance, and innovation, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the core computing competencies required to meet current and emerging workforce needs.

Part 2. Evaluation Process

2.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

	Document Type	Document Name
1.	Agenda (Panel)	Programme Review HDip Computing HDip Data Analytics
2.	Terms of Reference	2025 HDip Computing HDip Data Analytics & associated Exit awards v2 QQL.docx.pdf
3.	Core Documents	1. Programme Review Report Higher Diploma in Science in Computing.docx.pdf

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Programme Document Higher Diploma in Science in Computing.docx.pdf 3. Module and Assessment Document Higher Diploma in Science in Computing.docx.pdf 4. DBS Programme Handbook Higher Diploma in Science in Computing 5. Programme Team CVs HDip in Science in Computing.pdf
4.	Regulatory Required Documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DBS Cover Letter Declaration HDip in Science in Data Analytics Computing 2025 2. DBS Deed of Guarantee (1) (2) 3. Fee Cover Note HDip Data Analytics Computing 2025 4. PEL Refund Arrangements HDip Data Analytics Computing 2025
5.	Supporting Documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. QQI Criteria and Handbook 2. Programme Team Meetings 3. Learner and Industry Feedback 4. Industry Consultation – Industry Advisory Board 5. Independent Evaluation Report 6. External Examiner Reports 7. Exam Paper 2020-21, 2024-25 8. Progression, Results and Demographics Data 9. Certificate of Validation 10. Board of Studies 11. Attendance Data 12. Annual Programme Reports 13. 2019 Documents 14. SLATE2.pdf 15. RIPE23 – Research, Innovation, Practice, Enterprise Strategy.pdf

2.2 Provider's Representatives Met

	Person	Role / Job Title
1.	Darragh Breathnach	Chief Operating Officer & Registrar
2.	Dr. Lori Johnston	Academic Dean
3.	Assistant Registrar	Anita Dwyer
4.	Academic Programmes Manager	Amy Hayes
5.	Dr David Williams	Academic Director
6.	Dr. Paul McEvoy	Assistant Academic Director
7.	Dr. Shazia Afzal	Programme Level Manager
8.	Francisca Knight	Head of Academic Operations
9.	Sarah Sharkey	Student Engagement and Retention Officer
10	Shane Mooney	Head of Student Experience
11	Tanya Balfe	Admissions Manager

12	Trevor Haugh	Head of Academic Information and Resource Hub
13	Niamh Ni Chadhla	Faculty Manager
14	Nicholas Kelly	Head of Faculty Management
15	Various Faculty Representatives	
16	Student Representatives Met	

2.3 Description of evaluation process

The panel's evaluation of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and its embedded minor award, the Certificate in Information Technology, was conducted in line with QQI's programme review and revalidation guidelines. The aim of this process was to ensure the continued quality, relevance, and coherence of both awards, with a particular focus on academic standards, alignment with Level 8 of the NFQ, and responsiveness to industry and learner needs.

The panel undertook a comprehensive review of the programme documentation provided by Dublin Business School (DBS), including the programme review report, programme document and the module and assessment specifications. Emphasis was placed on examining the structure and sequencing of the programme, the clarity and consistency of learning outcomes, the appropriateness of assessment methodologies, and the robustness of associated quality assurance arrangements.

Stakeholder consultation was integral to the process. The panel engaged with current learners, alumni, faculty, and members of the academic management team. Current learners provided feedback on the accessibility of the content, teaching and learning supports, assessment clarity, and workload balance. Graduates reflected on how the programme prepared them for further study or employment in the ICT sector, particularly in roles requiring adaptable technical skills. Academic staff and management discussed curriculum development, teaching and assessment strategies, and programme resourcing. Industry representatives contributed insights into the skills landscape and highlighted the relevance of the programme to real-world computing roles.

The panel paid particular attention to areas such as access pathways, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), the currency and future-proofing of module content, and the authenticity and integrity of assessment strategies in the context of digital transformation and increased use of generative AI. The articulation between the embedded and principal awards, and the progression opportunities available to learners, were also examined in detail.

The evaluation included benchmarking against similar national and international computing programmes to validate the programme's relevance, coherence, and competitiveness. The panel acknowledged DBS's intention to streamline the programme while ensuring it remains responsive to current trends in computing education, including web technologies, software development, and systems integration.

The panel concluded that the review process was rigorous, transparent, and inclusive, enabling a robust assessment of the programme's strengths and areas for enhancement. The outcomes of this process support the ongoing development of a high-quality, learner-centred computing programme that reflects both academic standards and labour market demands.

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. The following reflects the panel's commentary and recommendations on the programme review report for the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and Certificate in Information Technology .

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

Commentary:

The panel acknowledges that Dublin Business School (DBS) adopted a robust, structured, and evidence-informed review process as outlined in the provider's Programme Review Report. The review encompassed both the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (PG24224) and its embedded programme, the Certificate in Information Technology (PG24230). The terms of reference for this review were comprehensive and aligned with the expectations set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

The provider engaged in a systematic consultation process, which included:

- A detailed gap analysis to benchmark programme content against industry requirements.
- Focus groups and interviews with lecturers and module leaders to evaluate the programme's academic robustness and contemporary relevance.
- Stakeholder feedback from current learners, graduates, industry representatives, and academic staff to assess curriculum relevance, delivery effectiveness, and the learner experience.
- A review of national and international comparator programmes, reinforcing DBS' intent to maintain a competitive and sector-relevant academic offering.

The panel also notes DBS' explicit commitment to enhancing accessibility and flexibility through multimodal learning strategies and its adherence to the QQI Code of Practice for International Learners. These elements of the Terms of Reference demonstrate DBS' strategic intent to align the programme with emerging educational practices, digital transformation, and inclusive learning environments.

Recommendations: N/A

Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

Commentary:

Dublin Business School (DBS) is a private higher education institution operating within a clearly defined academic and governance framework that aligns with QQI statutory requirements. The School has a well-established Academic Board that oversees academic governance, supported by a range of committees and programme boards. These structures are critical to maintaining academic standards and ensuring that programmes such as the Higher Diploma in Science Computing and the Certificate in Information Technology remain responsive to learner needs, labour market trends, and emerging educational standards.

DBS articulates its strategic mission as preparing learners for employment through quality-assured, skills-focused, and flexible programmes. Its commitment to learner success is supported by a strong academic infrastructure, including a team of Programme-Level Managers (PLMs), Assistant Academic Directors, and faculty-based support services that feed into institutional QA systems. The College's academic governance includes mechanisms for ongoing curriculum review, academic policy development, and stakeholder engagement, all of which were clearly evidenced during this programme review process.

The delivery of the programmes in question is situated within the Computing Discipline in DBS, one of six disciplines currently overseen by an Academic Director. The programmes are offered in both full-time and part-time modes at DBS's Aungier Street campus and through online/hybrid delivery. Programme delivery is further supported by physical and digital infrastructure such as lab-based teaching environments, remote access to computing resources and extensive student support structures.

Recommendations: N/A

Description of evaluation process

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:

This section summarises the panel's observations based on the provider's review report (Section 3.1) regarding enrolments, progression, awards, and graduate outcomes for the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and its embedded exit award, the Certificate in Information Technology.

