

## 8 Assessment Policy, Procedures and Regulations

### 8.1 Assessment Policy

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

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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 from 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 assess
- 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 or 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**

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

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

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

<b>Title:</b>	Academic Impropriety Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Assessment and Regulations Manager
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Lecturers Programme Leaders Assessment and Regulations Manager
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/2
<b>Review date:</b>	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.

DBS reserves the right to carry out a “*viva voce*” examination for Masters Dissertations or any assessment of a significant ECTS weighting. A *viva voce* is an opportunity for you to orally defend the

assessment piece that you have submitted. DBS may institute a viva examination in the case where clarification is required regarding some element or elements of the written piece of work.

The scope of a viva examination can include:

- confirming to the satisfaction of the panel that your submission is your own original work,
- verify the authenticity of the research,
- establish that you are aware of the wider research field of your chosen topic,
- demonstrate that you understand in detail the content of your written submission.

In the case where a panel deems that a student cannot sufficiently recount their work, the panel has the authority to either pass or fail the student based upon the strength of their oral defence.

In cases where a large disparity between a strong written submission and a poor oral defence occurs, the panel may refer the case to the disciplinary committee with an accompanying report; the report will also be provided to the student in advance of the disciplinary committee hearing. The disciplinary committee will impose a penalty based on the severity of the case as detailed in the report provided by the panel. The disciplinary committee will not revisit the case itself, the remit of the committee is to impose a minor or major penalty and provide that outcome to the student in a timely fashion.

#### **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

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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

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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**

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

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 contribute 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 resits.

The nature of the reassessment, either examination or continuous assessment, or both, should be in line 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 contribute 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 Circumstances (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.

<b>Classification of Higher Certificates (Level 6) and Ordinary Bachelor's Degrees (Level 7)</b>	<b>GPA boundary values</b>	<b>PPA boundary values</b>	<b>Description 2009-2010 and following</b>
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

<b>Classification of Honours Bachelor's degrees (Level 8) and Higher Diplomas (Level 8)</b>	<b>GPA boundary values</b>	<b>PPA boundary values</b>	<b>Description 2009 - 2010 and following</b>
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

<b>Classification of Postgraduate Diploma (Level 9)</b>	<b>GPA boundary values</b>	<b>PPA boundary values</b>	<b>Description 2009 - 2010 and following</b>
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

<b>Classification of Taught Master's degrees (Level 9)</b>	<b>GPA boundary values</b>	<b>PPA boundary values</b>	<b>Description 2009 - 2010 and following</b>
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 circumstances 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**

<b>Title:</b>	Discussion of Examination Scripts Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Assessment and Regulations Manager
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Assessment and Regulations Manager Lecturers
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Assessment and Regulations Manager Head of Academic Enhancement Schools Executive Board
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	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@dbb.ie](mailto:Exams@dbb.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 from the examiner who is reasonably expected to oblige.

**8.10 Verification of an Assessment Result Policy**

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

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

## 9 Learner Support and Responsibilities

<b>Policy Title</b>	Learner Support and Responsibilities
<b>Date Approved</b>	March 2015
<b>Effective From</b>	September 2015
<b>Date for Review</b>	September 2018 or as requested by Academic Board
<b>Summary</b>	This chapter describes the supports provided by DBS in respect of learners and academic delivery. These include, but are not limited to, Library, IT facilities, Careers and Student Services including International Student Services. The chapter also describes policies and procedures in respect of: personal mitigating circumstances, learner’s grievances and complaints, Learner Complaints Board, code of conduct, disciplinary procedures and procedures for dealing with suspected academic impropriety.
<b>Supplemental Policies</b>	
<b>Amendment History</b>	9.2 DBS Library – amended 08/12/16

### 9.1 Introduction

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Standards and Guideline for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), in Part 1, **Standard 1.6**, states that “Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and learner support are provided.”

Learning and support services for the purpose of quality assurance are defined as the physical services and resources provided by, or on behalf of, DBS to enhance the learner’s learning experience. Learner resources include:

- Library and study facilities
- on-line learning support
- information technology facilities
- Career Development Office & DBS Student Experience
- Student Services
- academic support services

The range of learning and support services is broad and each such service has its own aims, objectives and work practices. Each is therefore considered separately in relation to quality assurance practices.

## **9.2 DBS Library**

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### ***9.2.1 Role of DBS Library***

The mission of the Library in DBS is to provide efficient, appropriate and effective information services to facilitate the learning, teaching and research objectives of the College.

