8 Assessment Policy, Procedures and Regulations

8.1 Assessment Policy

Title:	Assessment Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Faculty Managers Head of Faculty and School Operations Head of Academic Programmes Lecturers Programme Leaders Assessment and Regulations Manager
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Introduction

The DBS assessment policy is informed by good practice across the international higher education sector and supports the principles for assessment as outlined in QQI *Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013*.

Assessment within DBS is learning outcomes orientated and ensures the consistent application of this approach. Assessment is integrated into teaching and learning and DBS operates assessment on the basis of assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning and assessment *in* learning. Specific assessment activities are designed to determine a learner's progress, to inform additional learning requirements, and / or to assess a learner's attainment against clearly defined learning outcomes.

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

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

Minimum Intended Learning Outcomes:

- inform the development of a relevant assessment tool
- enable a moderator, reviewer or external examiner to determine the suitability of the assessment tool
- notify learners what an examiner is seeking to establish
- act as a threshold standard i.e. that which is required to secure a pass mark, for examiners marking assessment
- inform feedback to learners in identifying where learning outcomes were not met, were satisfied and were exceeded
- inform the review of effectiveness and suitability of assessment
- provide fairness and consistency to the assessment process
- provide transparency to the assessment process.

The responsibility for demonstrating attainment of learning outcomes remains with the learner. In order to fulfil this responsibility, learners are required to engage in the relevant assessment activities

and it remains their responsibility to be familiar with the associated expectations and requirements including submission dates, attendance and location arrangements for examinations etc. Lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of such requirements which have been clearly communicated is not considered reasonable justification for non-completion of assessment requirements.

Learners have a limited number of opportunities to satisfy assessment requirements. Whilst there is a standard QQI practice of a maximum of 3 repeat opportunities per assessment, special regulations apply to individual programmes which may result in fewer opportunities being available. Full details are included in the programme validation document and programme handbook. Where a learner fails to satisfy these requirements either through not taking up the assessment opportunity or through failure to meet the required standard, they will be deemed to have failed and will be withdrawn from their programme. Any exception to this will only be in the context of standard procedures for mitigating circumstances.

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

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

8.1.1 Underpinning Principles of Assessment in DBS

DBS has endorsed and implemented the following underpinning principles for the assessment process:

(i) Assessment is an integral part of the programme design process and is constructively aligned with the programme/module minimum intended learning outcomes.

(ii) There are clear and consistent assessment criteria prepared by the examiner and these are provided to the learner at the time of assignment.

(iii) Assessment is transparent, valid, reliable and free from bias.

(iv) The assessment framework facilitates learning and informs and supports learner progression, particularly in the early stages of programmes.

(v) Learners are provided with feedback on assessment that is timely and promotes learning and facilitates improvement.

(vi) The management of assessment is efficient, especially regarding the amount and timing of assessment, staff and learner workloads; and to allow time for learner reflection.

(vii) All staff involved in the assessment of learners are competent to undertake their responsibilities.

(viii) Assessment is reviewed regularly and learners are involved in this review process to determine the suitability, effectiveness and fitness for purpose of the assessment tools, procedures, and overall strategy.

8.1.2 Assessment Responsibilities

8.1.2.1 Role of Examiners

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

- Prepare assessments in consultation with the Moderator, in accordance with the approved module descriptor
- Submit examination papers, solutions and marking schemes, in consultation with the Moderator, to the Examinations Office where they are forwarded to the External Examiner(s)
- Alongside the Programme Leader, take account of suggestions, deletions, additions or amendments proposed by the External Examiner (s) and implement as recommended or provide a rationale for non-implementation
- Mark the assessments and arrange for moderation
- Submit marks to the Examinations Team via the means specified (Moodle upload or through SIS)
- Prepare a sample of marked continuous assessment, in conjunction with the moderator, for the External Examiner and return to Examinations Team
- Return scripts and any associated forms to the Academic Affairs Office

- Receive feedback from the External Examiner(s) and, in conjunction with the PL if necessary, agree the marks proposed to be awarded to each candidate (prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners) and
- Attend meetings of the Examination Board, to verify marks and contribute to the deliberation of grades and awards.

8.1.2.2 Role of Moderator

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

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

The Moderator works closely with the Examiner in a monitoring/advisory role to ensure:

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

A detailed moderation guidance document is available for all lecturing staff and training is also made available.

8.1.2.3 Role of External Examiner

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

8.1.3 Assessment Purpose

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

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

Formal assessment tasks can be formative or summative. Those that are summative will have their grades reported to the Board of Examiners.

Formative assessments are designed to give learners an opportunity to practise unfamiliar skills or demonstrate their understanding in a new area of learning and receive guidance on how to further improve.

Formative assessments can be graded as this is useful information for the learner as to how well they are progressing or achieving, but they should not be confused with summative assessments and do not contribute to the overall summative result.

Learners are advised that whilst there is no formal penalty for not completing formative assessment tasks, the potential to succeed and to achieve higher marks is notably enhanced as a result of participating in all assessment activities.

It is expected that the formative assessment tasks used support the learners in their subsequent summative assessments and enhance their understanding of modules on the programme of study.

Summative assessments are for the purpose of determining a learner's performance against specified learning outcomes. A mark is awarded and this forms a part of their formal learner record, is reported to the Examination Board and may contribute to their overall award and classification.

DBS requires that, where feasible, assessments should include a formative element. Detailed feedback should be provided to learners outlining areas of strength and areas for further development. Feedback may include expansion of subject knowledge and skills as well as development of academic skills. Such feedback is to be automatically provided apart from where exceptions apply. Exceptions include, but are not restricted to, terminal examinations.

In cases such as examinations, where feedback is not automatically provided, feedback can be requested or arrangements made to discuss the assessment with a relevant examiner as per the Discussion of Examination Scripts policy.

8.1.4 Assessment Methodologies

DBS programmes leading to a QQI award are assessed by continuous assessment, practical, placement, project/thesis, written exam, or a combination of these.

Learners are notified from the outset of the academic year how they will be assessed in the modules they are undertaking.

The Programme Leader is responsible for the overall management of assessment on the programme they lead. This includes working closely with the School Management Team, the Programme Team and the Examinations Team to assure themselves that appropriate arrangements are in place and implemented in respect of:

- clearly communicating responsibilities and expectations to all stakeholders
- appropriate assessment timing, weighting and scheduling across the programme
- the inclusion of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment as applicable
- the moderation and external examining of assessments
- the ongoing review of suitability and effectiveness of assessments
- adherence to and consistent application of the academic regulations, policies and procedure in conducting assessments

- full and accurate assessment data being available for Examination Board decisions to be reached

The responsibility for management and coordination of all continuous assessments within a module is deferred to the module lecturer. This should be satisfied in conjunction with the relevant Programme Leader to ensure a programme level approach to assessment.

The coordination of terminal examinations is the responsibility of the Assessment and Regulations Manager. This is undertaken in conjunction with the relevant Programme Leader to ensure a programme level approach to assessment.

Continuous assessments are normally issued through the VLE (Moodle) and learners are required to submit their assessments via the VLE also. Exceptions to this relate to practical areas that cannot be submitted online; for example, class presentation, work placement observation, posters, exhibitions, moot courts etc.

DBS requires each module lecturer that is responsible for a module to provide all assessment material, final exams and continuous assessments for an entire academic year to cover original attempts and re-take situations. A copy of this should be submitted securely to the Assessment Team in Academic Affairs in accordance with the agreed procedure.

All assessments must have been approved through the DBS moderation process and those that require external examiner review must be agreed by the External Examiner as appropriate prior to being issued to learners.

8.1.4.1 Continuous Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

- an essay in response to an exam-type question
- an essay in response to a question or statement not normally seen in examinations
- a critical review of a text (e.g. a newspaper article or book) or a case study
- a summary of a text (e.g. a book chapter)
- an in-class test, similar in scope to an end-of-stage examination
- an in-class Short-Answer Question (SAQ) examination
- an in-class Multiple-Choice Question (MCQ) examination
- an oral presentation based on a prescribed topic
- literature review
- case studies
- a group-oriented task, requiring the production of a document or oral presentation by a small group of learners
- the completion of a short work-package relevant to the academic discipline (e.g. the writing of a computer program or the designing of a website, etc.).

When selecting and developing the type of continuous assessment to use, Examiners are required to align the task to the intended learning outcomes of the module. These in turn have been aligned to

the programme level and stage. An assessment may address only some or all module learning outcomes. The learning outcomes being assessed through the assignment task in question must be communicated to the learner.

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

8.1.4.2 Examinations

DBS utilises terminal examinations at the end of a module, semester or programme stage. These may take the format of a lab based examination for ICT related subjects or a written examination paper.

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

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

8.1.5 Authoring Assessments

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

The development of assessments should be informed by the programme and module assessment strategy as outlined in the relevant programme validation document. The assessment strategy for each module should reasonably include diagnostic (establishing the learner's start point and pre-existing knowledge and ability), formative (monitoring the learner's progress and informing

additional learning and development required), and summative (providing learners with the opportunity to demonstrate the attainment of learning outcomes and grading them accordingly against agreed, published criteria.

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

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

The number of summative assessments within a module should ensure that a learner is able to demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge appropriate to the level of the programme. It is therefore reasonably expected that modules at levels 8 and 9 are likely to include fewer summative assessments than those at levels 6 and 7, although there are exceptions to this. In using multiple summative assessment tools within a module, assessment authors are required to give consideration to the possibility of learners securing higher marks as a result of accumulation of marks from smaller assessments which may only enable superficial demonstration of knowledge and skills. This type of practice has the potential to cause grade inflation and should be avoided, particularly where a module requires a learner to demonstrate detailed subject knowledge, more in-depth thinking, critical analysis, reflective practice or evaluative skills. Lecturers are also encouraged to be mindful of the overall programme assessment load and to avoid over-assessment.

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

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

8.1.5.1 Implementation of the Continuous Assessment Process

For each element of continuous assessment, each learner must be given a clear and unambiguous written assessment specification. This specification should normally include the following:

- The module name, code and details of examiner
- The nature of the coursework in detail
- The learning outcomes being assessed
- The specific deliverable(s) required from learners, including format required (e.g. type written) and word-count, if specified
- The percentage of marks allocated for that assignment and for each component deliverable, where there is more than one
- The dates on which the assignment brief is given to learners
- Penalty accruing for late or non-submission
- The maximum number of repeat opportunities
- The submission date for the assignment (or for each deliverable element where appropriate).
- The date feedback and assignment results will be available
- The DBS Policy on Academic Impropriety (or a relevant link to facilitate learners familiarising themselves with the contents of the policy).

8.1.5.2 Implementation of the Examination Paper Production Process

A template for all examination question papers will be prepared by the Examinations Officer following consultation with the School. The agreed template will be sent to the Faculty Managers for distribution by an agreed date in September. The Faculty Manager will advise the lecturer if the module is also taught in another mode or on another programme and confirm the module leader details. The template comprises four documents – one for each examination question paper and one for the solutions for each of the two sittings in the academic year.

The Faculty Managers are responsible for distributing the template to the relevant Lecturers with full instructions on requirements and submission dates, as agreed with the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

The lecturer(s) will set the exam question papers for all exam sessions as per the template and submit the papers to the Assessment and Regulations team in accordance with the instructions by the following dates;

- **Not later than November 15th for January exams**
- **Not later than February 14th for all end of semester 2 exams**

Where a programme does not follow the traditional semester. The Programme Leader is required to agree the assessment schedule, and all key dates, in advance with the Assessment and Regulations Manager. This will then be communicated to the programme team.