- **Applications and Enrolments:**

Applications to the programme have declined from 578 in 2020/21 to 280 in 2023/24, although conversion rates have fluctuated, peaking at 44% in 2021/22 and settling at 41% in 2023/24. Part-time enrolments also declined from 165 in 2020/21 to 93 in 2022/23 before increasing again to 114 in 2023/24. This pattern reflects post-pandemic recovery and potential shifts in learner interest or industry demand.

- **Learner Profile:**

The learner cohort is mature and professionally motivated, with a significant proportion aged between 31 to 40 years, which has remained steady at approximately 40% since 2016/17. There is a noted gender imbalance, with ongoing efforts to address underrepresentation of women through targeted outreach, female guest speakers, and inclusive marketing practices. The programme remains attractive to both domestic and international learners, and DBS emphasises inclusivity and equal access to education. (section 3.1.2.2).

- **Progression and Completion:**

The average pass rate during the current review cycle is 70.35%, slightly above the 67.35% reported in the 2015–2018 cycle. The Exit Award rate has increased to 10.75%, up from 5.66%, while 9.32% of learners failed the programme—an increase from 7.71% in the previous cycle. These figures reflect consistent outcomes and suggest the programme is broadly achieving its objectives. No clear trends by year were identified (section 3.1.3.2).

- **Graduate Destinations:**

Two years of data from the HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey were available:

- 2021 Graduates (Survey 2022):
 - 100% of 14 respondents were in employment or further education.
 - 100% were in full-time employment, outperforming the DBS Level 8 average.
- 2022 Graduates (Survey 2023):
 - 70% of 11 respondents were in full-time employment.

- 30% were unemployed, slightly below DBS averages for that year.

Graduates have progressed to roles such as Software Developer, Data Centre Operations Engineer, Campaign Analyst, and Software Support Engineer, with employers including Amazon, TikTok, Accenture, Qualtrics LLC, and Dublin Airport (section 3.1.5).

Overall, the panel found the data to be detailed, transparent, and reflective of the programme's effectiveness. While some fluctuations in enrolments and graduate employment were noted, the high academic achievement, consistent award classifications, and positive graduate destinations support the conclusion that the programme is fulfilling its objectives and maintaining its quality.

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 panel reviewed documentation and data presented in Section 3.2 of the provider's review report, which comprehensively outlines the infrastructure, staffing, delivery modes, and educational strategies underpinning the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing.

- **Facilities and Resources:** DBS continues to deliver the programme from its city-centre campus with strong physical and digital infrastructure. The programme benefits from access to dedicated computing labs, virtualised environments (via Citrix), and 24/7 cloud-based software access to support both on-campus and remote learners (Section 3.2.1). The consistency and accessibility of IT resources are viewed as a strength of delivery.
- **Timetabling and Workload:** The programme is structured to support both full-time and part-time learners. Timetabling is responsive to learner needs, and workload is appropriately mapped against credit values at both programme and module levels. The panel acknowledges the provider's clear articulation of workload expectations across learning modes (Sections 3.2.2–3.2.3).
- **Teacher-Learner Ratios and Staffing:** While teaching staff are qualified and experienced, the report notes ongoing variability in teaching allocation. The panel echoes concerns raised in Section 3.2.5 around consistency of staffing and encourages continued transparent communication with learners regarding staff changes and module delivery.
- **Teaching and Learning Strategies:** The programme adopts a blended, learner-centred approach that reflects current pedagogical best practice in computing

education. Delivery incorporates multimodal strategies including lectures, project-based work, synchronous and asynchronous engagement, and practical lab sessions (Sections 3.2.5–3.2.6). The use of real-world scenarios and applied computing tasks is a consistent feature across modules, supporting the acquisition of both theoretical and practical competencies.

- **Assessment Strategies:** DBS has implemented a robust and evolving approach to assessment, moving increasingly toward authentic and applied methods. While traditional exams remain part of the mix, there is a clear shift toward project work, continuous assessment, and scenario-based tasks. Notably, the Mercer Metti platform has been integrated to facilitate secure online assessments with live webcam monitoring, which supports remote proctoring while maintaining academic integrity (Section 3.2.7). This platform also enables a broader move toward flexible, accessible, and technology-enhanced assessments.
- **Learning Community and Collaboration:** The panel noted evidence of strong peer and staff collaboration within the programme. Group projects, collaborative learning tasks, and opportunities for workplace-facing projects are embedded within the programme and support the development of both technical and transferable skills (Section 3.2.8).

Overall, the panel is satisfied that the teaching and learning strategies adopted by DBS are coherent, learner-centred, and aligned with the programme’s intended learning outcomes. The use of multimodal delivery, authentic assessment, and industry partnerships, such as the integration of the Mercer Metti platform to demonstrate a commitment to innovation, flexibility, and academic integrity.

However, the panel is detailing **as a condition** that an in-person supervised assessment must be included in each programme, with a minimum weighting of 20%. The Programme Teams should determine which modules are best suited to this methodology to ensure assessment rigour and uphold integrity in line with contemporary standards for computing and data analytics education. This measure will balance flexibility with essential quality benchmarks for summative assessment. A number of recommendations are also being proposed;

Recommendations:

1. Student Onboarding to Digital Platforms:

Lecturers should ensure all students are properly onboarded with access to required software, platforms, and systems at the outset of each module to enable full engagement and equity of access.

2. Hardware and Software Requirements:

Each programme should provide students with a clearly documented list of required hardware and software, ideally shared upon registration or prior to module commencement.

3. Verbal Defence as Assessment Validation:

DBS is encouraged to adopt a consistent, streamlined practice across both programmes to include an informal verbal defence (Q&A) element in assessments. This fosters authentic assessment, reinforces academic integrity, and enhances student

engagement. This measure addresses the growing concern that traditional homework and online assessments have become increasingly unreliable due to the capabilities of AI and LLMs. Learners should be informed of this component in advance.

Section D. Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

Commentary:

Feedback from current learners and graduates of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing reflects strong satisfaction with the programme's applied focus and clear industry relevance. Learners particularly valued the practical components, including the capstone project and group-based assessments, which they felt developed transferable and employment-ready skills. The flexibility of assessment formats was highlighted as a strength.

However, some learners noted inconsistency in communication regarding assessment timelines and module expectations, particularly in part-time delivery. There were also comments suggesting the need for more structured support during asynchronous learning components and more clarity on software requirements early in the semester (Section 4.1).

Some learners expressed a desire for greater clarity and institutional support around securing optional work placements. While the opportunity to undertake a practical industry-aligned capstone project or placement was welcomed, learners noted that navigating the placement process independently could be challenging, particularly for international students or those with limited industry networks.

Graduates shared positive reflections on the transition from the programme into industry, citing strong preparation in core computing skills and relevant tools.

Recommendations:

1. **Alumni Mentorship and Networking:**

DBS is encouraged to formalise opportunities for alumni to mentor current students, building on the already positive relationships observed and enabling expanded peer-industry networking and guidance.

2. **Placement Oversight:**

While acknowledging that not all students may avail of placement, greater strategic oversight and support should be provided via the Careers Hub to enhance access to industry placements, reflective of the 'industry-ready' ethos embedded within both programme designs.

Evaluation of the programme by Staff

Commentary:

Faculty members expressed broad support for the proposed revisions to the programme. The consolidation/reordering of modules were welcomed as positive steps toward creating a more streamlined, coherent programme structure. Staff specifically noted that the replacement of legacy modules with more foundational, logically sequenced content, such as the introduction of a 10 ECTS "Introduction to Programming" module, would strengthen learner progression and provide a clearer pathway through the programme.