The Library is located in the Aungier Street building. The Library also maintains two more informal study spaces in Bow Lane; Connect@TheHub and Study@TheHub.

### ***9.2.2 Opening Hours***

Library opening hours are extensive, with late opening five evenings per week during the academic year, and four evenings per week during the summer. The Library is open every Saturday throughout the year and is open seven days per week including bank holidays in the run up to exams. Hub opening hours are also extended before exam times.

### ***9.2.3 Library Staffing and Staff Development***

The majority of library staff members have a postgraduate library qualification and are members of the Library Association of Ireland (LAI). To ensure that staff members remain up to date, the College finances their attendance at professional development events such as those organised by the LAI, the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) and the Academic and National Library Training Co-operative (ANLTC). The Library subscribes to the Library and Information Science Source database.

The Library hosts the DBS Annual Library Seminar each June to which library professionals and learners from Ireland and beyond are invited. DBS Library staff present on a wide range of library topics at the seminar alongside a number of external speaker from the professional library community.

The Library is a member of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) Library Committee which fosters discussion and training around professional library issues as well as the advancement if

private higher education college libraries. The Library also holds institutional membership of the LAI and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in the UK (CILIP).

#### **9.2.4 Library Collection**

The Library has extensive print and audio-visual resources, with 50,000 items listed on the Library catalogue, (<http://koha.dbs.ie>), across the subjects of Arts, Business and Law. The Library also subscribes to a number of print journal titles.

In addition to its print holdings, the Library has a highly developed e-library which can be accessed via the Library website (<http://library.dbs.ie>). The e-library comprises e-books, e-journals and an extensive portfolio of academic databases. The Library website also provides information on Library services as well as access to a range of Library guides. The Library has an Institutional Repository, eSource (<http://esource.dbs.ie/>), which provides full-text access to learner these and continuous assessment of grades  $\geq 2.1$  as well as to the scholarly publications of academic staff.

The Library has been equipped with RFID technology and has three self-issue stations which enable learners to independently issue books to their own accounts. Ninety-five percent of borrowing is performed independently by learners. This has freed up Library staff time to assist learners with their more complex queries.

#### **9.2.5 Relevancy and Currency of the Library Collection**

The Library's Collection Development Policy is published on the Library website, (<http://library.dbs.ie/docs/default-source/default-document-library/collection-development-policy.pdf?sfvrsn=0>). Reading lists are updated on an annual basis by the Acquisitions Librarian. Prior to the commencement of academic programmes, faculty supply reading lists and details of class sizes to the Acquisitions Librarian, who then ensures that the latest editions of titles are sourced. Out of print material considered seminal to a subject is also acquired.

The Library has introduced the Loughborough Online Reading List Software (LORLS), [www.lorls.dbs.ie](http://www.lorls.dbs.ie), which provides learners with online access to their reading lists with real time availability. Staff can also upload and edit their reading lists via LORLS.

#### **9.2.6 Equitable Access to Library Resources**

The Library acquires one core text to every ten learners to ensure that learners can fully access the materials that they require. Texts are made available on a 3 day, one week and two week lending period. An e-copy of core text books is also routinely purchased when available. Up to 100 concurrent learners can access an electronic copy of a text book via Dawsonera, for example. A copy of a core text is available for reference use only in the Library. Learners with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties are entitled to an extended loan period and borrowing allowance.

#### ***9.2.7 Remote and Mobile Access to Collections***

The Library's electronic holdings can be accessed off campus 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world via the Athens authentication platform. The Library Catalogue and the online databases can also be accessed on handheld devices.

#### ***9.2.8 Staff Inductions and Staff Research***

The Library holds an annual staff open day to showcase pertinent Library developments of interest to faculty. The Information Skills Librarian also delivers one-to-one training with new and existing staff members on Library resources. Additionally, the Research Librarian provides one-to-one support to academics wishing to publish in the academic literature. S/he also delivers a programme of classes to faculty on getting published, measuring citation impact, etc. Please refer to the Policy on Staff Development for more detailed information on the Library's services to support researchers.

#### ***9.2.9 Student Induction***

The Library delivers a Library induction to all new and returning learners in the classroom setting. Tours of the Library are also run at the request of faculty or groups of students.

#### ***9.2.10 Information Skills Classes***

The Library delivers a programme of information skills classes on a standalone and integrated (at the invitation of the lecturer) basis. The Library's information skills classes are also formally accredited, embedded and accessed in a wide variety of academic programmes via the Learning to Learn and Personal and Professional Development modules. Classes are delivered by the dedicated Information Skills Librarian.