Where unforeseen circumstances prevent submission by the stated deadline, written communication of this must be submitted to the relevant Faculty Manager in advance of the submission date. Normally, a maximum extension of two calendar weeks may be agreed. Where submission cannot be satisfied in this period, the Faculty Manager will seek agreement form the Head of Faculty and School Operations for an alternative examination paper author to be appointed.

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

It is imperative that the agreed final exam question paper is checked for errors **prior to submission**. Checking should include:

- Completion in the correct template format
- Spelling / grammar
- Correct duration
- Correct module title
- Correct name of all examiners including the external examiner
- Correct exam session
- Typing errors
- Pages numbered sequentially
- Correct number of questions specified
- Clear instruction on any compulsory questions
- Questions numbered sequentially
- Instructions and number of questions tally (e.g. answer 3 out of 5 questions)

- Correct allocation of marks and a total mark of 100. If all questions carry equal marks please specify.
- Ensuring that the exam question paper is complete including any tables / graphs etc.
- Ensuring that any photocopied / scanned tables or attachments are legible.

The above check must be undertaken by the authoring lecturer and should be further checked as part of the moderation process.

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

Where multiple sets of examination papers and solutions are submitted for one module, the Assessment and Regulations Manager will highlight this with the relevant Faculty Manager for resolution.

Responsibility for the accuracy and proofing of exam question papers rests with the Lecturers. The Academic Affairs Department is not responsible for proof reading examination papers.

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

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

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

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

The examination papers, marking scheme and grading criteria are drafted by the Examiner responsible for the module. Where the module is taught by more than one lecturer, the module leader (as identified by the Faculty Manager) is the examiner and responsible for the assessment

tools on the module. Where lecturers make alternative arrangements on a local level, the agreed exam author must be communicated to the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

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

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

In instances of a module running for the final time i.e. due to programme closure or programmatic review changes, an examiner may be asked to provide an additional examination paper and marking scheme to accommodate any deferred learners. This will be managed by the Head of Faculty and School Operations. An alternative date for the submission of the additional paper and marking scheme can be agreed with the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

All draft examination papers must be in the standard DBS house style and should normally be consistent with previous examination papers in the same module where the module has been assessed by examination previously. Details of the DBS house style are available from Academic Affairs.

The examiner is required to store the examination paper securely throughout the development stage. This includes the requirement to password protect the document at all stages in the development process.

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

Circulation of draft examination papers to other members of the module lecturing team or the moderator should be done through the specified electronic means only and should include the sending or sharing of the password separately to the examination paper.

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

- presented in the required DBS house style
- appropriate for the learning outcomes it seeks to asses
- set at the appropriate level as per DBS Guide to Levels 6-9 Grade Descriptors (Appendix 8.4)
- suitable in terms of content and presentation, and

- typographical or grammatical errors are identified and eliminated.

Any changes considered desirable by the moderator are discussed with the examiner. Differences of opinion should be resolved by the PL. It is expected that such differences of opinion will be the exception rather than the rule.

When the papers and marking schemes are agreed, the Moderator completes and signs Part A of the Internal Moderation Form (F8.4) this is retained by the lecturer/module leader in the first instance as it may be required for audit purposes, evidence in a programmatic or institutional review or in the case of a learner appeal.

The examiner then forwards the approved drafts of the examination papers, the marking schemes and confirmation of moderation, to the Examinations Team in Academic Affairs, where receipt is formally recorded.

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

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

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

Submission of papers without password protection or to an alternative email address than that specified may be considered a potential security breach and new papers and marking schemes may be requested as a result.

8.1.5.3 Marking Scheme and Grade Criteria

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

For example, where a marking scheme lists a number of points that may be addressed within a question, it should indicate what degree of detail, analysis, evaluation and application is required in

relation to the number of points – thus preventing learners being awarded marks for merely providing a list.

A marking scheme should clearly outline which learning outcomes are expected to be addressed and the format in which it may be presented. Ideally, further detail should be provided to indicate what an examiner may award higher marks for.

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

8.1.5.4 Online Submission of Continuous Assessment

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

(i)   Learners complete a cover sheet which is available on the Moodle home page.

(ii) The learner then continues to the assignment submission area of the individual module page.

(iii) The learner uploads the file which contains their assignment.

(iv) Once the file has been uploaded the learner clicks the 'send for marking' button.

(v)   A message appears instantly which states the following: 'By clicking on this button I am aware of the DBS policy regarding cheating, plagiarism and all other forms of academic impropriety. The coursework submitted is my own or my group's work and all other sources consulted have been appropriately acknowledged. I am aware that in the case of doubt, an investigation will be held.'

(vi) When the learner agrees to the above, there is a final option to submit the assignment they have uploaded. They are also asked to check that they have completed the assignment cover sheet.

(vii) The learner will then see that their assignment has been submitted with the date and time displaying at the top of the page.

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

8.1.6 Assessing Learner Attainment

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

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

All assessment will be criterion referenced against clearly published requirements, and marks will be awarded according to the standards defined in published grade descriptors. Assessment decisions will not be made based on the comparison of learners' work against one another nor by the requirement for specified percentages to be awarded particular grades.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.1.7 Assessment Feedback

Except where approved otherwise, feedback to learners should be provided and the terminology utilised should correlate with the grade awarded and the relevant section of the grade descriptor. Feedback should be recorded on the relevant mark sheet.

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

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

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

As a guide, assessment feedback should be:

- Specific and relevant to the assessment and its learning outcomes and the individual piece of work
- Constructive, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment including guidance as to how the learner can improve
- Focused and not attempt to address too many different aspects at the same time
- Unambiguous

In contrast, it is necessary to ensure that feedback:

- Is not too general, vague or brief
- Is not subjective – 'I don't like the way that you...'
- Does not criticise or penalise a learner for failing to include aspects that the task did not direct them to include either implicitly or explicitly
- Does not criticise or penalise a learner for a particular style or structure if no preferred style or structure was specified

Feedback must be based on fact and description, not personal opinion. Acknowledging that assessment is an informed, professional judgement, it is a judgement of the completion of a task against set learning outcomes and it is therefore both the task and the learning outcomes that should inform and direct the feedback. Feedback should enable a learner to build on success and identify actions for improvement.

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

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

Where two or more learners present a joint assignment, then each learner in the group is required to submit and retain a copy of the entire assignment. Each member of the group will receive an individual grade for a group assignment. Refer to DBS Academic Guidelines on Assessing Group Work (Appendix 8.2)

The examiner is responsible for the safe-handling, storage and security of assignments or scripts. Examiners are required to take appropriate precautions to ensure that scripts/assignments should not be unnecessarily exposed to risk of access, loss, theft or destruction; for example, scripts should never be left unattended in a public area or in a vehicle. Refer to DBS Academic Guidelines on Good Practice in the Handling and Annotation of Examination Scripts/Assignments (Appendix 8.3).

To provide formative feedback to learners, the marked assignments should be made available to learners to allow them to review the marks awarded together with the comments of the examiner. This will normally be available on the original submission in Moodle. However, for those assessments such as presentation, exhibitions and events, that aren't uploaded to Moodle, feedback should be made available either in class on by way of a feedback report uploaded to Moodle. This is for learners to better understand the academic requirements in question, to improve their subsequent performance and to make them aware of any shortcomings so they understand why they received the grade they received. It is good practice to include a section on how the grade could have been improved.

8.1.8 Assessment Review

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

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

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

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

DBS encourages the ongoing review and enhancement of assessment practice. Learner performance and / or feedback is expected to inform proposals for changes to assessment. In some cases this may originate from a recommendation of the Examination Board when module performance has been highlighted in comparison with other modules.

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

8.2 Word Count Policy

Title:	Word Count Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Lecturers Moderators
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

8.2.1 Word Count in Assessments

As part of undertaking an accredited programme of study in DBS learners are developing subject knowledge and related skills but are also expected to develop academic skills. This includes the skill of academic writing. The ability to present a case or argument, to justify a position, to write within a clear framework that includes an introduction and a conclusion and uses primary and secondary research appropriately and correctly to support a position put forward are key attributes of effective academic writing. In demonstrating the ability to display these attributes learners are expected to satisfy the requirements of specified word count limits.

The purpose of a word count limit is to give learners clear guidance of the maximum length of a piece of assessed written work, the amount of effort expected and therefore the level of detail they should go into and how they should allocate time to one assignment in relation to others. Writing to set word count limits is a skill required within some professions, as well as an academic skill. Word limits are set appropriate to the learning outcomes, the credit weighting of the assessment and the framework level of the module.

I.   An assessment specification is published for each assignment clearly specifying a maximum word count. In some instances, a minimum word count may also be outlined.

II.   Learners will not be penalised for an assessment that goes under or over the word count by 10%

III. If an executive summary or abstract is required then a separate word count for this should normally be specified.

IV. The penalty for exceeding the word count should also be stated to clearly to learners.

V.   There is no mandatory penalty other than that after the word limit has been reached no more of the submission will be marked/graded. Likewise, a failure to meet the maximum word limit may result in lower marks based on the quality of the work because the learner may not have included the necessary information required for the assessment to meet the learning outcomes.

VI. Lecturers may, at their discretion, provide feedback on the additional but unmarked material.

VII. The word count **includes** everything in the main body of the text from the introduction to the conclusion including headings, tables, citations, quotes, lists and footnotes.

VIII. The word count **does not include** the cover page, table of contents, executive summary, list of references and appendices, unless it is clearly stated in the assessment specification that this assignment is an exception to the rule.

IX.   Appendices should be kept to a minimum and only contain reference materials illustrating and supporting arguments fully made in the main body of the work. Any other material included in appendices, except where specifically requested in the coursework instructions, will not be marked.

X.   Learners should avoid attempts to work around the policy by excessive use of diagrams, hyphenation or the use of screen shots, except where specifically allowed such as IT programmes for example.

XI.   The actual word count should be clearly and correctly stated on the title page of the title page of the assignment submission by the learner.

XII.   Where the word limit is exceeded a line should be drawn in the submission by the examiner indicating the point at which the word limit has been reached.

8.3 Late Submission Policy

Title:	Late Submission of Assessment Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Lecturers Moderators
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

8.3.1 Penalties for Late Submission

DBS applies penalties for the unauthorised late submission of assessments through Moodle. This is applied consistently across all modules and programmes leading to a QQI award and ensures fairness in the treatment of learners and prevents learners from securing an unfair advantage over other learners.

The late submission penalty applies to first attempt submissions only. Repeat attempts that are not submitted by the deadline, except where an agreed extension is authorised, will be awarded a mark of 0%. It is the learner's responsibility to ensure assessment submissions are received by the lecturer by the submission date and through the specified means of submission.

This is the default policy of all DBS programmes awarded by QQI, unless indicated otherwise within the student handbook following alternative arrangements agreed as part of the programme validation.

This policy shall apply to all first-attempt items of continuous assessment submitted through the specified means. Any item of continuous assessment to be submitted through Moodle should not normally be submitted through any other means. An examiner has the right to refuse the assessment if the specified submission mode is not adhered to.