Staff highlighted the value of aligning module learning outcomes more tightly with industry-relevant skills and agreed that the redrafting of these outcomes helped improve clarity, measurability, and appropriateness to Level 8 standards. They also acknowledged the removal of certain advanced or overly specialised modules as a necessary adjustment to ensure a core, foundational computing focus was maintained.

While the academic team recognised the curriculum revisions as a necessary and beneficial development, they also noted that successful implementation would require consistency in teaching assignments and ongoing communication among module leads to ensure the updated content is delivered cohesively.

There was general agreement that continued support for academic staff, particularly through clear briefing sessions, shared resources, and workload planning, would be important to sustaining quality during the implementation of the revised curriculum.

Recommendations: N/A

External Examiner Feedback

Commentary:

Over the past three academic years, External Examiners have consistently affirmed the programme's strong structure, high-quality teaching, and fair assessment practices. Earlier feedback (2021/22–2022/23) encouraged the integration of recorded lectures and video submissions to support diverse learning and assessment approaches.

In 2023/24, a new External Examiner shifted focus, recommending a move away from multiple-choice assessments in programming modules. Instead, they suggested incorporating more practical, hands-on assessments such as lab exams and project-based tasks. This feedback reflects a broader emphasis on assessing applied skills and ensuring learners are prepared for real-world computing challenges.

Overall, the External Examiner feedback has been constructive, affirming existing strengths while encouraging a pedagogical shift towards more practical, skills-based learning.

Recommendations: N/A

Section E. Programme Quality Assurance

Complaints, appeals and commendations

Commentary:

The panel reviewed learner feedback and institutional records as outlined in Section 5.1.1 of the provider's review report. Between 2019/20 and 2023/24, two formal complaints were lodged and four formal appeals were submitted. While the volume remains low, it suggests either that learner concerns are addressed effectively through informal mechanisms or that formal procedures may be underutilised.

Feedback is captured through a variety of structured mechanisms, including Class Representative meetings, Moodle module surveys, Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys, focus groups, and StudentSurvey.ie. Informal feedback through direct staff engagement is also commonplace but is not consistently recorded unless escalated through formal channels. DBS has acknowledged this gap and is working to improve the transparency and coherence between informal and formal feedback routes.

The panel recognises that the programme operates within a robust and transparent quality assurance framework, and notes a positive learner culture in which concerns are addressed in a timely and constructive manner. Learners on the Computing programme described staff as responsive and supportive, which contributes to a respectful and solution-focused learning environment.

Recommendations: N/A

Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

Commentary:

The programme operates in line with the DBS Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH), reflecting QQI's statutory QA guidelines. The panel noted that ownership of QA systems is embedded within the work of the Programme Team, and staff are actively engaged in quality-related development initiatives, including contributions to the QAH review and QQI policy consultations (Section 5.2.2). Regular team meetings and integrated systems (including NEP supports, exam logistics, and recognition of prior learning) are structured and documented. Issues around continuity of staffing were noted, with recognition that high turnover can impact QA consistency. DBS has initiated staff mentoring structures, including peer observation and a new departmental teacher's manual, to support quality enhancement.

Recommendations: N/A

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

Commentary:

The programme is underpinned by the institutional Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH), which aligns with QQI's statutory QA guidelines. As noted in Section 5.2.2,

QA ownership is embedded across the Programme Team, and staff are actively engaged in quality enhancement activities, such as reviewing module documentation, updating the learner handbook, and contributing to national policy consultations.

Operational QA processes include structured Programme Board meetings, documented exam logistics, supports for recognition of prior learning (RPL), and peer review mechanisms. While staff turnover has presented some continuity challenges, DBS has introduced a departmental teaching and learning strategy, a new teacher's manual, and peer observation practices to mitigate risks and ensure consistency in programme delivery and learner experience.

Recommendations: N/A

Section F. Summary Analysis of the programme

Commentary:

The Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and its embedded Certificate in Information Technology offer a well-structured programme designed to support learners in acquiring the technical skills necessary for success in the rapidly evolving computing sector. The programme equips learners with the knowledge and competencies required to meet the growing demand for computing professionals both nationally and internationally.

The programme demonstrates strong integration of a diverse range of assessment methods, which effectively evaluate theoretical understanding as well as practical skill application. The flexible modes of delivery, including full-time and part-time options, cater to a wide variety of learners, enhancing accessibility. In addition, robust learner support systems are in place to help learners succeed throughout their studies, providing both academic and personal development guidance.

Stakeholder engagement, particularly with current learners and graduates, has been a key strength of the programme's review process. Feedback from these groups has been thoughtfully incorporated into the curriculum, ensuring that the programme remains relevant to industry needs. Furthermore, the Programme Level Manager and established governance structures provide strong oversight, ensuring that quality assurance (QA) processes are consistently maintained, and programme enhancements are effectively implemented.

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 Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and its embedded Certificate in Information Technology and acknowledges that the direction of change is appropriate, aligned with industry expectations, and learner-focused. The updates demonstrate DBS's commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the evolving needs of both learners and employers.

However, the panel has identified several key areas where further work is required to ensure the revised programme meets professional and regulatory expectations. A condition is set requiring an adjustment to the programme title as the current title *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing*, implies a broad scope, whereas the content is explicitly focused on web and cloud technologies. Furthermore, a comprehensive review and finalisation of the programme documentation to meet standards of coherence, internal consistency, and version control.

Despite this, the panel affirms the underlying structure and academic rationale of the revised programme as sound, and it is confident that, once addressed, the programme will be well-positioned for revalidation.

Conditions:

1. The programme documentation must be reviewed and finalised to meet professional standards of version control and coherence:
 - All documents must include version dates, revision history, and pagination.
 - Outdated or legacy content must be removed or updated.
 - Consistency must be ensured across all materials (Programme Review Report, Programme Document, and Module & Assessment Specifications).
2. The programme title should be revised to more accurately reflect the specificity of the curriculum. The current title, *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing*, implies a broad scope, whereas the content is explicitly focused on web and cloud technologies. Revised title proposal: *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Web and Cloud)*.

Recommendations Overview:

A range of recommendations have been made regarding the programme's modules, assessment strategies, and delivery methods. These recommendations aim to enhance the coherence, rigor, and relevance of the curriculum while aligning more closely with industry needs and current educational trends. Specific suggestions include refining

module learning outcomes, introducing more practical assessments, improving clarity around module expectations, and enhancing support systems for learners.

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 positively the structured and reflective nature of the review process undertaken by DBS. The provider demonstrated clear engagement with QQI's revalidation requirements and aligned the process closely with the QQI Programme Review Manual (HET, 2022). The review was supported by thorough internal evaluations, active stakeholder engagement (learners, staff, graduates, and employers), and the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Documentation was, for the most part, detailed and evidenced a genuine intent to enhance programme quality. The presence of a Programme Level Manager (PLM) contributed to consistency, academic oversight, and responsiveness. The panel also recognises the provider's alignment with national policy priorities, including commitments to digital learning, UDL, and graduate outcomes tracking.

Nonetheless, the panel noted inconsistencies in documentation formatting, version control, and cross-document alignment, which have been addressed through a revalidation condition.