Information skills classes cover planning, writing and referencing assignments (including APA, Harvard and OSCOLA), avoiding plagiarism and the effective use of electronic resources and

referencing software. More recently, the Library has introduced classes on information skills for job seeking and success in the workplace.

For more details on the Library's programme of information skills classes, please refer to the following link: <http://libcal.dbs.ie/calendar/classes/?cid=5257&t=d&d=0000-00-00&cal%5B%5D=5257>

### ***9.2.11 Alumni and External Reader Services***

The Library offers a variety of Alumni Membership packages which enable DBS alumni to access the Library and to borrow Library materials. Similar services are also offered to external readers. Both services offer access to Business Source Complete, Alumni Edition and Academic Search Complete, Alumni Edition, both on campus and remotely.

### ***9.2.12 Quality Assurance***

Library users at DBS are not a homogenous group but rather have very different needs and preferences. They range from undergraduates and postgraduates to academic staff. The needs and circumstances of both full-time and part-time students are catered for. Resource usage levels are constantly monitored and tracked through the Library Management System Koha and the statistical modules of library databases. These reports provide vital statistics on user requirements of each group.

Feedback from students is seen as a vital input to quality assurance of Library services. This is primarily gathered through two channels:

1. The Library Committee

The Library Committee meets twice yearly to consider the general performance of the Library service. This committee includes student and staff representatives from a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Student representatives are encouraged to comment on service quality and any issues raised are discussed and recorded. Matters emerging from this meeting are addressed, where possible, by Library Management. Members of this committee provide feedback to the Boards of Studies meetings in the Schools. Issues requiring higher-level decisions are referred to the Schools Executive Board. The Head Librarian sits on the Academic Board and the Schools Executive.

2. Annual Library Survey

The Library conducts an annual online survey via Survey Monkey. The survey is also posted to the Library Website and Moodle. Feedback is addressed firstly at Library management level and actions documented. Issues requiring higher-level decisions are referred to the Schools Executive Board.

Information gathered by these means is used to effect quality improvements and is an important input to strategic and operational plans for the development of learning resources.

As part of the Kaplan management procedures, the Library reports on a number of key performance indicators each year. These are informed by institutional imperatives, professional body standards, and recent developments in the academic library literature. Performance indicators are updated annually to reflect the introduction of new services and resources.

**DBS Library: a Summary**

<i>Number of Staff</i>	13 (9 full-time and 4 part-time). All full-time staff have a professional library qualifications.
<i>Institutional and Personal Memberships</i>	Library Association of Ireland (LAI), Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, UK (CILIP), The British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL)The Irish Film Institute (IFI), Acquisitions Group of Ireland (AGI), TCD Information Service, Irish Institute of Taxation.
<i>Seating</i>	250
<i>Study Rooms</i>	4
<i>Computers</i>	27 PCs. PCs are equipped with Microsoft Office, research software, SPSS and QSRNvivo7, virtual laboratory software, the Virtual Rat and accounting software; Sage and TASbook2. The Library and the Hub are Wi-Fi enabled.
<i>Books</i>	49,152 print titles, e-books via Dawsonera, e-books from Amazon via the Kindle lending scheme
<i>Journals</i>	25 print journals and in excess of 60,000e-journals via A-Z software
<i>Newspapers (print &amp; electronic)</i>	5 print titles and online access to 350 newspapers from around the world via Lexis Nexis database

<i>Electronic Resources</i>	ABI Inform, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Computer and Applied Sciences Complete, Emerald Insight, Film and Television Literature Index, Hospitality & Tourism Complete, JSTOR, JustCite, Justis, Lexis Nexis, Library & Information Science Source, Mintel Reports, Passport, PEP Archive, PsychArticles, SocIndex, WARC, Westlaw IE, Westlaw UK
<i>Inter-Library Loan Services</i>	British Library, Trinity College Information Service & the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland
<i>Photocopiers</i>	5 networked colour photocopiers for copying, scanning and printing
<i>Printing Software</i>	Papercut (including wireless printing)
<i>Library catalogue</i>	<a href="http://koha.dbs.ie/">http://koha.dbs.ie/</a>
<i>Library Website</i>	<a href="http://library.dbs.ie/">http://library.dbs.ie/</a>
<i>Institutional Repository</i>	<a href="http://esource.dbs.ie/">http://esource.dbs.ie/</a>
<i>Online Reading Lists</i>	<a href="http://lorls.dbs.ie/">http://lorls.dbs.ie/</a>

### 9.3 Learner Support Policy

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<b>Title:</b>	Learner Support Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Learner Support Coordinator
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Admissions Learner Support Coordinator Academic Affairs Student Services Assessment and Regulations Manager Lecturers
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Learner Support Coordinator Director of Admissions and Marketing Schools Executive Board
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2019

### 9.3.1 Learning Support in DBS

In line with good practice DBS adopts an inclusive approach to teaching, learning and assessment to enable all learners to fully participate in its education programmes as far as reasonably practicable and subject to reasonable accommodations being made where necessary. DBS adopts the AHEAD Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning and reflects this in the teaching, learning and assessment practices of the College and the support services provided.