Immediately after the submission deadline for an item of continuous assessment, a penalty will be applied *per day* or *part thereof*.

For the purposes of these penalties, a *day* is defined as *any* day of the week, including weekends and public holidays when the College may be closed.

The minimum possible mark for late submission is 0%.

The number of marks deducted depends on the lateness of the submission and will be deducted according to the following scale:

- Where an assessment is submitted between 1 and 14 days late **2 marks per day** are deducted
- An assessment submitted after the deadline but within 24 hours of the original deadline will attract the first day penalty, i.e. deduction of 2 marks

- Where an assessment is more than 14 days late it is annotated at the discretion of the lecturer but no marks can be awarded.

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

A learner may opt to submit a late assessment more than 14 days after the deadline, but it will be graded at 0% and deemed as an attempt for the purpose of calculating a final award and entitlement to honours. The learner may subsequently re-submit that submission as a repeat attempt, at the scheduled repeat submission point and the examiner will mark the submission as a repeat attempt.

Standard exclusions of agreed extensions or personal mitigating circumstances as recognised by the College will apply where these have been agreed in line with the appropriate policy and supported by the necessary independent evidence as applicable. This evidence must be provided to the applicable programme coordinator in a timely fashion and include all appropriate documentation the learner wishes to have taken into account.

Learners are advised that late submission resulting in a fail grade may also impact on the entitlement to an honours award where first attempt marks are considered for award calculation. In such cases the first attempt mark will be recorded as 0%.

8.3.2 Implementing the Late Submission Penalty Process

The late submission penalty applies to all learners on all modules contributing to a DBS programme leading to a QQI award.

The procedure applies to learners submitting summative first-attempt continuous assessments i.e. assessments submitted for grading purposes that contribute to the pass mark for the module, across all programmes.

Learners are to be notified of the penalty policy and a copy of the full policy should be made available to them.

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

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

Learners must be advised of the submission date and time of their assessments at the point of the assessment being issued.

A formal policy and procedure for considering requests for extensions to continuous assessment deadlines is in place (see personal mitigating circumstances policy). Learners are required to familiarise themselves with the policy and take the correct steps specified in order to avail of an extension.

All assessments must be submitted electronically through Moodle, except where an alternative arrangement has been agreed, on or before the specified deadline.
Electronic submissions are identified as final submission for grading, are date and time stamped and may not be amended or changed after being submitted.

Learners are required to retain a copy of the assessment work/project submitted.

The internal examiner will note the date and time of assessment submission and will apply appropriate penalties as detailed within the DBS policy.

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

Retrospective claims for PMCs are only accepted in exceptional circumstances and will be decided on by the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

8.4 Repeat Assessment Policy

Title:	Repeat Assessment Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Lecturers Moderators
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
Date approved by Academic Board	
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

8.4.1 Entitlement to Repeat Assessment

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

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

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

Learners are advised that failure to pass at the first attempt a module which contributes to an award calculation will result in the loss of entitlement to an honours award (or other such classification higher than a pass). This is in line with QQI Sectoral Convention number 3 - no repeat for honours.

Learners wishing to avail of a repeat assessment opportunity are required to pay the associated fee in order to be registered for the assessment. Non-payment of the fee will result in the assessment not being arranged (where for example placement or lab facilities are required) or marked.

Learners who do not avail of assessment opportunities offered to them at the time they are offered, except where authorised exceptions have been agreed, will be deemed to have foregone the assessment opportunity and a mark of 0% will be recorded.

A learner that exhausts all assessment opportunities as a result of failure or non-participation including due to non-communication with DBS regarding intentions or circumstances will be

presented to the Examination Board as such with a recommendation they are academically withdrawn due to programme failure.

8.4.1.1 Undergraduate Programmes

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

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

Specific requirements of individual programmes are outlined in the student handbook.

8.4.1.2 Postgraduate Programmes

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

Learners on a postgraduate programme are normally only provided with one repeat assessment opportunity for a research project / dissertation / thesis module. The Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring the learners are aware of limitations and implications of repeat attempts for all modules as part of the assessment schedule, communicated at the outset of the programme or stage.

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

Specific requirements of individual programmes are outlined in the student handbook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Repeat attempts for modules that do contribute to the final award calculation will be capped at 40% and repeat attempt marks will be considered in the award calculation thus removing the learners entitlement to an honours award (or other such classification above a pass), in line with QQI sectoral convention number 3. Learners who fail an award calculation module at the first attempt will be entitled to the maximum of a pass award.

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

It is the learner's responsibility to be fully aware of the impact on their marks and subsequent award of failing to submit or failing to pass assessment components at the first attempt. It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure the assessment schedule including information pertaining to regulations and awards is communicated to the learner or that they are directed to its location.

8.4.3 Implementing the Repeat Assessment Opportunities Policy

This procedure applies to all learners undertaking summative assessments, with a clearly communicated submission deadline, on all DBS programmes leading to a QQI award.

The repeat opportunities policy promotes the principles of fairness and consistency in the assessment process and ensures the application of the QQI sectoral convention of no repeat for honours.

Learners should be advised of the assessment regulations, repeat opportunities and implications of failing to comply with same as part of their induction. It is clearly documented in writing within the student handbook and a copy made available at all times on the College website.

For clarity, non-submission refers to a learner not sitting an examination at the scheduled date and time or not completing and putting forward for marking an assessment task by the scheduled date. In the event of non-submission, a mark of 0% will be applied and an assessment attempt recorded.

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

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

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

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

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

Repeat opportunities are only authorised where a learner needs to recover failed module(s). Repeat opportunities to improve performance from an existing pass standard are not authorised in any circumstances.

Where a learner achieves an overall module mark of 35 – 39% pass by compensation may be applied subject to the specific requirements of this as outlined in QQI HET Assessment and Standards 2013 and any special regulations of the programme concerned.

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

Learners who fail to pass an award contributing module using first attempt grades (including through Pass by Compensation where this is permitted) but achieve a Pass using repeat attempt grades will only be entitled to a Pass award.

Learners who demonstrate a pattern of poor performance or a significant drop in performance are brought to the attention of the Programme Leader or Level Manager to arrange for a meeting with the learner concerned to establish any circumstances that may be impacting performance and to advise of supports available.

It is the learner's responsibility to avail of any supports provided.

Any learner is entitled to appeal a fail grade in accordance with the DBS Academic Appeals Policy.

8.5 Academic Impropriety Policy

Title:	Academic Impropriety Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Lecturers Programme Leaders Assessment and Regulations Manager
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

8.5.1 Promoting Academic Integrity

DBS promotes academic integrity and is proactive in encouraging correct academic writing and research skills. All learners are advised of the expectations in relation to academic work submitted for assessment and are provided with access to services to support the development of appropriate academic skills. In addition, DBS uses plagiarism detection software (see **appendix 8.7** for full details of the plagiarism detection software policy).

Learners are advised that DBS takes cases of academic impropriety very seriously and will apply penalties up to and including expulsion from the College with no right to return or entitlement to a refund.

DBS reserves the right to protect its reputation as an academic institution and will defend any legal challenge to its implementation of this policy and the outcomes of deliberations relating to academic impropriety.

Examiners are reminded that poor academic conduct or academic impoverishment is not to be confused with impropriety. Instances of academic impoverishment should be addressed through marking accordingly and providing the appropriate feedback to assist academic development. Cases of suspected academic impropriety i.e. the intention to secure an unfair advantage through dishonest academic practice in the assessment process, should be addressed through the Academic Impropriety procedure.

DBS encourages communities of learning, the creation of learning partnerships, and authorised collaboration in assessment. However, all assessment tasks are to be entirely the work of the individual submitting it unless stated otherwise. Any assessments found to contain work the same as, or similar to, that of another learner, past or present, will also be considered academic impropriety and the appropriate procedure will be applied and penalties determined as appropriate. In order to deter learners from considering academic impropriety as a low risk option in cases where they feel failure is likely, in considering the penalty to be imposed the Committee should normally ensure that any penalty is more significant than having made an honest attempt at assessment and failed.

8.5.1.1 Definitions

Cheating:

Examples of cheating include but are not restricted to:

1. Any form of communication with or copying from any other source during an examination/assessment

2. Use of a third party for the completion or partial completion of an assessment e.g. friend, family member or essay writing service

3. Introducing any form of written or other material into an examination (including that stored electronically) other than that specified on an examination paper

4. Use of mobile phone during an assessment or examination

5. Forgery, alteration or misuse of College documents, records or identity cards

6. Submission of false claims of prior qualification, research or experience in order to gain credit for prior learning.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is defined as: the presentation of work, written or otherwise, of any other person, including another learner, or institution, as the candidate's own. Plagiarism includes but is not restricted to:

1. Verbatim copying of another's work without clear identification and acknowledgement

2. Close paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation without clear identification and acknowledgement

3. Unidentified /unacknowledged presentation of another's concept as one's own.

Collusion:

Collusion is defined as: the conscious collaboration, without official approval, between two or more learners in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical or substantially similar form and/or is represented by each to be the product of his or her individual efforts. Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised co-operation between a learner and another person in the preparation and production of work, which is presented as the learner's own.

8.5.2 Implementation of the Academic Impropriety Policy

DBS operates on the basis of fairness and transparency, promotes academic integrity and seeks to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment process. As a result, the Academic Impropriety

policy will be applied in a consistent manner and all instances of suspected academic impropriety will be managed through this procedure.

DBS will not condone or facilitate academic conduct that seeks to intentionally compromise the reputation of DBS as an academic institution and the standards of the programmes it offers.
All learners will be notified of the action to be taken in any instance of academic impropriety being suspected and the potential penalties that may be applied.

The academic impropriety policy applies to all learners on all DBS programmes regardless of location, mode of study or target award. Exceptions apply where an alternative policy has been agreed as part of a formal collaboration.

The Assessment and Regulations Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy in respect of all cases brought to his / her attention and is also responsible for ensuring all lecturing staff are aware of the policy, of their obligations within it and how to act in cases of suspected academic impropriety.

The Assessment and Regulations Manager is responsible for determining whether an identified case of suspected impropriety warrants further investigation.

Where a suspicion of impropriety is identified the policy must be applied in a timely manner to ensure the interests of the learner concerned and consideration of examination board requirements. A learner must be of any suspicion and of any proceedings where a matter is being investigated. Notification should be in writing and should normally be by email. The learner should be notified of their rights and provided with a link to or copy of the policy and procedure along with any source material identified in cases of suspected plagiarism.

Each learner has a right to attend a formal deliberating committee in respect of a case brought against them. Should they choose not to attend or participate the committee is authorised to proceed regardless. DBS strongly encourages the attendance of learners at applicable meetings of the AI committee. Learners are permitted to ask a member of student services or the class representative to attend the meeting with them.

Learners are advised that the deliberating committee is required to determine if, on the balance of probability, impropriety occurred or not. In that regard DBS believes there is no justification for impropriety and claims of stress, financial pressure, ill health or other such instances will not be accepted as justification for academic impropriety. Equally, lack of knowledge is not considered a suitable defence. DBS provides extensive information to all learners on the regulations and their responsibilities within them.

Dishonest conduct in assessment will not be tolerated and learners should look to alternative options in times of high pressure or uncertainty. Any learner who believes they are subject to pressure that is impacting their studies and their ability to satisfy assessment requirements is advised to consult Student Services, the Programme Leader or module lecturer and request appropriate supports or information on the options available to them.