Section B. Recommendations on review process:

The panel recognises the thoughtful and structured approach taken by DBS throughout the review process. Stakeholder engagement was meaningful, documentation was largely comprehensive, and the review was conducted in a spirit of openness and reflection. To further enhance future reviews:

- Continue to build on the strong foundations of stakeholder engagement and internal collaboration.
- Consider streamlining and standardising documentation presentation to support clarity and efficiency.
- Maintain reflective practice as a core feature of programme review, ensuring continued alignment with evolving quality and policy expectations.

Section C. Commentary on programme revisions:

The panel recognises the appropriateness and responsiveness of the proposed revisions to the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and its embedded Certificate. The changes reflect careful consideration of learner needs, staff input, and industry expectations. The updated programme retains its strong applied focus, introduces digital integrity safeguards, and refines module outcomes to enhance clarity and relevance.

The revisions clearly demonstrate DBS's commitment to programme enhancement, and the panel is satisfied that, subject to the implementation of required documentation improvements

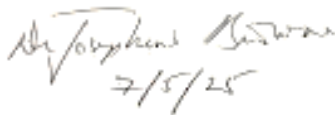
through conditions and recommendations, the programme is ready for revalidation and continued delivery.

Section D. Recommendations on programme revisions:

DBS's programme review process for the Higher Diploma in Computing in Science and the embedded Certificate in Information Technology was structured, consultative, and responsive. The proposed revisions to the programme reflect a considered response to stakeholder feedback, institutional reflection, and external benchmarks. The changes are forward-looking, learner-centred, and aligned with national skills needs.

The panel recommends that the revised programme be revalidated, subject to the implementation of three conditions and with consideration given to eight additional recommendations. These focus on strengthening programme documentation, enhancing assessment integrity, refining learning outcomes, and supporting learners from diverse backgrounds.

All conditions and recommendations have been fully outlined and referenced against the relevant QQI validation criteria in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.



Signed:

Panel Chairperson:

Date: 7th May 2025



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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Dublin Business School
Date of site visit	24 th March 2025
Date of report	10 th April 2025

Section E. Overall recommendations

Principal programme¹	Title	Higher Diploma in Science in Computing
	Award	Level 8
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Embedded programme 1²	Title	Certificate in Information Technology
	Award	Level 8
	Credit	15 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

¹ Replace throughout with actual programme title.

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

Section F. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Josephine Browne	Chair	Former Head of Faculty of Enterprise and Humanities, IADT
Dr Michael Gleeson	Academic Representative	Faculty of Science and Computing, South East Technological University
Dr Natalie Culligan	Academic Representative	Faculty of Science and Engineering, Maynooth University
Dr Merim Dzaferagic	Academic Representative	School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin
Seamus Minogue	Industry Representative	Head of Information Technology, Enterprise Ireland
Nagasai Chintalapati	Student Representative	TUS Athlone
Trudi Barnett	Report Writer	Independent Consultant

Section G. 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	120	120

Proposed Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	Duration	Intakes per Annum	Enrolment i.e. learners per Intake	
			Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Full-Time	September 2025	1 calendar year: 12 months	3	10*	120*
Part-Time	September 2025	2 calendar years: 24 months	3	10*	120*
Intake Schedule e.g. January September		September, January, March/April			

*numbers as per principal programme. As this is an embedded exit-only award, learners are not recruited separately from the principal programme

Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

The panel considers the proposed enrolment projections for the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing to be appropriate and well-judged. They reflect a realistic understanding of the programme's delivery capacity and support the maintenance of a high-quality learning environment. The balance between learner numbers, staff availability, and resource infrastructure has been thoughtfully considered and is aligned with the programme's design and strategic intent.

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

The Higher Diploma in Science in Computing provides practical knowledge and skills in computing and data science for learners who wish to upskill or reskill in these areas. The programme is offered on a full-time (one year, two semesters) and part-time (two years, four semesters) basis, and is designed to educate and prepare a diverse group of learners by applying the transferable skills they have gained from their previous degree to computing and ICT skills in their chosen area of specialisation.

The programme aims to develop learners' understanding of the theory and practice of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) necessary for them to secure employment and perform effectively as graduate-level ICT/Data Analytics practitioners in various commercial, industrial, and public sector environments. Given its transversal nature, the skills developed through the programme can be applied across a variety of disciplines, such as in financial services and beyond.

Learners will gain foundational theoretical knowledge essential for applying advanced analytics, including areas such as web technologies, cloud infrastructure, database design, and programming. These skills are critical for generating actionable insights and supporting strategic decision-making within organisations.

The programme also provides learners with opportunities to work on real-world ICT projects through work placements and project work. Upon successful completion, learners will be equipped with the necessary computing skills to interpret and analyse complex data sets using techniques related to data modelling, visualisation, and machine learning - skills that can be applied across various industries and use cases.

The Higher Diploma in Science in Computing aims to foster a critical understanding of core scientific approaches to computation. It integrates both theoretical learning and experiential learning opportunities, allowing learners to develop practical, transversal, and vocational skills that enhance their capabilities and employability in the field.

Target learner groups

The Higher Diploma in Science in Computing is a conversion course for non-computing graduates who wish to acquire core ICT skills and computing expertise which will enable graduates to play an active role in Software Development, Mobile Applications Development, Web and Cloud, IT Infrastructure and Networking or DevOps.

Graduates will, upon completion of this programme, have the skills necessary to carry out industry-level computations and information processing, system and application development, support modern IT infrastructures and participate in ICT projects and pursue a career path in the technology-driven world.

The Higher Diploma in Science in Computing creates graduates capable of dealing with diverse intrinsic and extrinsic technological realities in a creative manner to ensure sustainability and career growth. In this way, this programme is aimed at those who wish to specialise in the field of ICT with a view to entering industry, progressing professionally or to undertake postgraduate studies in a related field.

Approved countries for provision

Ireland

Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time

Full-time/Part-time

The teaching and learning modalities

The programme is delivered in full-time (1 year) and part-time (2 years) modes, and uses blended learning formats that include:

- On-site face-to-face classes
- Synchronous online sessions
- Asynchronous learning
- Independent learning
- Work-based learning (for those opting for placement)

Summary of specifications for teaching staff

Role	Profile	WTE
Lecturer	<p>Lecturing staff will have a minimum of a Masters and/or PhD in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computing science / Computing • Quantitative methods • Analytics • Networking • Information Systems • Computer Technology • Research methods • Mathematics and statistics <p>In modules where industry experience is desirable, those who are exceptionally qualified by virtue of senior significant experience may also be considered.</p>	8
Academic Director	<p>The Academic Director will be responsible for the overall 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 through Assistant Academic Directors and Programme Level Managers. The Academic Director is responsible for the suite of programmes in their discipline area and ensures programme offerings are current, employment-focused and academically robust and coherent in construct. The Academic Director provides academic leadership to Faculty and to Programme Teams in the development and delivery of high-quality, progressive, learner-centred education. The Academic Director role is focused around 3 distinct areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance of discipline area programmes. • Programme development, review, and retention for discipline areas. 	1