The following policy takes into consideration the legal requirement for providers of services to make reasonable adjustment for those with a disability. It is important to note the term “reasonable” here. DBS commits to providing the resources and accommodations it deems to be reasonable. Any excessive cost or adaptations will be deemed unreasonable.

DBS is committed to promoting inclusion in all aspects of College life. The College supports all learners and specifically enables the participation of learners with additional or specific needs that can have an impact on day-to-day activities. Supports are provided to enable engagement in and successful completion of programmes of study, as far as is reasonably practicable and within any constraints laid down by QQI or relevant professional bodies.

In promoting inclusion, DBS:

- Encourages applications from people with additional needs
- Seeks to provide information in suitable formats to accommodate individual needs, where possible
- Assesses applications from those who disclose disabilities or specific needs, solely on the basis of their academic potential
- Provides a dedicated learner support service and invites all applicants and learners with additional needs to contact the service to discuss how their requirements may be accommodated
- Provides additional support or resources at the application stage to enable the applicant to complete the application process including attending interview where applicable
- Works towards the earliest possible assessment of needs and offer of reasonable accommodations where required
- Makes reasonable accommodations in assessment where applicable and without impacting the learning outcomes to be assessed
- Provides learning support services for all learners

- Takes steps to encourage students with progressive conditions, or who become disabled during their programme of study, to continue their studies
- Promotes an inclusive environment and attitude amongst the wider College community and endeavours to provide appropriate training to staff and faculty where required

Any assessment of additional support needs will be based upon an appropriate report from a relevant expert such as a medical consultant or educational psychologist. All such reports must:

- Be original
- Be provided on headed paper
- Be not more than five years old
- Include recommendations of the accommodations required

DBS is not qualified to determine the impact of a disability or learning need on any individual learner and therefore requires the above information.

The provision of additional supports or reasonable accommodations to learners who do not provide an expert opinion may be deemed as providing an unfair advantage and therefore is not normally permitted.

The Learner Supports Coordinator is the relevant contact for all learners wishing to discuss learner support needs. The Learner Supports Coordinator is located in the Library of Dublin Business School. Any learner who wishes to avail of additional supports, is strongly encouraged to speak in confidence with the Learning Supports Coordinator, by appointment at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to personalised specific learner supports and reasonable accommodations, DBS Library Service provides a range of services to assist all learners in the development of study skills and examination preparation. Further information can be obtained from the Library Service or on the Library Website at <http://library.dbs.ie/>

### **9.3.2 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide assurance to potential applicants and learners with additional or specific needs that DBS will seek to provide reasonable accommodations to support them in their application

and their studies, where this is possible.

- Provide learners with a disability or specific learning need with the information required to enable them to seek assistance and arrange for reasonable accommodations where required and appropriate, including in assessment

### **9.3.3 Scope**

This policy applies to learners with permanent or long-term disabilities or health conditions or specific learning needs requiring facilities and/or arrangements that would enable them to participate in a programme of study and or demonstrate their ability in assessment.

This policy does not apply to learners with illness, temporary disabilities, or low levels of literacy or language competence.

Many of the arrangements required for the assessment of disabled learners or those with a specific learning need can and should also be applied to programme delivery where required. Arrangements will be provided where it is reasonable for the College to provide same and at no additional cost to the learner.

### **9.3.4 Principles**

This procedure is based on the principles of inclusion, accessibility and the promotion of equality along with the College commitment to compliance with legal and professional requirements. Where necessary, the College will seek additional professional advice.

### **9.3.5 Procedure for Promoting Learner Support: Access and Inclusion**

If required, DBS may discuss specific access and inclusion matters with a third party in order to secure appropriate professional expertise. Discussions will not include disclosing the identity of the individual applicant or learner unless express written consent has been secured from the applicant or learner in question.

Any information relating to the specific needs, disability or health of an individual applicant or learner will be retained and shared in accordance with the consent provided and in line with Data Protection legislation.