DBS will retain a written record of each stage of proceedings. In the event that it is found on the balance of probabilities that no offence has occurred, all records of the allegation will be removed and deleted from the learner record.

8.5.3 Initial Action in Instances of Suspected Academic Impropriety

8.5.3.1 During the Examination Sitting

Any member of staff who suspects academic impropriety during assessment under examination conditions must report such suspicions immediately to the Chief Invigilator/Examinations Officer or representative from Academic Affairs.

The Chief Invigilator/Examinations Officer is required to approach the learner concerned and ask them to step outside the examination hall. A second invigilator or staff member should be present for this. The chief invigilator or Examinations Officer is required to:

- Confirm the identity of the learner and confiscate the learner's I.D card temporarily
- explain the suspicions and reason for suspicion
- note the response of the learner
- remove any unauthorised material
- advise the learner of the entitlement to complete the examination and

- confirm the requirement for the learner to report to the Academic Affairs Office immediately after the examination concludes.

On returning to the hall, the invigilator is required to annotate the script clearly at that point. The learner is then permitted to finish the examination.

The Chief Invigilator is required to submit a full, written report on the incident to the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

At the end of the examination, the learner concerned must present himself/herself immediately to the Academic Affairs Office where he / she will be advised on the next steps in the case of suspected academic impropriety. The learner will have their I.D card returned at this juncture, along with any personal items not deemed relevant to the investigation.

The relevant script is corrected as normal.

8.5.3.2 Suspected Academic Impropriety during Grading of Learner Assessment

Any Examiner who suspects academic impropriety must report such suspicions immediately to the Assessment and Regulations Manager. In making such a report the examiner is required to provide:

- a copy of the learner submission
- the mark sheet and feedback for the learner based on being marked as normal
- copies of all relevant evidence/documentation, supporting this suspicion
- a completed copy of the DBS Academic Impropriety form

This should be done as soon as the Academic Impropriety is suspected, to allow for appropriate investigatory action and possible disciplinary proceedings in advance of the examinations and/or Examination Boards.

Each learner is entitled to the presumption of innocence and therefore the assessment must be marked as normal. The grade and feedback will not be released until such a time as the allegation has been investigated and an outcome determined on the balance of probability.

Where suspicion arises due to a report from plagiarism detection software, the lecturer must first have reviewed and interpreted the report and made an informed judgement on whether or not it appears academic impropriety may have occurred. Information produced by the plagiarism

detection software does not automatically equate to confirmation or evidence of plagiarism. Further guidance can be obtained from the Assessment and Regulations Manager, The Head of Academic Programmes or the Research Librarian.

8.5.4 Procedures in Cases of Suspected Academic Impropriety

The Assessment and Regulations Manager or nominee reviews the Invigilator's report or the examiner's report and evidence to determine if there is a case of potential academic impropriety or whether it is academic impoverishment. If it is decided that there is insufficient basis for a charge of academic impropriety, no further action is taken in the matter. If it is decided that there is a case to answer, the Assessment and Regulations Manager will arrange for the learner to be advised of the allegation and requested to provide a response to the evidence and allegation put forward.

8.5.4.1 Investigatory Stage

Each learner is entitled to the presumption of innocence and must also be afforded the right of response to any allegations.

The learner must be contacted and provided with the following:

- Confirmation that an allegation of suspected impropriety has been received
- The origin of the allegation including the role of the individual making the allegation and the assessment concerned
- The report and evidence presented to support the allegation
- A copy of the Academic Impropriety Policy or link to it
- The right to respond
- The availability of Student Services to provide assistance
- The deadline by which a response must be received in writing
- Notification that failure to respond will result in the case proceeding in absence of a response
- A warning that failure to admit any wrong doing in the investigatory stage may result in more severe penalties should the allegation be proven at a later stage in proceeding.
- Notification that penalties for academic impropriety are applied up to and including expulsion from the college with no right to return or entitlement to a refund.

A learner should be provided with a minimum of 5 working days to provide their response before any subsequent action is taken.

8.5.4.2 Potential Outcomes of the Investigatory Stage

On completion of the investigatory stage, the Assessment and Regulations Manager is required to determine one of the following outcomes on the balance of probability:

1. No offence has occurred

2. Admission of the offence by the learner

3. Unresolved i.e. the evidence suggests there may be a case to answer but the learner has not admitted to any offence, intentional or otherwise.

The learner must be notified of the outcome of the investigatory stage, and any associated actions, at the earliest opportunity and not normally more than 10 working days after the response deadline provided to the learner.

Where the Assessment and Regulations Manager finds that no offence has occurred. The matter will be considered concluded and the results will be authorised for release to the learner.

Where the Assessment and Regulations Manager is dealing with admission of the offence by the learner the following options apply:

Undergraduate*:*

For a first offence in an undergraduate non-award bearing module a mark of 0% and requirement to repeat the assessment, and the module capped at 40% will be imposed. The learner will also be obliged to attend and complete the DBS Library Service course on Academic Writing and present their confirmation of completion to the Assessment and Regulations Manager with 4 weeks.

For a first offence in an undergraduate award-bearing module a mark of 0%, requirement to repeat the assessment, capping the module mark at 40% and capping of the award as a pass award will apply. The learner will also be obliged to attend and complete the DBS Library Service course on Academic Writing and present their confirmation of completion to the Assessment and Regulations Manager with 4 weeks.

Postgraduate*:*

For a first offence in any taught module a mark of 0%, requirement to repeat the assessment, capping of the module at 40% and capping of the award as a pass award shall be applied. The learner will also be obliged to attend and complete the DBS Library Service

course on Academic Writing and present their confirmation of completion to the Assessment and Regulations Manager with 4 weeks.

Any instances of a second or subsequent offence regardless of programme framework level will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

Learners found to have committed multiple offences of academic impropriety will be subject to serious penalties up to and including withdrawal from the programme, with no entitlement to refund or readmission.

In order to deter learners from considering academic impropriety as a low risk option in cases where they feel failure is likely, in considering the penalty to be imposed the Assessment and Regulations Manager should normally ensure that any penalty is more significant than having made an honest attempt at assessment and failed.

Where the matter is unresolved, the case is referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee convenes once per academic term and prior to the meeting of the Examination Board or as required in respect of cases of Academic Impropriety. The Disciplinary Committee can be convened at the request of the Assessment and Regulations Manager outside of the regular schedule as required.

For full details on the proceedings of the Disciplinary Committee and potential outcomes please see DBS Learner Disciplinary Policy, Chapter 9.

8.6 Examination Boards

Examination Boards are responsible for the monitoring and moderation of the assessment process, for determining student progression and for recommending the conferment of the relevant awards of the awarding body to the Academic Board. These guidelines consolidate current regulations and examples of good practice relating to the conduct of Examination Boards. They set out practices by which Boards can safeguard the probity, consistency and hence the authority of their decisions.

1. An Examination Board is associated with each stage of a programme.

2. Academic staff members who are Internal Examiners and teach and examine on a relevant module, the marks of which are before a Board, are *ex officio* members of the corresponding Board.

3. External Examiners, as approved by the Academic Board, are members of Examination Boards.

4. An Examination Board makes recommendations to the Academic Board for the ratification of the results for each stage of a programme, including the final award classification.

8.6.1   Composition of Examination Boards

An Examination Board shall be established by the Examinations Office for each programme for which DBS has responsibility for the examination of students. The composition of the Examination Board shall be in accordance with the requirements of the awarding body and DBS procedures. Current regulations of validating bodies shall be used in conjunction with these procedures where appropriate.

The number and composition of individual Examination Boards varies depending on the nature of the academic programme. The generic *ex officio* composition for an Examination Board for taught academic programmes is:

• Chair as appointed by the Assessment and Regulations Manager

• Head of Academic Programmes or nominee

• Inter-Board Representative (observer to ensure consistency between Examination Boards)

• PLs

• External Examiners relevant to the programmes (as approved by the Academic Board).

• Internal examiners contributing marks to the Board

• Placement Co-ordinators (where appropriate)

- Secretary to the Board

The number and remit of Examination Boards is overseen by Academic Board.The Chair and Secretary of each Board is appointed by the Assessment and Regulations Manager.

The quorum for a Board normally consists of the Chair, the Head of Academic Programmes, the Secretary, at least one External Examiner and a sufficient number of Internal Examiners to competently deliberate on the assessment, (i.e. 50% of Internal Examiners as agreed by the Chair), all of whom must sign the presented Exam Board Reports, which are generated by the Examinations Office.

No student may be a member of a Board or attend any other Examiners' meetings, other than as a candidate for assessment (in the case of a *viva*), except where a member of academic staff or approved External Examiner is registered as a student on another programme, within the College, and not considered at that board. In that instance he/she is not to be disqualified from membership.

The Chair is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that at least one member of academic staff representing every module on the programme is present at an Examination Board, such that the interests of all students are properly addressed. At meetings to determine student progression on the programme only, at least one External Examiner is normally present. At meetings to determine or recommend academic awards, all External Examiners appointed to the relevant programmes are normally present.

Examiners are required to;

- attend any internal review meeting convened for the purpose of internal review of examination activity to check paperwork
- attend the relevant Examination Board at which the results of candidates are formally decided.
- defend their marking and are expected to be prepared accordingly.

Each Examination Board shall meet at times throughout the year when needed to fulfil its duties under the scheme of assessment defined in the Approved Programme Schedule e.g. spring, summer, or autumn.

8.6.2 Knowledge of Programme Regulations

In order to contribute to the Examination Board's decisions, all members of the Board must have a thorough understanding of the assessment regulations.

- The Examination Office will make available, copies of the current programme assessment regulations to all members of the Board. Members of the Board should be made aware of any changes to the regulations, in advance of the Board. A current set of regulations should be maintained on the Examinations Office web pages.

- Academic staff members of the Board should be encouraged to raise any questions concerning programme assessment regulations at programme board meetings or Boards of Studies.

- Where necessary, the Chair of the Examination Board should give a short verbal overview of the key regulations at the start of each Board meeting.

8.6.3   Preparation for the Board

Examination Boards can conduct their business effectively if all the necessary information is clearly presented. The following procedures should therefore be observed:

- Where necessary, the Chair of the Examination Board should give a short verbal overview of the key regulations at the start of each Board meeting.

- Marks should be presented to the Examination Board using the DBS Assessment Broadsheets from Agresso.

- In exceptional circumstances, it may be deemed necessary to make global changes to marks. Although not part of the guidelines or regulations, this may only be done in consultation with the Assessment and Regulations Manager **and** with the specific approval of the External Examiner(s) and of the Examination Board. In such circumstances, it is necessary to present both the raw and 'normalised' marks to the Examination Board.

- Claims of failure due to personal mitigating circumstances (PMC's) should normally only be considered if the procedures for dealing with PMC's have been applied.

- An *Internal Module Board* should be held in advance of the Examination Board. This meeting is held to test the veracity of data to be presented to the Examination Board, to identify possible problems or gaps in the available information, and to identify required supplementary information e.g. PMC supporting documentation, to facilitate the efficient running of the planned Examination Board.