	Programme innovation, employer engagement and foster business opportunity in the discipline area.	
Assistant Academic Director	<p>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. The Assistant Academic Director role is focused around 3 distinct areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effective programme management and teaching, learning and assessment initiatives in DBS programmes. ● Implementation of programme development, review, and retention initiatives in the discipline area. <p>Supporting the discipline Academic Director in discipline development, enhancement and innovation including opportunities for business development, employer-facing initiatives and improved graduate outcomes.</p>	1
Programme Level Manager	<p>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. 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 and requests for accommodations from learners.</p>	1
Faculty Managers	<p>The Faculty Managers (FM) are key members of the academic management team in DBS who assist the Head of Teaching Delivery and Content Production in the management of the academic full-time and part-time staff. Each Faculty Manager has direct line-management responsibility for a large number of staff, ensuring that programmes are staffed correctly, staff performance is measured and reviewed, annual budgets are prepared, costs are controlled, and reporting on academic performance to internal governance and quality boards. While FMs have overall responsibility for academic staff management, operational responsibility for academic management and support of students at programme level is the responsibility of Academic Directors.</p>	1
Programme Coordinators	<p>Programme Coordinators provide administrative support to learners and ensure all students are provided with full details of their programme of study. They are the first point of contact for learners on a range of issues such as programme queries, deferrals, personal mitigating circumstances (PMCs) that may</p>	1

	affect their learning. Programme Coordinators are responsible for day-to-day management of student information and data.	
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Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Classroom sessions	1:30
Workshops	1:30
Practical sessions	1:30
Online Class (live)	1:30

Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:

The panel recognises the structured and coherent design of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing. The programme provides a progressive sequence of modules, each tailored to enhance learners' computing and ICT skills. The curriculum is designed to address both the theoretical and applied aspects of computing, with a specific focus on advanced IT skills such as programming, data modelling, web and cloud technologies, and machine learning. These areas are critical to the current demands of the technology sector and are well-aligned with the programme learning outcomes and QQI Level 8 award standards.

The integration of a capstone project/work placement within the programme enhances its practical orientation, providing learners with valuable real-world experience. The dual delivery modes (full-time and part-time) further ensure that the programme is accessible to a wide range of learners, including recent graduates and working professionals looking to reskill or upskill.

The panel commends the teaching team for their academic and professional expertise. Staff bring both academic rigour and industry experience, ensuring that the programme remains relevant to current industry needs and developments. There is a strong culture of collaboration within the teaching team, and the panel notes that staff benefit from ongoing professional development, which is supported by the institution.

Additionally, the panel appreciates the institution's ongoing collaboration with industry through advisory boards and external partnerships, which helps ensure that the curriculum remains aligned with industry standards and employment needs. The panel also acknowledges DBS's efforts to ensure diversity and inclusion both within the academic team and the student body.

Recommendations and conditions arising from the evaluation, including those related to assessment design, clarity of module content, and learner preparedness, are detailed in Part 2 of this report.

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG24424	Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	August 2025

PG24230	Certificate in Information Technology	August 2025
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Section H. Other noteworthy features of the application

The application demonstrates a strong alignment with industry needs, supported by active engagement through the DBS Computing Industry Advisory Board. The capstone options - project or placement - offer applied, real-world learning experiences, enhancing graduate readiness.

Flexible delivery modes (full-time and part-time, with blended learning) promote accessibility for a diverse learner cohort, including those entering via RPL. The programme also reflects a commitment to equity, with attention to diversity across staff and student groups.

The use of secure online assessment tools, alongside the panel's condition for in-person supervised assessment, ensures academic integrity is upheld.

Overall, the application reflects a reflective and responsive approach to programme design, grounded in continuous improvement and stakeholder feedback.

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
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel confirms that DBS is eligible to apply for validation of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (60 ECTS, NFQ Level 8), as well as the embedded Certificate in Information Technology (15 ECTS, NFQ Level 8).</p> <p>The provider has demonstrated ongoing compliance with QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the effective operation of its internal QA system in supporting programme governance and enhancement.</p> <p>Based on this, the panel affirms that Criterion 1 has been met.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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

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

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel confirms that the objectives and outcomes for the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing and its embedded Certificate in Information Technology are clearly articulated, consistent with the QQI award standards at NFQ Level 8, and appropriately aligned with the intended award titles. However, a revision to the programme title to more accurately reflect the focus of the curriculum is required (sub-criterion f). The current title, <i>Higher Diploma in Science in Computing</i>, suggests a broader scope, whereas the content is explicitly focused on web and cloud technologies. Therefore, the panel proposes that the title be revised to <i>Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Web and Cloud)</i>.</p> <p>The revised title proposal reflects the content of the programme more accurately and is aligned with the curriculum, which focuses specifically on web development, cloud technologies, and their applications in the field of computing. The panel also confirms that the programme aims are clearly expressed, and the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPOs) are appropriately stated, aligned with the</p>

		<p>knowledge, skills, and competence expectations for a Level 8 major award in computing.</p> <p>Condition 1: The programme title should be revised to more accurately reflect the specificity of the curriculum. The current title, <i>Higher Diploma in Science in Computing</i>, implies a broad scope, whereas the content is explicitly focused on web and cloud technologies. Revised title proposal: <i>Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Web and Cloud)</i>.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	Yes	The panel are satisfied with the title of the Certificate I Information Technology.

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
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel confirms that the design, structure, and implementation strategy of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing, along with its embedded Certificate in Information Technology, are soundly based, well-informed, and aligned with QQI award standards at NFQ Level 8.</p> <p>The panel is satisfied that the programme’s development/revisions has been informed by meaningful stakeholder engagement. This included contributions from learners, graduates, faculty, and external industry representatives via structured mechanisms such as focus groups and the DBS Computing Industry Advisory Board. There is clear evidence that these contributions influenced curriculum design, the review of learning outcomes, and the refinement of teaching and assessment strategies.</p> <p>The provider has conducted benchmarking against similar programmes at national and international levels, and the rationale for programme provision is clearly</p>

		<p>articulated. The programme responds to identified skills gaps in data analytics, and there is strong evidence of both learner demand and employment opportunities for graduates in the sector.</p> <p>The interpretation of the QQI Science award standards at Level 8 has been well researched, and the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) reflect the expected breadth and depth of knowledge, skill, and competence. The embedded certificate award has also been carefully designed to function as a meaningful, standalone exit pathway.</p> <p>The panel commends the mechanisms in place at DBS to keep the programme updated through ongoing dialogue with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>Programme updates are reviewed regularly by academic staff, informed by employer feedback and developments in the field. These mechanisms help ensure the continued relevance of the programme in a fast-moving discipline.</p> <p>Based on the documentation provided and engagement during the review process, the panel is satisfied that this criterion is met.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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

- a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied.
- b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.
- c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR³) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.
- d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that **target learners** are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).
- e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the **recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.
- f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-
 - (i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes*, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).
 - (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;
 - (iii) Has long-lasting significance.
- g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Science	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The application clearly outlines the knowledge, skill, and competence learners are expected to hold prior to enrolment and describes the typical learner profile. Admissions criteria are appropriate for a Level 8 award, and the programme supports both standard and non-standard entry routes.</p> <p>The provider’s processes for recognising prior learning (RPL) are well-established and allow applicants with relevant professional experience and non-traditional qualifications to access the programme. This is consistent with QQI’s Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression, and reflects the provider’s inclusive approach to widening participation.</p> <p>Comprehensive programme information is available in accessible formats and clearly sets out</p>

³ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

		expectations for both learners and educators. The programme title is appropriate and aligned with the QQI award standard, and English language proficiency requirements.
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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 duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The programme is clearly designed and oriented towards the achievement of the stated learning outcomes. The structure and sequencing of the modules demonstrate a logical developmental progression, enabling learners to acquire the skills, knowledge, and competencies appropriate to a Level 8 award in Computing.</p> <p>The curriculum is divided into well-defined stages, with each module contributing meaningfully to the overarching aims of the programme. Learning outcomes are scaffolded to support learners from foundational concepts to more advanced technical capabilities, ensuring that the learners gain practical, transferable computing skills.</p> <p>The embedded Certificate in Information Technology (15 ECTS) provides a meaningful early exit award, allowing learners to leave the programme at an earlier stage with a recognised qualification.</p> <p>The duration, contact time, and workload are appropriate to the credit allocations. Full-time learners typically complete the programme over two semesters,</p>