### **9.3.6 Information to Learners**

DBS encourages the provision of information to learners that ensures complete and equitable access to all aspects of College life as is reasonably possible. Where materials cannot be provided in an accessible format, alternatives will be provided where possible.

### **9.3.7 Inclusive Practice in Admissions**

All applicants are advised to disclose a disability or specific learning need at the point of application. This will not inform the admissions decision but will assist in ensuring appropriate supports can be made available.

Applicants or potential applicants are advised to contact the admissions office to discuss their specific requirements, with a view to the Admissions Office making the required accommodations to facilitate an application to the chosen programme of study.

Applicants or potential applicants may be requested to provide independent, expert reports to support their request for reasonable accommodations and to further assist DBS in identifying the appropriate accommodations to be implemented.

The applicant will be kept informed throughout the assessment of need being completed and advised of the accommodations implemented. Applicants are reminded that admission to DBS programmes will remain as an academic judgement only. However, where the accommodations required are not considered reasonable for DBS to implement, the applicant will be advised of this. Attempts will be made to ensure suitable reasonable accommodations can be implemented.

### **9.3.8 Communication of Request for Additional Learning Support**

Each individual learner is responsible for communicating their request for additional support or reasonable accommodations in assessment.

Normally a learner should outline their additional requirements at the admissions stage so DBS can make an early and informed decision as to whether or not the additional support requirements can reasonably be provided.

It is the responsibility of each learner to disclose any condition or circumstance that may require

reasonable accommodation arrangements to be made.

DBS will not discriminate against any learner who makes such a disclosure and will seek to meet all support requirements that are deemed reasonable.

Disclosure is a personal decision and it is the right of the learner not to disclose this information if they so choose. Where a learner chooses not to disclose, DBS is not liable for the provision of additional supports and the impact this may have on learner performance in assessment cannot normally be taken into consideration retrospectively in any appeal.

Where a learner opts not to disclose their additional support requirements until they commence their studies but wish to avail of such supports, they should contact the Learner Supports Coordinator not later than 6 weeks after their programme start.

Failure to contact the Learner Support Coordinator within the 6 week timeframe may result in the required supports not being provided in a timely manner. This includes DBS not guaranteeing making reasonable accommodation for assessments and examinations that may occur within that semester.

DBS will ensure that all learners are informed of their right to request appropriate assessment arrangements.

### **9.3.9 Applying for Additional Support and Reasonable Accommodations**

The learner must make their request for additional support in writing and include the report of the relevant expert or specialist.

The Learner Supports Coordinator will consider the application and approve additional support and reasonable accommodations as appropriate based on the evidence submitted.

Upon confirming entitlement to additional support, the Learner Supports Coordinator will make a note on the learner record and advise the relevant academic and support staff on a need-to-know basis.

The note on the learner record should set out the nature of the proposed supports. The consultant's or educational psychologist's report or other appropriate expert's recommendations will be noted on the learner record to ensure the ongoing year on year support for the learner. Copies of the evidence

submitted will not be retained.

All appropriate assessment arrangements should be made on an individual basis depending on the learner's abilities so as to minimise possible disadvantage and not to advantage the learner.

Arrangements put in place must be achieved in consultation with the learner.

Any nominal costs incurred in regard to approved arrangements for disabled learners or those with a specific learning need will be borne by the College.

### **9.3.10 Specific Disabilities and Additional Needs**

Outlined below are some of the main areas where arrangements and procedures have been identified.

#### **Hearing Impairment/Deafness**

The extent of the challenges faced by a learner with a hearing impairment will vary depending on the degree of deafness and also the first language of the learner.

Support arrangements should allow for appropriate means of ensuring effective communication. This may include the provision of information in written form, use of amplified sound or arrangements for locating the learner at the front of the class for example.

Within an assessment setting, arrangements may or may not be required. Procedures should allow for extra time during which instructions may be given so that any misunderstandings with regard to the phrasing or vocabulary of the questions can be clarified, if necessary via a sign language interpreter. A learner is reasonably expected to understand the technical language of the subject but not necessarily the language or phrasing of the question itself. Partially/profoundly deaf learners may lip-read or require amplified sound during the instructions being given by the invigilator in an examination. It is essential that the invigilator is aware of the need for clear speech and arrangements are made to seat a learner who lip-reads at the front of the examination room. Alternatively, any instructions may be made available in written format. Where necessary a separate room should be provided.