This meeting is the responsibility of the School and chaired by the Head of Academic Programmes. The pre-meeting involves all internal examiners. Its aim is to:

- ensure that the marks to be presented to the Examination Board are complete and accurate;
- formulate recommendations to the Examination Board and to identify particular areas where the advice of externals is needed;
- identify any further information needed by the Examination Board e.g. evidence of PMC's, or outcomes of Academic Impropriety, including invigilators reports; and
- collate reports of supervised work experience (where appropriate).

The Internal Module Board cannot compel an assessor to review their assessment findings or change a mark. Minutes are recorded at the meeting but are not presented to the Examination Board. The results of the meeting ensures complete and accurate information for presentation to the Examination Board.

8.6.4 Conduct of Examination Boards

I. The responsibility of an Examination Board is to review the marks presented to the Board and make recommendations as to the overall result for each candidate.

II. The proceedings and deliberations of the Examination Boards are strictly confidential.

III. The External Examiners are appointed in accordance with section 8.9.

IV. The Examinations Officer, following consultation with the Assessment and Regulations Manager and liaison with the Schools Executive Board, advises the Board members and appropriate accreditation agencies of the preferred dates for Examination Board meetings.

V. The Examination's Office staff make all of the arrangements for the accommodation of the Board with the DBS Facilities Department.

VI. The Examination Board should agree the marks for each module for each student, including the breakdown of examination and continuous assessment, and have due regard to award classifications in considering the overall result for a student. In discharging this responsibility the Examination Board may exercise discretion in marginal cases by minor modification of marks.

VII. Individual student marks should not normally be changed without consulting the Examiner(s) who awarded the original mark. It follows that the Board does not normally change a mark without the relevant Internal Examiner being present. However, if a relevant Internal Examiner's other obligations prevent him/her from attending the Board, he/she

may be consulted in advance about the potential for moderating the mark. Pre-meetings are a useful vehicle for such consultation.

VIII.   Changes to marks by an Examination Board otherwise should only be permitted if:

        a.   a clerical or administrative error in transmission of marks has occurred

        b.   a late change to a mark is recommended by an External Examiner

IX.   In both instances the change should be submitted with explanation in writing to the Examination Board. The resulting adjustment of marks should be made before the results are otherwise considered by the Board.

X.   To confirm the result/award being made by the Examination Board, the Chair reads out the decision that the Board has adopted immediately after and in respect of each individual case. The Secretary may also be required to read back to the Board the recorded decision.

XI.   A hard copy of the agreed mark sheets is signed by the Chair of the Examination Board, the Head of Academic Programmes, the Internal Examiner(s) and, when present, by the External Examiner(s).

XII.   Where in special circumstances, an Examination Board recommends a change in marks outside its normal discretion, the original marks should stand pending a decision of Academic Board. The same should apply where any Examiner present dissents from a recommendation.

XIII.   Where the Examination Board is unable to reach a consensus regarding an individual's, mark, progression or award, the Chair of the Board, with the agreement of the External Examiners, may wish to decide the result. If any member of the Board wishes to dissent from the decision of the Board, it should be recorded in the minutes.

XIV.   The minutes of the Examination Board Meeting should be concise. Discussion relating to the individual students should be recorded only in 'borderline' cases, PMCs should be recorded for future reference, and then in a summary form. There should be no recording of any discussion relating to individuals clearly passing, failing or being referred. The results list should be regarded as the primary record of the meeting. Any general comments made by the External Examiner(s) about the examinations should be recorded, but the External Examiner's written report should be regarded as the definitive document.

XV.   In order to ensure that the recorded decisions of the Board are unambiguous, the minutes should follow the terminology conventions set out by the relevant awarding body.

XVI.   An attendance sheet is provided by the Examinations Office to record attendances/apologies at an Examination Board Meeting.

8.6.5 Action Following the Examination Board

I.   In addition to maintaining formal records, consisting of minutes of Examination Boards and the results lists, the Examinations Office arranges for any agreed changes of marks arising from the External Examinations Board, to be inputted onto Agresso. These final marks or grades are available to the individual student, as a transcript and on request under the Data Protection Acts. The marks in individual papers or sections are not be released to a third party except, on the written request of a student (e.g. applying for exemption from further professional examinations or seeking to enter another educational establishment).

II.   The Examinations Office produces a results list (pass, fail, refer, etc). This result list is signed by the Chair of the Examination Board and at least one External Examiner. Results are then released online on a specified date, which is decided and notified by the Examinations Office and confirmed with the School.

III.   The Examinations Office files the original results list, signed by the Chair, as the official record in the Examinations Office archive in accordance with the College's Record Management Policy.

IV.   Transcripts of Award Stage results are sent to learners by post within seven days of the release of results on the DBS website.

V.   Following the meeting of the Examination Board, the Examinations Office produces minutes of the meeting for review and agreement by the Chair of the Examination Board, are circulated to all members of the Examination Board and the Assessment and Regulations Manager. The master is filed as the official record in the Examinations Office. These minutes are presented to the next meeting of the Examination Board for review and approval.

VI.   After each examination session, a summary report to include Chairs Actions is prepared and reviewed initially by the Examination Office. The summary report is distributed to Head of Academic Programmes, the Head of Faculty and School Operations and PLs for review by the Boards of Studies, and submitted to the School Executive Board. The report includes a statistical analysis of student performance, including progression statistics for each programme. The report also includes a reflective commentary on any general teaching,

learning or assessment issues that have surfaced at the Examination Boards (or through the External Examiner comments).

8.6.6 Examination Board Process for ICM/DBS Diploma Programmes in the Professional School

The Examiner is required to collect the scripts and other relevant material, from the Professional School Examination Office including

- The examination scripts
- a copy of the examination paper
- a copy of the approved marking scheme
- a copy of the exam attendance register
- a 'Returned Examinations Check-list'(**F8.6**) to ensure the Examiner has completed all required tasks
- forms for the Examiner's Report and Internal Moderator's Report,

The Examiner must pass all the examination material for review to the designated Internal Moderator by the appointed deadline. The Internal Moderator reviews:

- The Examiner's Report
- Overall student performance as indicated in the breakdown of marks as on report
- A sample of scripts to confirm appropriateness of first marking

1. Following reflection on the assessment material, the Internal Moderator completes a formal Internal Moderator's Report (**F8.4**) in which he/she may recommend:
   - Full adoption of the Examiner's marks and report
   - Adjustment of marks for individual scripts
   - A global adjustment of marks

Any such adjustments should be discussed and agreed with the Examiner. Differences of opinion should be resolved by the Head of Department. The Internal Moderator returns the examination material to the Professional School Examinations Office.

8.7 External Examiners

Please refer to the QQI policies on external examiners as outlined in Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining, HETAC March 2010 (**Appendix 8.5**).

8.7.1 Appointment of External Examiners

External Examiner reports are considered an indispensable element of peer judgement in monitoring the quality and standard of each programme in DBS. The appointment and approval of External Examiners varies with the Awarding Body.

External Examiners for QQI programmes are appointed by DBS under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Proposals for QQI External Examiners are nominated by the PL and such nominations are endorsed by the relevant Head of Faculty and School Operations based on the criteria as indicated in *section 8.9.2* below. The nominating School complete the "Application for Appointment of New External Examiner", which is accompanied by the candidate's *curriculum vitae*. This is approved by the Academic Appoints Sub-Committee on behalf of the Academic Board. Where required, it is forwarded to QQI by the QA Officer. When approved, the candidate is then formally invited to become an External Examiner for modules/subjects within their field of expertise.

The External Examiners are supplied with an External Examiners' Induction Pack and invited to an induction process where details are provided of the relevant programmes such as module descriptors, assessment criteria and assessment regulations. Examiners will be notified of dates for terms, semesters and academic years, and the customary timing of External Examiner activities in the DBS context, as well as the terms and conditions of appointment, a formal contract of appointment is issued and completed by the candidate.

Conditions imposed by professional bodies, such as The Honorable Society of King's Inns, must also be met where required.

8.7.2 Criteria for the Appointment of an External Examiner

The following criteria are adopted by the Academic Board for consideration during the appointment of proposed external examiners:

Each External Examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate in level and subject for examining the programme(s). Both the level and the subject of the examiner's

qualifications should generally be in a cognate discipline to what is to be examined in the programme.

Each External Examiner's standing, expertise and experience should be such as to enable fulfilment of his/her responsibility in the maintenance of the academic standards of the programme(s) in the context of higher education both nationally and internationally.

External Examiners should be drawn from academic life and where appropriate, from business, industry and professional practice. Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:

- the present (or last, if retired) post and place of work;
- the range and scope of experience across higher education/professions; and
- the current and recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in a relevant field of study.

There must be an appropriate balance and expertise in the team of External Examiners. The proposed External Examiner should complement the external examining team in terms of expertise and examining experience. Where possible, a balance between academic and professional practitioners should be employed.

Where possible, each External Examiner should have had significant recent examining experience as an Internal Examiner or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students in the subject area.

If the proposed examiner has no previous external examiner experience at the appropriate level, their nomination can be supported by either:

- other external examining experience;
- extensive internal examining experience; and
- other relevant and recent experience likely to support the external examiner role.

However, consideration is given in those exceptional situations where the pool of potential External Examiners is especially limited. This is most likely where provision of the subject is particularly limited within the sector. Every effort is made to mentor proposed External Examiners without prior experience. Where possible, they would join an experienced team of External Examiners or, where

there is only one Examiner, they should initially work alongside an experienced currently appointed External, on a related programme.

External Examiners should be drawn from a wide variety of institutional/professional contexts and traditions in order that the programme benefits from a wide range of external scrutiny.

There should not be current reciprocal external examining between departments (i.e. nominees should not normally be members of a department in an institution where a member of the nominating department is serving as an External Examiner). For any one programme, External Examiners should not be appointed consecutively from the same institution - the College should seek to draw nominations from a variety of institutions, and should avoid multiple nominations from the same institution within a single discipline.

External Examiners should not be over-extended in their external examining duties. As a norm, an External Examiner should not hold more than two concurrent external examining appointments for taught programmes. This policy can only be waived in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of Academic Board, and with cognisance of the Awarding Body's policies in this regard.

Former members of College staff should not be invited to become External Examiners before a lapse of at least three years.

Those registered for an award of the College or the awarding body are ineligible for appointment as External Examiners in any part of the College.

It is the responsibility of the External Examiner to declare an interest if placed in a position of making a judgement about any student with whom there has been direct contact e.g.:

- as a sponsor, relative or friend
- as a close professional colleague
- having been involved with the supervision of the student on placement or professional training.

The College takes due cognisance of the desirability of gender balance when nominating teams of External Examiners. The AASC is responsible for resolving conflicts of interest in the appointment of External Examiners.

8.7.3   Communication with External Examiners

Communication with External Examiners takes place in a number of contexts throughout each academic year. The principal points of contact with the External Examiners through the year are:

1. External moderation of examination papers and marking schemes are supplied to the External Examiner by the Examinations Office)

2. Review of coursework and examination scripts, marks and examiners reports (the material is supplied to the External Examiner by the Examinations Office)

3. Attendance and participation in Examination Boards (the invitation to attend is conveyed to the External Examiner from the Examinations Office)

4. Input to programme design, development and review, on request of the PL.

5. End-of year report (through the generation and submission of the report by the External Examiner)

Briefing sessions for External Examiners are held annually. These sessions cover the relevant procedures and documentation and seek to ensure that there is common understanding of requirements and responsibilities between DBS and the External Examiners. In addition to their role as external moderators of module assessments, External Examiners are seen as a most valuable resource in the context of academic development of the College. It is DBS policy and practice to invite External Examiners to provide input to the design and development of new programmes as well as the periodic review of existing programmes.