		<p>while part-time learners are supported to complete the award over a longer timeframe. Supervised contact hours, learner workload expectations, and module descriptors are clearly communicated and mapped against credit values.</p> <p>Programme documentation outlines module content, assessment strategies, and learning outcomes in a consistent and structured format. The panel acknowledges that the curriculum is fit for purpose and aligned with QQI standards, offering a structured learning experience that supports the delivery of a high-quality learner experience.</p> <p>Based on the panel’s review of the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing, several recommendations have been identified to further enhance the programme’s structure;</p> <p>Recommendation 1: Project Module: The <i>Project Module</i> should be reviewed to ensure coherence with the Computing programme. Elements appear to be directly lifted from the Data Analytics programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An exemplar of a high-standard project (e.g., 1st Class Honours level) should be developed, along with a detailed rubric to support consistency in marking and clarity in expectations. <p>Recommendation 2: Introduction to Programming Module: The Programme Team is advised to consider restructuring the <i>Introduction to Programming</i> module. Options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivering it over two semesters, or ○ Dividing the content into a foundational module (Semester 1) and a more advanced module (Semester 2)
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The programme team includes a core group of experienced faculty with relevant academic qualifications, industry experience, and subject-matter expertise in computing, data analytics, and related disciplines.</p> <p>The staff complement is appropriate for the scope and scale of the programme. Staffing details provided to the panel reflect a diverse and capable team with a balanced mix of full-time and part-time lecturers.</p> <p>There is evidence of active engagement with professional development, including upskilling in emerging technologies, teaching and learning methodologies, and digital tools.</p> <p>The provider has documented systems for performance management and development, with staff appraisal processes, peer review mechanisms, and opportunities for CPD. These structures are designed to ensure continued teaching excellence and consistency in learner support.</p> <p>The teaching team is well supported by administrative and technical staff, contributing to a stable and responsive learning environment.</p>

		Based on the evidence provided, the panel is satisfied that this criterion is met. The institution has the staffing capacity and capability to deliver the programme to a high standard.
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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

- a) The specification of the programme’s physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).
- b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:
 - (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme’s learning environments including the workplace learning environment)
 - (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)
 - (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment
 - (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable
 - (v) technical support
 - (vi) administrative support
 - (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable
- c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).
- d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address
 - (i) Planned intake (first five years) and
 - (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.
- e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel is satisfied that Dublin Business School (DBS) has the capacity to implement the programme as planned. The multi-site city centre campus offers suitable teaching spaces, learner facilities, and IT infrastructure, with centralised digital access via Citrix enabling 24/7 availability of core applications and systems.</p> <p>Learning environments are well-maintained, accessible, and appropriately equipped for a programme of this nature, with suitable provision for software, virtual learning, and digital platforms. The IT support and administrative services are comprehensive, and learners benefit from access to online materials through Moodle, as well as on-campus library and support services.</p> <p>However, the panel notes the need to strengthen the onboarding process for students regarding digital platforms and technical requirements. To support full engagement and ensure equity of access from the outset, the panel recommends:</p>

		<p>Recommendation 3: Learner Onboarding to Digital Platforms Lecturers should ensure that all learners are properly onboarded with access to required software, platforms, and systems at the outset of each module.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: Hardware and Software Requirements Each programme should provide learners with a clearly documented list of required hardware and software, ideally shared upon registration or before module commencement.</p> <p>The panel is otherwise satisfied that resource planning is robust and that DBS has the facilities, systems, and supports in place to deliver the programme effectively.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel finds that the learning environment is well developed and consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners.</p> <p>The programme is delivered across a multi-site city campus, supported by a strong digital infrastructure that enables flexible, accessible engagement through both synchronous and asynchronous methods.</p> <p>Learners are well-supported through structured academic resources and have opportunities to interact with peers, faculty, and industry practitioners throughout their studies.</p> <p>In particular, the panel noted positive informal relationships between alumni and current learners, contributing to a strong culture of peer support and professional awareness;</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Alumni Mentorship and Networking DBS is encouraged to formalise opportunities for alumni to mentor current learners, building on the already positive relationships observed and enabling expanded peer-industry networking and guidance.</p> <p>While not a mandatory requirement for all learners, the panel noted that work placement is referenced in the programme documentation as a potential element. In light of this, and reflecting the programme’s emphasis on employability and industry readiness, the panel encourages the provider to strengthen oversight of placement opportunities;</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Placement Oversight</p>

		While acknowledging that not all learners may avail of placement, greater strategic oversight and support should be provided via the Careers Hub to enhance access to industry placements, reflective of the ‘industry-ready’ ethos embedded within both programme designs.
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

Criterion 9. There are sound teaching and learning strategies

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes. b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes. c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload). d) Learning is monitored/supervised. e) Individualised guidance, support and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel confirms that the teaching and learning strategies are appropriate and well-aligned to support the achievement of the intended programme learning outcomes. Delivery is structured around a combination of applied, project-based, and skills-focused learning that encourages active learner engagement and supports both theoretical understanding and practical competence.</p> <p>Teaching approaches are varied and include synchronous and asynchronous delivery, group-based learning, and the integration of formative feedback. The programme team actively monitors learner engagement and progression, with structured mechanisms in place to provide individualised guidance and timely feedback.</p> <p>The curriculum offers learners authentic learning opportunities, allowing learners to demonstrate and refine their skills in real-world or simulated environments. The learning environment supports a balanced workload and enables diligent learners to reliably attain the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>Overall, the panel is satisfied that the teaching and learning strategies are fit for purpose, promote academic success, and foster the development of relevant industry and research skills.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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 programme assessment strategy 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>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel found the assessment strategy to be coherent, consistent, and appropriately aligned with the intended programme and module learning outcomes. The programme documentation outlines procedures for internal moderation and external review, ensuring quality and consistency in assessment outcomes. The strategy also reflects a strong commitment to learner support, with mechanisms in place for formative feedback and ongoing engagement. The integration of practical tasks and authentic assessment methods is noted as a strength, particularly in areas requiring applied learning.</p> <p>Assessment is clearly mapped and balanced across modules, with a mix of formative and summative approaches supporting learner progression. Assessment instruments, marking schemes, and grading criteria are in place and generally demonstrate validity and reliability. However, to further strengthen assessment integrity across the programme, the panel identified a necessary requirement relating to summative assessment formats (sub-criterion f);</p> <p>Condition 2: An in-person supervised assessment must be included in each programme, with a minimum weighting of 20%. The Programme Team should determine which modules are best suited to this assessment methodology to ensure rigour and uphold assessment integrity in line</p>

		<p>with current standards in tertiary computing and data analytics education.</p> <p>In light of sector-wide challenges associated with generative AI and maintaining academic integrity, the panel also identified a valuable opportunity to enhance the authenticity of learner assessment;</p> <p>Recommendation 7: DBS is encouraged to adopt a consistent, streamlined practice across both programmes to include an informal verbal defence (Q&A) element in assessments. This fosters authentic assessment, reinforces academic integrity, and enhances student engagement. Learners should be informed of this component in advance.</p> <p>Recommendation 8: Cloud Infrastructures and Virtualisation Module Assessment: The panel recommends a revision of assessment tasks within this module to ensure a clearer alignment with the Module Intended Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs), particularly MIMLO 6.3, which currently lacks strong correspondence in assessment design.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	Partially	As above