#### **Visual Impairment**

Arrangements for visually impaired learners will vary according to their level of vision, the subject

under assessment, the nature of the programme or the assessment and the learner's chosen work methods. Accommodations made for visually impaired learners may include:

- Providing written materials in a medium appropriate to the learner's needs, for example, increased font size or audio recording
- Avoiding the use of diagrams in questions and answers or providing a clear means of presenting these that will be visible to the learner or clearly describing them in words in a manner that will be understandable and not inhibit the learner from completing the question to their full potential

In addition to the above, provision of a reader and scribe during assessment activities may be required and will involve the need for a separate room and invigilation.

### **Physical Disability**

Learners with physical disabilities may require specific supports related to the physical access of the learning environment. Additionally, consideration may need to be given to the nature and format of teaching and learning activities.

Many physically disabled learners may need use of a laptop, to use a scribe or require extra time when undertaking examinations or in-class tests. Where the assessment relates to the completion of physical activities, alternative arrangements should be made to accommodate the needs of the learner. Again, the learner should not be disadvantaged or advantaged as a result of any such accommodations.

### **Dyslexia**

Learners with dyslexia may require support relating to the format in which information is provided. This may include changing the font size and type, changing the colour of the paper or using strategies that are not text dependent.

Appropriate arrangements should be made so as to minimise the effects of dyslexia in assessment arrangements in a way that enables the learner to demonstrate attainment of minimum learning outcomes without being disadvantaged or advantaged.

Arrangements may differ from learner to learner and should be based on the specified recommendations of an appropriately qualified educational psychologist's report and may include:

- Application of a spelling and grammar waiver in all assessments
- Extra time to allow the learner to read and understand the question and to plan, structure and check the answer, or a scribe to write on behalf of the learner
- Use of particular fonts, font size, background paper colour, use of a reader and so on

- Opportunity for the learner to sit an exam in a separate room if the extent of their anxiety in a shared environment is likely to significantly exacerbate the effects of their dyslexia and prevent them from presenting an accurate reflection of their knowledge

### **Hidden Disabilities**

Learners with hidden disabilities will normally be accommodated in managing their condition throughout their programme of study. This may require special arrangements regarding the use of electronic equipment, breaks during class time, recovery time, arrangements for self-administering medication etc.

Learners with hidden disabilities should have the option of taking their examinations in separate, appropriate accommodation if there is a possibility that a symptom of the illness may interrupt the examination sitting.

Where a medical recommendation is that a significant break is provided for a learner, this should be accommodated and arrangements made for the learner to sit the examination in a separate room with individual invigilation.

### **Mental Health**

In the instance of evidence of a long-term mental health condition constituting a disability, appropriate accommodations should be made in line with recommendations from the qualified practitioner. This may include:

- Provision of a separate room and invigilator
- Provision of additional time to complete exams or continuous assessments

This does not apply to short-term mental health issues where the regulations relating to extenuating circumstances should be referred to.

### **9.3.11 Practical Arrangements**

#### **Extra Time for Exams and In Class Tests**

Where an expert recommendation identifies the requirement, extra time is given at a rate of:

1 hour test	10 minutes
90 minute test	15 minutes
2 hours or longer	30 minutes

#### **Extra Time in Exams**

Learners go to a dedicated exam room with up to 15 learners who are also having special exam arrangements. Academic Affairs will contact learners by email with the room location and the dedicated room will also be shown on the exam timetable. Some learners in the dedicated exam room will be using laptops to write their exams so it is acceptable to bring ear plugs into the exam room if the learner is sensitive to noise.

#### **Extra Time in In-Class Tests**

Learners will either be given the test in a separate room with an invigilator along with any other class members entitled to extra time or alternatively they will be accommodated in the same room as the rest of the class and given the extra time after the other learners have left the class.

To avail of the extra time for an in-class test, learners must notify the lecturer at least 3 weeks in advance. On the day learners should introduce themselves to the lecturer at the start of the class to let them know that they are to receive the additional time.

#### **Rest Breaks during Exams and In-Class Tests**

Where an expert recommendation identifies the requirement, extra time is allocated to the learner to be used for rest breaks at a rate of:

1 hour test	10 minutes
90 minute test	15 minutes
2 hours or longer	30 minutes

Learners may choose when to take their breaks. During rest breaks learners may move around the room as they wish. Should they wish to leave the exam room to access toilet facilities or any other facilities they must be accompanied by an invigilator.

During rest breaks learners may not read the exam paper, read their answers or write or prepare answers.