8.7.4   External Examiner's Report

The end of year report by each External Examiner is an important document in the broad context of academic quality management. Each External Examiner is asked to comment on a number of academic matters including:

- Academic standards
- Assessment processes and documentation
- Effectiveness of approaches to teaching and learning
- Operation of Examination Boards
- Distinctive strengths and innovative features
- Institutional issues.

A copy of the standard External Examiner's Report Form (**F8.9**) is available on the shared drive.

The External Examiner reports are reviewed by the Head of Academic Programmes and Head of Faculty and School Operations in conjunction with the relevant Examiners. Any issues raised by the External Examiner are carefully considered and, where appropriate, acted upon. Any cross-departmental issues are progressed through the Head of Academic Programmes and a summary of issues raised with good practice commended is presented at the appropriate Board of Studies and where appropriate, the Schools Executive Board.

A formal response to each External Examiner's report is prepared by the PL and approved and sent by the Head of Academic Programmes, within four weeks of receipt of the final report.

It is the responsibility of the Assessment and Regulations Manager to ensure that all External Examiner reports are received and duly responded to. Issues highlighted and appropriate actions are detailed in the relevant Board of Studies and Annual Reports. This information also feeds into the programme development and review process.

8.8   Progression and Classification of Awards

Title:	Progression and Award Classification Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Board of Examiners
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders
	Head of School
	Assessment and Regulations Manager
	Head of Academic Enhancement
	Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

Learners must complete all modules on a programme in accordance with the validated programme schedule and timeframe approved for full time or part time as applicable.

The validated programme timeframe for a level 8 honours degree is normally 3 years full time or 4 years part time. Some honours degree programmes are delivered over 4 years full time.

The validated timeframe for a taught Masters degree is normally 1 year full time and 2 years part time.
The programme timeframes for all DBS programmes leading to a QQI award are communicated to potential learners in advance of application and again at the outset of their studies.

DBS recognises that circumstances may arise that prevent a learner from completing in the specified timeframe. Such circumstances include assessment failure and repeat assessment requirements, PMCs preventing completion of assessments, or circumstances warranting deferral. In each of the situations there are time-limited arrangements for a learner to satisfy their responsibilities and requirements.

Where a learner is unable to satisfy the completion of the programme within communicated time-limited parameters associated with deferrals or repeat opportunities, the appropriate action will be taken to withdraw the learner and issue a transcript of results for all successfully completed modules.

Where a learner who has previously been withdrawn wishes to return to DBS to complete their programme of study they are required to apply through the standard admissions process and seek exemptions for successfully completed modules that are still valid for the programme they wish to undertake. Exemptions will only be granted in accordance with the DBS exemptions policy.

Where a learner has been withdrawn as a result of failure within the maximum permitted assessment opportunities, they will not normally be permitted to return to the programme or a programme of equivalent or higher NFQ level unless evidence of potential to succeed can be provided to the satisfaction of DBS.

8.8.1 Undergraduate Programmes

Progression

A pass in a module is a positive statement of achievement, and a demonstration that the minimum intended learning outcomes have been met. A learner cannot repeat a module that has already been passed.

To progress from stage 1 to stage 2, or stage 2 to stage 3, (or in the cases where this applies, stage 3 to stage 4) the learner is normally required to pass all mandatory modules, and the prescribed number of elective modules as outlined in the Approved Programme Schedule for the preceding stage.

The minimum mark required to a pass a module is 40%.   The mark for a module is the total, or average of, marks awarded for the individual assessment components.   No individual component needs to be passed unless it is prescribed in the Approved Programme Schedule as a special regulation such as the requirement for a Professional Body.

No individual component that has been passed can be retaken for the purpose of improving the overall performance in the module.

Recovering Failed Modules

A learner who fails to achieve a pass mark in a module may be awarded a pass by compensation, provided that a pass by compensation is not precluded in the Approved Programme Schedule and that:

I. the mark falls within the 35-39% band for that module,

II. the learner has attained marks in excess of 40% in at least one other subject equivalent to double the deficiency in the subject which is being compensated,

III. all modules at the stage are passed as first attempts,

IV. no module at the stage has been failed outright (<35%).

Pass by compensation can be applied to a maximum of one third of the stage, 20 credits of a 60 credit stage or 10 credits of a 30 credit stage, and then only where a student has taken all modules at that stage.

When pass by compensation has been awarded, the numeric result obtained will remain on the transcript and Diploma Supplement for award calculations, but the transcript, and Diploma Supplement, will indicate a 'pass by compensation'.

Where all of the modules in a stage are not taken at one sitting, the learner may be counselled to resit the failed module or component of that module.

A learner is exempt from further examination in each module in which a pass has been awarded.

Notwithstanding, a learner who with the agreement of the Examination Board, is to re-sit a full year of study, other than the final year, may do so for the actual marks attained provided that at the outset s/he agrees formally to relinquish his/her previous marks in full.

Where a learner fails a module they have the option to:

- resit the failed component,
- retake the module with attendance or
- substitute an alternative module, where the failed module is an elective on the programme.

Resit

The Examination Board will allow a maximum of three resit opportunities to recover a failed module, subject to the validated regulations of the programme.

Failure to avail of an assessment opportunity is considered an attempt for the purpose of entitlement to resists.

The nature of the reassessment, either examination or continuous assessment, or both, should be agreed at the Examination Board.

Where both the examination and any applicable individual continuous assessment elements are failed, all failed elements should be offered to the learner for reassessment. A learner has the right to choose not to avail of all re-assessment opportunities and attempt to pass the module utilising a combination of re-assessment and original attempts even where the original attempt was a fail grade e.g. where a module has 3 assessment components worth 50% 25% and 25% and the learner achieves 40 for the first 30 for the second and 0 for the third, giving a module mark of 35%, they

reserve the right to only attempt the 3rd assessment again in order to achieve an overall module pass. However, they are considered to have been offered a repeat for the second component also.

The mark/grades for any components passed, will be carried forward for the purposes of calculating the overall mark/grade for a module where the learner failed to meet the minimum standard in the initial attempt. Where a combination of passed components and fail components result in an overall pass for the module, the failed components will also be carried forward. Essentially those components that have been passed will not be permitted to be repeated and a learner is only required to pass a module overall, unless explicitly stated otherwise in programme documentation.

Where the assessment was an unseen assessment (e.g. a written examination) the resit paper should not be the same as the original.

Any failed examination must be attempted at the next scheduled repeat sitting for that examination, except where the learner has an approved deferral.

The resit mark for the module will be presented to the Board of Examiners as a second or subsequent attempt.

If the resit mark is not at the award stage, or does not contributes to the award calculation, then a capped mark of 40% will be applied.

If the resit mark contributes to the award calculation then a capped module mark of 40% will be applied and the learner will be restricted to a pass award in line with QQI sectoral convention number 3 which outlines no repeat for honours.

Retake

In some instances a retake of the module may be more appropriate, for example if the performance was very poor across all assessments or where significant practical work was involved.

In the case where a module is retaken with attendance no marks from the previous attempt are carried forward.

A requirement to retake is at the discretion of the Examination Board**.**

The retake mark for the module will be presented to the Board of Examiners as a second or subsequent attempt.

If the retake mark is not at the award stage, and does not contribute to the award calculation, then a capped mark of 40% will be applied.

If the retake mark contributes to the award calculation, then a capped module mark of 40% will be applied and the learner will be restricted to a pass award in line with QQI sectoral convention number 3 which outlines no repeat for honours.

In the case of a retake leading to a minor award, special purpose award or other award where no classification of award is issued, the retake mark will be capped at 40%.

Substitute

Where a learner has failed an elective module, they will be required to resit the module and if they fail to pass at the resit they have the option for two further resit attempts or to substitute it for another elective on the programme.

The selection of an alternative elective will depend on it being offered on the programme and the candidate has satisfied any pre-requisites.

The substitute module must be taken in its entirety.

The marks for the substituted module will be recorded as a first attempt but will be treated as a retake attempt for the purpose of award calculation i.e. sectoral convention number 3, no repeat for honours, will still apply if the result contributes towards the award calculation.

Deferral of examinations can only be considered if professional or medical documentation is presented to the relevant Programme Coordinator within ten working days of the commencement of the examination in question, and accepted by the Assessment and Regulations Manager. For the policy on Personal Mitigating Circumstance's (PMC) see Chapter 9.

8.8.2 Postgraduate Programmes

Learner must complete all modules in accordance with the validated programme schedule and approved timeline for completion, except where deferrals have been approved based upon mitigating circumstances which prevent this.

Higher Diploma and Post Graduate Diploma programmes are considered to be award stage only programmes.

A taught Masters Programmes normally consist of two stages, the taught component and a dissertation, both of which contribute to the final award.

Progression

A pass in a module is a positive statement of achievement, and a demonstration that the minimum intended learning outcomes have been met.

To progress from the taught stage of a Masters' programme to the dissertation stage a candidate is required to pass all mandatory modules and the prescribed number of elective modules as outlined in the Approved Programme Schedule.

The minimum mark required to a pass a module is 40%.

The mark for a module is the total, or average of, marks awarded for the individual assessment components.

No individual component needs to be passed, unless explicitly stated in programme documentation and is prescribed in the Approved Programme Schedule.

Pass by Compensation

Pass by compensation applies on Higher Diploma programmes in accordance with the QQI sectoral convention, except where explicitly stated otherwise in programme documentation.

Pass by compensation is not permitted on Post Graduate Diplomas and Masters' Programmes unless the practice of compensation is explicitly stated in programme documentation.

Recovery of Failed Modules

Where a learner fails a module they have the option to resit the failed component(s).

The Examination Board will allow a maximum of three resit opportunities to recover a failed module, subject to the validated regulations of the programme.

Failure to avail of an assessment opportunity is considered an attempt for the purpose of entitlement to resists.

The nature of the reassessment, either examination or continuous assessment, or both, should be in lie with the validated programme schedule.

Where both the examination and any applicable individual continuous assessment elements are failed, all failed elements should be offered to the learner for reassessment. A learner has the right to choose not to avail of all re-assessment opportunities and attempt to pass the module utilising a combination of re-assessment and original attempts even where the original attempt was a fail grade e.g. where a module has 3 assessment components worth 50% 25% and 25% and the learner achieves 40 for the first 30 for the second and 0 for the third, giving a module mark of 35%, they reserve the right to only attempt the 3rd assessment again in order to achieve an overall module pass. However, they are considered to have been offered a repeat for the second component also.

The mark/grades for any components passed, will be carried forward for the purposes of calculating the overall mark/grade for a module where the learner failed to meet the minimum standard in the initial attempt. Where a combination of passed components and fail components result in an overall pass for the module, the failed components will also be carried forward. Essentially those components that have been passed will not be permitted to be repeated and a learner is only required to pass a module overall, unless explicitly stated otherwise in programme documentation.

Where the assessment was an unseen assessment (e.g. a written examination) the resit paper should not be the same as the original.

Any failed examination must be attempted at the next scheduled repeat sitting for that examination, except where the learner has an approved deferral.

The resit mark for the module will be presented to the Board of Examiners as a second or subsequent attempt.