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>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	YES	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel finds that DBS has comprehensive learner supports in place that align with the intended outcomes of the programme. Learners are well informed about key elements of the programme, including module content, assessment schedules, and expectations, with accessible documentation and online resources. The induction process supports early engagement, and structured onboarding into the VLE (Moodle) and relevant platforms ensures learners are positioned to fully participate.</p> <p>The programme is designed to cater for diverse learner needs, including those with different levels of prior experience, educational backgrounds, or personal circumstances. Targeted academic and pastoral supports are available, and the institution provides specialist services for learners with disabilities or additional learning needs. There are clear structures in place to provide individualised support for learners at risk, and mechanisms for early intervention appear effective.</p>

		<p>Information on learner appeals and complaints processes is communicated transparently, and the programme provides guidance services for module and elective selection, where applicable.</p> <p>The panel is also satisfied that supports for international learners and part-time cohorts are appropriate and meet sector expectations.</p> <p>Overall, the panel is confident that learners will be appropriately supported, guided, and cared for throughout their programme journey.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	YES	As above

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>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing	Partially	<p>The panel has thoroughly assessed the programme against the criteria, based on the evidence presented in the application documentation and through engagement with the provider during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The panel confirms that the programme is supported by established institutional governance structures and quality assurance processes that are consistent with QQI requirements.</p> <p>There is evidence of systematic quality assurance embedded within programme management. The panel was satisfied that procedures related to assessment, learner feedback, staff performance review, and programme enhancement are active and consistent with DBS’s broader QA framework. The involvement of programme-level management, including oversight from the Programme Leader and academic committees, demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and oversight.</p> <p>Mechanisms for the recruitment and allocation of teaching staff are clearly defined and appropriate to the specialist nature of the programme. Processes for resource allocation are transparent and aligned with the programme’s requirements, including the use of digital tools and physical infrastructure.</p>

		<p>The programme’s operational and management arrangements, including oversight of delivery, staffing, learner engagement, and academic governance, are generally clearly documented and appropriately implemented. However, the panel identified issues with inconsistencies and formatting errors in the documentation submitted. Some materials included outdated references and lacked clarity regarding version control, which impacts confidence in the programme's operational coherence (sub-criterion g);</p> <p>Condition 3: The programme documentation must be reviewed and finalised to meet professional standards of version control and coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each document must include version dates (including the last date reviewed), document history, page numbers, and clear alignment between programme components. • Specific discrepancies were noted, such as outdated content (e.g., page 20 of the Programme Document for the Computing programme containing content reflective of a previous iteration). • All content must be internally consistent between the Programme Review Report, Programme Document, and Module & Assessment Specifications. <p>This revision is necessary to ensure that quality assurance and programme management arrangements are accurately and consistently communicated across all documentation.</p>
Certificate in Information Technology	Partially	As above

Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1 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 (minor) 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. The panel is satisfied that the Higher Diploma in Science in Computing broadly meets the QQI validation criteria and demonstrates strong academic coherence, industry relevance, and learner supports. The programme benefits from a qualified teaching team, a robust curriculum, and effective governance structures.

However, three specific conditions must be addressed prior to final validation. These conditions, detailed below are considered achievable within a short timeframe and do not detract from the overall quality or viability of the programme. Subject to their fulfilment, the panel recommends validation.

Commendations

1. **Graduate Engagement and Alumni Network:**
The panel commends Dublin Business School for its proactive engagement with alumni, whose continued involvement showcases strong graduate loyalty and adds valuable real-world insights into programme delivery and development.
2. **Industry Advisory Board:**
The panel commends the institution on the calibre and diversity of its Industry Advisory Board, which reflects a robust governance model and integration of both national and international expertise, ensuring industry-aligned programme content.
3. **Gender Balance:**
The panel commends the programme teams for achieving a commendable gender balance across both programmes, demonstrating DBS's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in computing and data analytics education.
4. **Student and Graduate Contributions:**
The panel commends the professionalism, insight, and openness of the student and graduate contributors who engaged meaningfully in dialogue with the panel.

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

Condition 1:

The programme title should be revised to more accurately reflect the specificity of the curriculum. The current title, *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing*, implies a broad scope, whereas the content is explicitly focused on web and cloud technologies. Revised title proposal: *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Web and Cloud)*.

Condition 2:

An in-person supervised assessment must be included in each programme, with a minimum weighting of 20%. The Programme Team should determine which modules are best suited to this assessment methodology to ensure rigour and uphold assessment integrity in line with current standards in tertiary computing and data analytics education.

Condition 3:

The programme documentation must be reviewed and finalised to meet professional standards of version control and coherence:

- Each document must include version dates (including the last date reviewed), document history, page numbers, and clear alignment between programme components.
- Specific discrepancies were noted, such as outdated content (e.g., page 20 of the Programme Document for the Computing programme containing content reflective of a previous iteration).
- All content must be internally consistent between the Programme Review Report, Programme Document, and Module & Assessment Specifications.

Embedded 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 (minor) 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. As Principal Programme

Commendations

Section I. As Principal Programme

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

1. As Principal Programme

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

Condition 1:

The programme title should be revised to more accurately reflect the specificity of the curriculum. The current title, *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing*, implies a broad scope, whereas the content is explicitly focused on web and cloud technologies.

Revised title proposal: *Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Web and Cloud)*.

Condition 2:

An in-person supervised assessment must be included in each programme, with a minimum weighting of 20%.

- The Programme Teams should determine which modules are best suited to this assessment methodology to ensure rigour and uphold assessment integrity in line with current standards in tertiary computing and data analytics education.

Condition 3:

The programme documentation must be reviewed and finalised to meet professional standards of version control and coherence:

- Each document must include version dates (including the last date reviewed), document history, page numbers, and clear alignment between programme components.
- Specific discrepancies were noted, such as outdated content (e.g., page 20 of the Programme Document for the Computing programme containing content reflective of a previous iteration).
- All content must be internally consistent between the Programme Review Report, Programme Document, and Module & Assessment Specifications.

Summary of recommendations to the provider (in order of presentation against Criteria)

Recommendation 1:

Project Module:

The *Project Module* should be reviewed to ensure coherence with the Computing programme. Elements appear to be directly lifted from the Data Analytics programme.

- An exemplar of a high-standard project (e.g., 1st Class Honours level) should be developed, along with a detailed rubric to support consistency in marking and clarity in expectations.

Recommendation 2:

Introduction to Programming Module:

The Programme Team is advised to consider restructuring the *Introduction to Programming* module. Options include:

- Delivering it over two semesters, or
- Dividing the content into a foundational module (Semester 1) and a more advanced module (Semester 2)

The proposed change is expected to significantly enhance the learning experience by providing a more structured and comprehensive approach to teaching. By implementing this modification, students will have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts of Object-Oriented Programming (OOP) and related topics such as data structures, algorithms, and software design principles. This would facilitate incremental learning and accommodate varying student entry levels.

Recommendation 3:

Learner Onboarding to Digital Platforms

Lecturers should ensure that all learners are properly onboarded with access to required software, platforms, and systems at the outset of each module.