### **Spelling and Grammar Waiver**

Learners who are entitled to a spelling & grammar waiver will be given S&G stickers to stick onto their submitted work and exam papers. They will also be given an electronic version to attach to work submitted online. The onus is on the learner to ensure that they have enough stickers for all of their exams and coursework. Stickers can be collected from the Learner Supports Coordinator at any time during working hours.

The S&G sticker should be placed on either the first or second page of a piece of coursework or exam paper. The stickers will alert lecturers marking the work that they must apply the spelling and grammar waiver. Please note that lecturers double check the learner's eligibility before applying the waiver. Anyone found to be passing stickers to other learners or using stickers without permission from the Learning Support Office will face disciplinary procedures.

### **Alternate Exam Papers Format**

Where an expert recommendation requires that a learner has exam papers provided in a different font / font size / colour paper or has recommended the use of a coloured overlay, learners will sit the exam / in-class test in the same exam room as the rest of the class. Learners should make themselves known to the lecturer or invigilator at the start of the exam so that they know who to give the adapted exam paper to.

Learners who have been assessed as entitled to use assistive technology for exams will have exam papers provided as a MS Word document on a memory stick. They will sit the exam in a dedicated exam room with up to 15 learners who are also having special exam arrangements. An Academic Affairs representative will contact learners by email with the room location and the dedicated room will also be shown on the exam timetable.

### **A Reader**

DBS does not use text to speech technology or Dictaphone recordings. Where learners are entitled to use a reader for exams and in-class tests they will be working with a human reader. The learner will be given a private room for the exam / in-class test. Present in the room will be the learner, the reader and an invigilator or alternatively the reader will also be the invigilator so only the learner and the reader will be present.

The reader will read the questions, as written on the exam paper, to the learner. They will not explain or paraphrase the question or give the learner any other information. The reader will read the questions in any order that the learner chooses allowing the learner to attempt the questions in their preferred order and can re-read the questions as often as the learner wishes. The reader can also read back the answers that the learner has written if requested by the learner.

**Using a Reader for In-Class Tests:**

Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to the use of a reader, to avail of the reader for an in-class test the learner must make contact with the Academic Affairs Office to arrange this at least 3 weeks in advance. Learners will be accommodated in a separate room for the in class test.

**A Scribe**

DBS does not use Dictaphones or speech to text technology. Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to a scribe for exams and in-class tests they will be working with a human scribe. The learner will be given a private room for the exam / in class test. Present in the room will be the learner, the scribe and an invigilator or alternatively the scribe will also be the invigilator so only the learner and the scribe will be present.

The scribe transcribes the learner's dictation of answers by hand or using a computer depending on the scribe's own preference. If separate marks are given for spelling or punctuation, these will not be credited to a learner using a scribe. They will be assessed on the content of their answer only.

The scribe will not advise, explain or discuss answers with the learner. They will write the learner's answers accurately without paraphrasing the content. Scribes can, at the learner's request, read back what has been written.

Paper will be available for the learner to use for any rough work, planning or any handwritten material that they would like to submit in addition to the work produced by the scribe.

**A scribe for In-Class Tests:**

Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to the use of a scribe, to avail of the scribe for an in-class test the learner must make contact with the Academic Affairs Office to arrange this at least 3 weeks in advance. Learners will be accommodated in a separate room for the in class test.

### **Using A Reader and A Scribe**

Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to the use of both a reader and a scribe, the same person may perform both functions. In this case present in the exam room would be the learner, the Scribe / Reader and possibly a separate invigilator.

### **A Laptop**

Where learners have been assessed as entitled to use of a laptop for exams and in-class tests a laptop will be provided for the learner's use on the day. The learner will be given a memory stick to save their answers on and submit both the laptop and the memory stick at the end of the exam. Exam answers will be written in MS Word. It is the responsibility of the learner to be proficient in the use of the computer and the appropriate software.

Learners who use an assistive technology for exams may be given permission to use their own equipment in exams if it is not practical to transfer the technology to a college laptop.

### **Using a laptop in Exams:**

Learner will go to a dedicated exam room with up to 15 learners who are also having special exam arrangements. Academic Affairs will contact learners by email with the room location and the dedicated room will also be shown on the exam timetable.

### **Using a Laptop in In-Class Tests:**

Learners will either be given the test in a separate room with an invigilator along with any other class members entitled to use a laptop or alternatively they will be accommodated in the same room as the rest of the class.

\*\*To avail of the laptop for an in class test learners must contact Academic Affairs three weeks in advance. On the day, learners must introduce themselves to the lecturer at the start of the class to let them know that they are the learner who will be using a laptop.