If the resit mark is not at the award stage, or does not contributes to the award calculation, then a capped mark of 40% will be applied.

If the resit mark contributes to the award calculation, then a capped module mark of 40% will be applied and the learner will be restricted to a pass award in line with QQI sectoral convention number 3 which outlines no repeat for honours (or other such classification above a pass).

Learners may only resubmit a master's dissertation once.

Deferral of examinations can only be considered if state, professional or medical documentation is forwarded directly to the relevant Programme Coordinator, within ten days of the commencement of the examination in question, and accepted by the PMC Committee. For the policy on Personal Mitigating Circumstance's (PMC) policy see Chapter 9.

8.8.3 Award Calculations

Classification of Awards and where exit awards are approved as part of the Approved Programme Schedule

The award class of the degree is calculated on the credit-weighted mean value of the grades that contribute to the award. DBS applies a percentage grading system. Learners are enrolled for the target award but may be awarded an associated minor, special purpose or alternative exit award, where available, when assessment opportunities have been exhausted or the Examination Board makes a recommendation in this regard.

Exit awards are only available where validated and where the learner has satisfied the specified requirements of that award.

Learners who join programmes with advanced standing are not eligible for an exit award on the grounds of accumulation of credits from Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL).

Full details on the National Framework of Qualifications is available at http://www.nfq-qqi.com/index.html

Except where explicitly stated otherwise in programme documentation award classifications are calculated as follows:

Higher Certificate (NFQ level 6)

The award classification will be calculated using a credit weighted average of the eligible module (%) marks at the first attempt.   This will be calculated as 100% of the Award Stage.

Honours Degree (NFQ level 7) and Bachelors Degree (NFQ level 8)

The award classification will be calculated using a credit weighted average of the eligible module (%) marks at the first attempt. This will be calculated in the majority of cases as follows:

Award Stage modules   -   80% weighting

Penultimate Stage*   -   20% weighting

*The weighted mean of the penultimate stage modules should be taken from the best modules worth 50 ECTS or 80% of the stage, i.e. one or two modules, up to a total of 10 ECTS are not included in the calculation of the stage average.

If exemptions exceed 10 ECTS at the penultimate stage then the award is to be calculated at 100% of the Award Stage.

Where a learner is being classified on the basis of the modules taken at the Award Stage only, as in the cases of direct entrants to the final year, then the award classification is based on 100% of the final year credits.

For award purposes, a candidate must satisfy all of the examination and other requirements set for the programme.

The learner must complete their award within the registration period for that award.

Learners should not be offered a repeat for honours where classifications of awards apply.

Special Purpose Awards (varying NFQ level)

Special purpose awards which have at least 60 ECTS and are comparable to a major award (at the same NFQ level), will be classified in the same manner as the relevant major award. Special purpose awards which have a volume of less than 60 ECTS shall be unclassified i.e. Pass/Fail.

Where classifications apply, the rules governing retake and resist of assessment will apply i.e. no repeat for honours.

Higher Diploma (NFQ level 8)

To be eligible for consideration for the award of Higher Diploma at Honours classification, a learner must pass all modules and satisfy the other requirements set for the programme. An Award with Honours may only be considered if the candidate has passed the final examination at:

• the first attempt,

• without exemption,

• and in one sitting for full time candidates, except where PMCs have been applied.

Postgraduate Diplomas and Masters' Degree (NFQ Level 9)

To be considered for an Honours Award (or any classification above pass) the candidate must pass all modules at the first attempt.

8.8.4 Table of Degree Classification Thresholds for all Programmes Leading to A QQI Award

The following tables, taken from QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013, describe the classifications available for major awards (made by QQI or by recognised institutions under delegated authority) in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). They also specify the required boundary values for grade point average (GPA) and percentage point average (PPA). DBS applies the PPA grading model only.

Classification of Higher Certificates (Level 6) and Ordinary Bachelor's Degrees (Level 7)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description 2009-2010 and following
Distinction	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Merit Grade 1	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Merit Grade 2	2.5	50%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

Classification of Honours Bachelor's degrees (Level 8) and Higher Diplomas (Level 8)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description 2009 - 2010 and following
First-class honours	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second-class honours Grade 1	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Second-class honours Grade 2	2.5	50%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

Classification of Postgraduate Diploma (Level 9)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description 2009 - 2010 and following
Distinction	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Merit	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

Classification of Taught Master's degrees (Level 9)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description 2009 - 2010 and following
First-class honours	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second-class honours	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

The threshold should be interpreted by the Examination Board in general, rather than in absolute, terms. The Board may make an award at a grade above the threshold specified in the table in cases where the Board feels that the learner's circumstances merit such action.

Learners may be considered by the Board for an award higher than that indicated by their mark, where:

- The final award grade is within 1%, of the higher classification boundary,
- Where at least 50% of the credit-weighted modules are in the higher class bracket (preponderance),
- Other such evidence of extenuating circumsatnces is considered at the discretion of the Examination Board to be appropriate

Where an award classification recommended by an Examination Board is higher than that indicated by a credit weighted average of the eligible module (%), then the mark should be recorded to reflect the recommended award i.e. a 69.89 should become a 70. In no circumstance should an individual module mark be amended for the purpose of allowing a learner to achieve a higher award classification.

Should it be established that a learner's failure to submit work, or poor performance in the assessment process was due to illness or personal mitigating circumstances (which were brought to the attention of the college, and accepted for the purpose of PMC approval) the Examination Board may exercise discretion in a manner appropriate to the individual case.

8.8.5 Other Awards

Aegrotat Awards

Where there is insufficient evidence to determine the recommendation of an award but the Examination Board is nevertheless satisfied that the learner would have qualified for the award for which s/he was a registered had it not been for illness or other valid cause, an *Aegrotat* award may be recommended.

Aegrotat awards do not carry a classification, they are unclassified degrees.

An Aegrotat award does not necessarily entitle the holder to registration with a professional body, or to exemption from the requirements of any professional qualification which might otherwise be associated with the programme.

Aegrotat awards are not available to learners registered for the following awards: Postgraduate Diploma, Higher Diploma, Masters programme and, all research awards.

The award of an Aegrotat removes the right of any further assessment opportunity for the registered final award. The learner must have signified that s/he is willing to accept the award under this condition.

Posthumous Awards

Where the normal conditions of any award of the College have been met, or where the College is satisfied based on learning completed to date that the learner now deceased would have otherwise met the conditions of the award, a request for a posthumous award may be made to QQI.

A posthumous award may be accepted on the learner's behalf by a parent, partner or other nominated individual(s) as identified by the next of kin or immediate family member.

The opportunity should normally be offered for acceptance of a posthumous major award to take place as part of the conferring ceremony of the class which the learner was a part of. Alternatively, the family may wish for the award to be issued directly to them via collection or post.

8.8.6 European Diploma Supplement

On successful completion of their studies, learners are entitled to receive a Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement facilitates the academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.).

This Diploma Supplement follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.).

The Diploma Supplement provides additional information regarding the learner's award which is not available on QQI parchments such as the skills and competencies acquired and entry requirements and access opportunities to the next stage of education.

It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should be given as to the reason why. This is provided by the Academic Affairs Department on request. DBS Diploma Supplement may be found in **Appendix 8.6**.

8.9 Discussion of Examination Scripts Policy

Title:	Discussion of Examination Scripts Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Assessment and Regulations Manager Lecturers
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

Unlike in the case of continuous assessments and project work, DBS does not automatically provide feedback to learners on their performance in an examination. Where a learner wishes to avail of the opportunity to secure feedback on examination performance they are entitled to view their examination scripts and discuss them with the examiner or the Assessment and Regulations Manager where the examiner is not available.

This policy applies to all formal, written examinations undertaken by learners on programmes leading to QQI awards. In that regard all examiners of said programmes are reasonably expected to be available to meet with learners to discuss their examination script. This policy does not apply to continuous assessments, projects or other assessment work including in-class tests. In such cases feedback is provided automatically as part of the assessment process and where a learner requires further feedback they are required to contact the examiner directly to arrange this.

Viewing examination scripts is intended as a means of enabling a learner to secure assessment feedback to contribute to their academic progress and development. This is particularly important for those learners who are required to repeat an examination due to failure. The viewing of examination scripts under this policy does not form or inform any verification or appeal process where a learner wishes to question the accuracy of a mark or the outcome of the assessment process.

In order to play an effective role in contributing to the academic development of the learner DBS will seek to ensure that all requests to view examination scripts are processed in a timely manner. Learners should not wait longer than one calendar month following submission of their request, with the exception of cases where the learner script may have been forwarded off site to an appointed External Examiner.

DBS will endeavor for the examiner who marked the script to be available to discuss the examination script and result with the learner in question. However, DBS reserves the right to arrange for an alternative examiner, moderator or the Programme Leader to host the discussion.
Where examinations take place remotely or the learner is located remotely to where the script is stored (due to returning to their home town or country, or due to undertaking a programme of online learning if applicable) alternative arrangements may be made for a telephone discussion or additional written feedback to be provided with the learner having the right to raise further questions for clarification.

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

8.9.1 Procedures for Viewing Examination Scripts

All learners are entitled to view their corrected examination scripts.

Applications to view corrected examinations scripts must be submitted to **Exams@dbs.ie** not later than seven working days after the date of the publication of results or in the case of an unsuccessful appeal, not later than seven working days after the date of the publication of the result of the appeal.

The application must be made in writing using the relevant "Application to View Scripts" form (F8.10) which is available on the "Current Students" page of the DBS website.

The learner will receive acknowledgement of receipt of their application within 5 working days. Arrangements will be made for the learner to meet with the examiner and discuss the examination script and result within not more than one calendar month of the date of application.

Where a physical meeting is not feasible, arrangements will be made for a telephone or email exchange to provide the additional feedback required.

The learner can reasonably expect a minimum of 3 working days' notice of the examination script discussion meeting.

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

Inability to attend a rescheduled meeting will result in additional feedback being issued in writing from the examiner to the learner and the process will be terminated at that point.

The discussion meeting will take place in DBS premises, or other location as specified by the College. This will usually be the normal place of delivery for the programme concerned. Discussion

arrangements can be organised by telephone or by email but will not include sharing of the examination script or images of same.

In the case of discussions taking place by e-mail, the examiner will provide initial feedback on each aspect of the examination paper. The learner will then have a window of 5 working days to identify any further points of clarification for the examiner to respond to. Communications within the 5 working days should not be excessive but are not explicitly limited. An examiner may wait until the end of the 5 day period to respond to all clarification requests together. In such cases, the response should be provided in the subsequent 5 working days.

Only the registered learner may view the examination script and only on production of a valid DBS student card.

Learners may view their scripts in the presence of the examiner or nominee.

Learners may not be accompanied except in the case of those learners who have been identified as requiring additional support to assist with communication e.g. sign language interpreter

Learners may not annotate, take an image of, or remove any examination material.
Learners are not permitted to take notes or to record the meeting in any format. If written clarification of the feedback provided is required this should be requested form the examiner who is reasonably expected to oblige.

8.10 Verification of an Assessment Result Policy

Title:	Verification of an Assessment Result Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment And Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/1
Review date:	2019

This policy is implemented to satisfy the QQI requirement that providers must determine the procedures for dealing with requests for a recheck of an assessment and the recording of component scores for a module.

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

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

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

Learners are advised that a verification is an administrative rechecking process and is not an appeal of an assessment result.