Recommendation 4:

Hardware and Software Requirements

Each programme should provide learners with a clearly documented list of required hardware and software, ideally shared upon registration or before module commencement.

Recommendation 5:

Alumni Mentorship and Networking

DBS is encouraged to formalise opportunities for alumni to mentor current learners, building on the already positive relationships observed and enabling expanded peer-industry networking and guidance.

Recommendation 6:

Placement Oversight

While acknowledging that not all learners may avail of placement, greater strategic oversight and support should be provided via the Careers Hub to enhance access to industry placements, reflective of the ‘industry-ready’ ethos embedded within both programme designs.

Recommendation 7:

DBS is encouraged to adopt a consistent, streamlined practice across both programmes to include an informal verbal defence (Q&A) element in assessments. This fosters authentic assessment, reinforces academic integrity, and enhances student engagement. Learners should be informed of this component in advance.

Recommendation 8:

Cloud Infrastructures and Virtualisation Module Assessment:

The panel recommends a revision of assessment tasks within this module to ensure a clearer alignment with the Module Intended Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs), particularly MIMLO 6.3, which currently lacks strong correspondence in assessment design.

Declarations of Evaluators’ Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Dr. Josephine Browne

Date: 7th May 2025



Signed:

3.2 Disclaimer

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

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

Part 4. Proposed programme schedules (post panel feedback and consequent amendments, if any)

a Proposed Programme Schedule(s) - Full Time																
Name of Provider:		Dublin Business School														
Programme Title (Principal)		Higher Diploma in Science in Computing					QQI Award Title			Higher Diploma				ECTS		60
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)		Award	Exit Award Title (if relevant)												Stage ECTS	60
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓ one as appropriate.		On-site Face-to-Face			Blended			Online			Apprenticeship					
					✓											
Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓ one or more as appropriate.		On-site Face-to-Face			Synchronous Hybrid		Synchronous Online		Asynchronous		Independent		Work Based			
		✓					✓		✓		✓		✓			
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓ one or more as appropriate.		Continuous Assessment			Invigilated 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 (from the module assessment strategy)						
Module Title		Se me ster	Ma nda to ry (M) or Ele ctiv e (E)	Cre dits (EC TS)	To tal H ou rs	On-site Face-to- Face	Synch ronou s	Asynch ronous	Ind epe nde nt	Work Based	Contin uous Assess ment %	Invigil ated Exam – in perso n %	Procto red Exam – online %	Pro ject	Practica l Skills Demon stration %	Work Based %
Introduction to Programming		1	M	10	250	48			202		100%					

a Proposed Programme Schedule(s) - Full Time																	
Name of Provider:		Dublin Business School															
Programme Title (Principal)		Higher Diploma in Science in Computing				QQI Award Title		Higher Diploma				ECTS		60			
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)		Award		Exit Award Title (if relevant)								Stage ECTS		60			
Programme Delivery Mode - <i>✓ one as appropriate.</i>		On-site Face-to-Face				Blended				Online				Apprenticeship			
						✓											
Web Design and Development	1	M	5	125	24			101		100%							
Database Design and Development	1	M	10	250	48			202		100%							
Information Systems Development and Management	2	M	5	125	24			101		50%		50%					
Web and Cloud Application Development	2	M	10	250	48			202		100%							
Cloud Infrastructure and Virtualisation	2	M	5	125	24			101		100%							
Advanced Web Technologies	2	M	5	125	24			101		100%							
Project	3	E	10	250	18			232					100%				
Placement	3	E	10	250	6			46	202						100%		

b Proposed Programme Schedule(s) - Part Time																
Name of Provider:		Dublin Business School														
Programme Title (Principal)		Higher Diploma in Science in Computing				QQI Award Title		Higher Diploma				ECTS		60		
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)		Award	Exit Award Title (if relevant)								Stage ECTS		60 ▾			
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓ one as appropriate.		On-site Face-to-Face			Blended			Online			Apprenticeship					
					✓											
Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓ one or more as appropriate.		On-site Face-to-Face			Synchronous Hybrid		Synchronous Online		Asynchronous		Independent			Work Based		
		✓					✓		✓		✓			✓		
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓ one or more as appropriate.		Continuous Assessment			Invigilated 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 (from the module assessment strategy)						
Module Title		Se me ster	Ma nda tor y (M) or Ele ctiv e (E)	Cre dits (EC TS)	To tal H ou rs	On-site Face-to-Face	Synch ronou s	Asynchr onous	Ind epe nde nt	Work Based	Contin uous Assess ment %	Invigil ated Exam – in perso n %	Procto red Exam – online %	Pro ject	Practica l Skills Demon stration %	Work Based %
Introduction to Programming		1	M	10	250	3	33		214		100%					

Web Design and Development	1	M	5	125	3	15		107		100%				50%	
Database Design and Development	2	M	10	250	3	33		214		100%					
Information Systems Development and Management	2	M	5	125	3	15		107		50%		50%			
Web and Cloud Application Development	3	M	10	250	3	33		214		100%					
Cloud Infrastructure and Virtualisation	3	M	5	125	3	15		107		100%					
Advanced Web Technologies	3	M	5	125	3	15		107		100%					
Project	4	E	10	250	3	15		232					100%		
Placement	4	E	10	250		6		46	202						100%

c Proposed Programme Schedule(s) - Full Time																
Name of Provider:		Dublin Business School														
Programme Title (Principal)		Higher Diploma in Science in Computing				QQI Award Title		Certificate				ECTS		15		
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)		Award	Exit Award Title (if relevant)			Certificate in Information Technology						Stage ECTS	15			
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓ one as appropriate.		On-site Face-to-Face			Blended			Online			Apprenticeship					
					✓											
Teaching and Learning Modalities – ✓ one or more as appropriate.		On-site Face-to-Face			Synchronous Hybrid		Synchronous Online		Asynchronous		Independent		Work Based			
		✓					✓		✓		✓					
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – ✓ one or more as appropriate.		Continuous Assessment			Invigilated 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 (from the module assessment strategy)						
Module Title	Semester	Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)	Credits (ECTS)	Total Hours	On-site Face-to-Face	Synchronous	Asynchronous	Independent	Work Based	Continuous Assessment %	Invigilated Exam – in person %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %	
Introduction to Programming	1	M	10	250	48			202		100%						
Web Design and Development	1	M	5	125	24			101		100%						

d Proposed Programme Schedule(s) - Part Time																
Name of Provider:		Dublin Business School														
Programme Title (Principal)		Higher Diploma in Science in Computing				QQI Award Title		Certificate				ECTS		15		
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)		Award	Exit Award Title (if relevant)			Certificate in Information Technology						Stage ECTS		15		
Programme Delivery Mode - <i>✓ one as appropriate.</i>		On-site Face-to-Face			Blended			Online			Apprenticeship					
					✓											
Teaching and Learning Modalities – <i>✓ one or more as appropriate.</i>		On-site Face-to-Face			Synchronous Hybrid		Synchronous Online		Asynchronous		Independent			Work Based		
		✓					✓		✓		✓					
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage – <i>✓ one or more as appropriate.</i>		Continuous Assessment			Invigilated 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	On-site Face-to-Face	Synchronous	Asynchronous	Independent	Work Based	Continuous Assessment %	Invigilated Exam – in person %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %	
Introduction to Programming	1	M	10	250	3	33		202		100%						
Web Design and Development	1	M	5	125	3	15		101		100%						