Learners are advised that an assessment result may remain unchanged, go up as well as go down as a result of a verification application.

It is the learner's responsibility to be aware of the correct procedure, timeframe and communication means for requesting a verification of an assessment result.

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

8.10.1 Procedures for Applying for a Verification

A request for verification must be submitted within 7 days of the formal publication of results.

A request for verification must be submitted in writing using the correct form (F8.11) available from the DBS student website and may only be submitted by the learner concerned.

All requests must be submitted to **Exams@dbs.ie** and must be accompanied by proof of payment of the appropriate per module fee.

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

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

The learner will be notified of the outcome of the verification process normally in not more than 5 working days following the deadline for submission of applications. Where a learner requests multiple verifications this may impact on the ability to respond within the proposed timeframe.

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

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

The learner will be notified in writing of the outcome of the verification process.
The outcome of the recheck is the final grade recorded. No further recheck opportunity will be granted.

8.11 Appeals Policy

Title:	Appeals Policy
Responsibility:	Assessment and Regulations Manager
Implemented by:	Lecturers Programme Leaders Assessment and Regulations Manager
Updated by:	Director of Academic Affairs
Circulated for consideration to:	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager QA Officer Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
Version number:	2016/2
Review date:	2019

8.11.1 Introduction

DBS recognises that learners are entitled to the right of appeal against a decision of a lower-level decision-making authority by making a request to a higher one. In respect of academic appeals and decisions of any subcommittee of Academic Board, appeals are the responsibility of the Academic Board. This is the final decision-making authority and there is no further right of appeal against an appeal decision.

The purpose of this policy is to afford learners the opportunity to appeal the decision of a decision-making committee.

This applies to all learners on programmes leading to QQI awards and relates to the decisions of any committee or Board with academic decision making authority.

The Academic Appeals Policy does not apply to appeals against a Complaint Committee finding.

The appeals policy is based upon transparency and fairness and recognises a learner's right to question a decision-making authority within DBS.

Appeals will not be considered based upon hearsay. All appeals and decisions must be evidence based.

8.11.2 Membership

The Academic Board retains responsibility for hearing academic appeals. However, this does not require full membership of the Board. The Academic Board responsibility for appeals is delegated to the Assessment and Regulations Manager and the QA Officer in respect of considering grounds for appeal, and to the Appeals Committee, made up of Academic Board members, for the hearing of an appeal.

The Executive Dean is usually appointed as Chair of the Appeals Committee and is authorised by the Academic Board to appoint an Appeals Committee, from the Board membership, to facilitate timely and appropriate consideration of appeals. Where necessary and appropriate, non-Board members may be invited to join this committee where it is deemed necessary and appropriate the decision-making process to be effective and transparent. A minimum of three Board members must be appointed to the Committee for a case to be considered.

No member of the Appeals Committee can have had any previous involvement in the case being considered.

8.11.3 Submitting an Appeal: Timeframe and Requirements

A learner who wishes to appeal

- their published results

- a decision of the Board of Examiners

- a decision of any other decision committee of the Academic Board

must submit a formal appeal to the Appeals Committee, through the QA Officer.

The appeal must be submitted in writing and received by the QA Officer not later than seven working days after the date of the publication of the relevant assessment result from the Examination Board or, in relation to appealing a decision of a sub-committee other than an Examination Board, the specified appeal date provided by a decision making committee.

The appeal form must be accompanied by a detailed written submission together with supporting documentation (if appropriate). Appeals submitted without a written submission or for which the fee has not been paid, will be rejected. It is the learner's responsibility to ensure an appeal is lodged fully and correctly. Additional appeal opportunities or extension of appeal deadlines will not be made available.

Appeals against assessment results must also include evidence of payment of the relevant fee per module. Payments can be made online, by telephone or at reception. Learners are reminded to include the payment reference number on all documentation.

8.11.4 Grounds for Appeal

An appeal submission must specify the grounds on which the appeal is requested, and it must contain all information that the learner wishes to have taken into account.

Learners are advised that a request for a rehearing is not valid grounds for appeal.

The only permissible grounds for an appeal are:

- the learner believes there was a substantive irregularity in the College's procedures and/or in the manner in which those procedures were executed

- the learner believes there was a substantive irregularity in the Assignment brief or Examination Paper or the assessment process

- the learner believes that there were circumstances known to the College that the decision making committee was not aware of when its decision was taken.

Disagreement with a decision, including an assessment decision is not considered grounds for appeal. Appeals which question the academic judgement of examiners shall not be admissible; disagreement with the judgement of the Examination Board does not constitute grounds for review.

The Quality Assurance Officer will receive all appeal applications and ensure they have complied with submission requirements in order to be forwarded to the Appeals Committee. The Assessment and Regulations Manager in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Officer will consider the appeal and the grounds on which it is sought.

8.11.5 Appeal of Assessment Results

In all cases of appeal of an assessment result a verification process is undertaken. The Academic Affairs Office will verify the learner's result by way of an administrative operation of checking the recording and the addition of marks for the assessment. The verification ensures that the assessment published by the College is free of arithmetical or other administrative errors of fact.

Learners are advised that an appeal of an assessment decision may result in confirmation, upgrading or downgrading of the initial result/decision.

8.11.6 New Evidence

Where the learner wishes to present new evidence this must be identified at the point of applying for an appeal. Beyond this point, new evidence not identified will not be considered by the Appeals Committee unless exceptional circumstances are identified and these are accepted at the Chair's discretion.

Learners are reminded that evidence of PMCs is reasonably expected to have been presented in advance or at the time of the original decision.

The Appeals Committee will only consider late declaration as grounds for appeal where there are valid reasons for non-disclosure at an earlier stage and must be accompanied with:

- Evidence that confirms the circumstances were present during the period under consideration

  And

- Evidence to show why the learner was unable to disclose these at the time or the *valid reasons* why this could not be disclosed at the time

Medical or professional certification must confirm the learner attended the relevant professional during the period of consideration for the circumstances outlined.

Post-dated certification will not normally be considered. The dates of attendance must be stated by the professional along with verification of the circumstances claimed.

For a claim of valid reasons for non-disclosure to be accepted, it is normally expected that the circumstances themselves were exceptionally serious, or had an exceptionally serious impact on the learner, and there were substantial and grave reasons why the learner was unwilling to disclose them at the time.

An unwillingness to disclose, lack of appreciation/awareness of potential impact of personal circumstances, or lack of knowledge of the regulations is not considered justification for non submission of evidence at the time of the event and will not result in the acceptance of late submission of PMCs.

8.11.7 Acceptance or Rejection of Appeal

The QA Officer in conjunction with the Assessment and Regulations Manager will consider each application to determine whether there are grounds for appeal.

An application for appeal will be dismissed without hearing where it is considered there are no identifiable grounds apparent or where the appeal deadline was not adhered to.
In the case of an application for appeal being denied, the QA Officer will notify the learner of this outcome and the fact that there is no further right of appeal. In such cases the process concludes at this point.

Where the Chairs believes there are grounds for appeal, an independent party will be appointed to investigate the grounds and evidence provided and a meeting of the Appeals Committee will be convened.

Due to the wider implications of appeal decisions it is reasonably expected that an investigation will be concluded and an appeal committee held within 10 working days of the appeal grounds being accepted.

In the case of grounds being accepted, an investigation into the grounds will be conducted by an independent party and an appeal hearing will be convened.

8.11.8 Responsibility for Convening the Board

Where a learner has been found to have valid grounds for appeal, the Appeals Committee will be convened either virtually or physically.

The QA Officer will notify the learner in writing of the date of the Appeal Committee meeting.

Where a learner requests the right to attend an appeal hearing, such a request will only be authorised where the Chair deems it relevant, appropriate and necessary. This is based on the understanding that any input from the learner should have been provided at the point of appeal or through the further submission opportunity.

The investigating officer will present the evidence in respect of the appeal to the Appeals Committee.

The learner will be notified of the role of the Committee and any potential outcomes.

8.11.9 Membership

The Executive Dean or nominee undertakes the role of Chair

Any member of the Academic Board can request to be included in an Appeals Committee but must not have had previous involvement in the case.

The Chair of the Board will determine the membership of the Appeal Committee. Board members can request to be included in the Appeals Committee.

The learner representative members of the Board should be encouraged to be involved in the Appeals Committee process except where there may be a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

All members are required to declare any interest. The QA Officer acts as secretary to the Committee.

The investigating Officer is required to present the appeal but is not present for any Committee discussion or decision making.

8.11.10 Remit of the Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee will consider the case based on the grounds for appeal as set out by the learner in his/her notification of appeal.

The Committee is not authorised to re-hear the case of a previous decision making committee but moreover determine if the grounds for appeal are evidenced in the case put forward.

The Chair will inform the Committee and any attending learner or investigating officer of the role of the committee, the possible outcomes and subsequent action.

8.11.11 Potential Outcomes

The Committee is required to determine an outcome in respect of the grounds put forward based on the evidence presented. The potential outcomes are:

- The outcome of the investigation confirms there is sufficient evidence to uphold the appeal: appeal upheld.
- The outcome of the investigation confirms there is insufficient evidence to uphold the appeal: appeal denied.

8.11.12 Decision-Making

The decision of the Committee should be a majority one. Where there is an even number of votes cast for both sides the Chair will invoke the right to a final casting vote. This is in addition to the

Chair's vote as a member.

In determining a decision, where the appeal is upheld, the Committee is required to agree on the subsequent action or options to be afforded to the learner.

8.11.13 Notification of Decision

The QA Officer will notify the learner in writing of the decision of the Appeal Committee and, where applicable, any subsequent action required.

Where an appeal is upheld, the Chair, through the QA Officer, will notify the relevant Committee and Departments of the outcome along with any recommendations and the requirement to update records.

Where the appeal relates to an award and certification has been requested from QQI the Assessment and Regulations Manager will take responsibility for updating that request.

8.11.14 Conclusion of Process

The decision of the Appeals Committee of the Academic Board is final and the process is concluded at this point.

Learners are advised as per QQI *Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013*, QQI does not have a role to play in a learner's appeal of the provider's assessment decisions.

Where an appeal fee has been paid and the appeal outcome results in a learner's mark being increased, the fee for that specific appeal will be refunded. Where multiple marks are appealed at any one time, only those resulting in an upgrade will be refunded.

DBS is committed to ensuring that all decisions pertaining to assessment are fair and that learners have access to clear consistent and comprehensible appeals procedures.

8.11.15 Complaints about the Appeal Process

If a learner is dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeals processes and believes that the procedures have been conducted improperly then she/he has a right to make a complaint to the Director of Academic Affairs within 15 working days of the announcement of the decision. The learner must be advised that this is not a re-opening of the appeal and that she/he must provide reasonable evidence of procedural impropriety. The Director of Academic Affairs will undertake a review to establish the validity of the claim. Following a decision from DBS, the learner must be formally notified that s/he has exhausted all procedures of the College and that the matter is now closed. Complaints Form (**F9.3**) may be obtained from Academic Affairs.

Learners must ensure that the completed complaint form (which should include full details of the complaint) is submitted by the published deadline. If any relevant supporting documentation is not available at this time, this should be indicated on the form and supplied within a maximum of 10 working days. Learners should be aware that after this time their complaint will be considered without reference to outstanding supplementary evidence.