### **Alternative Assessment Methodology**

Where the assessment methodology itself is deemed to be the barrier, this should be discussed between the Lecturer and the Learner Support Coordinator. An alternative assessment methodology may be approved in such cases where it is possible to assess the attainment of learning outcomes through another means and where an unfair advantage is not being provided. DBS encourages

lecturers to consider automatic use of assessment methodology that is as inclusive as possible. Where recurring barriers to assessment are identified as a result of the chosen methodology it is reasonably expected that the methodology will be revised and replaced with a more inclusive one.

#### 9.4 On-line Learning Support

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DBS provides on-line learning support to learners via a facility known as 'Moodle'. Moodle is a virtual learning environment (VLE), a software package designed to help educators create quality on-line courses and manage learner outcomes. Lecturers assigned to deliver and assess modules are required to make certain course materials available to their learners via Moodle. All course material uploaded to Moodle is subject to review and validation.

For each module delivered, the lecturer is required to place the following materials on Moodle for the benefit of learners:

- module guide
- lecture notes
- schedule of continuous assessment
- assessment specification that forms part of the continuous assessment
- reference to the DBS Plagiarism policy
- past examination papers
- current reading list
- grade criteria

It is recommended that lecturers also supply:

- tutorial support
- links to useful information on the web, support reading/journals
- links to library reservation for books.

Moodle provides learners with an additional channel through which learning materials can be accessed and used. The materials can be accessed locally or remotely, thus facilitating learners who prefer to study at home and part-time learner. Learners who have missed lectures for whatever reason can use the facility to catch up on missed material. The on-line facility is seen as a valuable addition to the more traditional learning resources.

Staff Development sessions are provided for staff to support their engagement with Moodle. Training is provided for all new academic staff members, those who feel they need a refresher course and those who wish to explore other academic activities (formative quizzes, blogs, etc) in Moodle.

## 9.5 IT Facilities for Learners

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DBS's policy in relation to learner computing facilities and services is one of continuous improvement to cater for emerging academic needs (e.g. additional software) and to capitalise on developments in technology. IT facilities for learners comprise of 11 teaching suites, located as follows:

Castle House: 9 suites each with 21-34 workstations

Balfe Street: 1 suite with 28 workstations

Auniger Street: 1 suite with 23 workstations

Library: 40 workstations for learner use (which must be booked through the Library)

There is also a wireless network to facilitate learners who prefer to use their own portable computers for academic work. Learner e-mail has been launched using new Microsoft Windows Live for educational institutions. Learners can have profile pages and can contact each other through instant messaging.

Support for learner computing is provided by six IT support staff, that cover all buildings from 09.00-18.00 every weekday and two members of staff provide cover onsite from 17.30-21.30. During induction, each learner is given the computer services e-mail address and helpdesk number for use in the event of any IT-related issues or queries. Learners are also advised to contact the computer services office in the event of any significant problem. The IT Department continues to develop a computer services area on the learner website which provides helpful information to learners on general support questions and answers, for example, how to connect to the learner wireless network and how to access learner email.

All lecture rooms are equipped with a projector, pc, multimedia and sound facilities. In each room, there is an on-line facility for reporting faults or usage problems to computer services staff. Faults or issues reported in this way are addressed as quickly as possible by computer services. This allows the IT Department to monitor the quality of service provision to learners and lecturers alike.

The IT manager currently sits on two Committees, part of whose brief is to monitor and review the quality of computing services provided to learners. The IT Steering Committee, which meets quarterly and involves the heads of all major departments within DBS, is responsible for the strategic management of IT affairs in DBS and considers, in particular, the adequacy and quality of learner computing services and how those services might be further improved. The Learning and Teaching Committee, meets monthly to consider academic support issues and to respond to feedback from

learners. Any significant IT issues or matters involving additional resources or investment are referred to the IT Steering Committee.

Any computing/IT related issues raised at Boards of Studies meetings are reported back to IT management for attention. A representative from the IT Department may be invited to attend a Board of Studies, if there is a particular IT issue or requirement. This frequently results in improvement initiatives.

## **9.6 Premises and Facilities**

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The Facilities Department is responsible for managing all building and maintenance work in the College, along with providing and maintaining all furniture and equipment, including but not limited to:

- teaching aids
- desks and seating
- electricity and heating.

The facilities department is further responsible for programme and module timetabling and classroom scheduling across the entire school. The primary objective of the Facilities Department is to provide and maintain a safe, well-resourced physical environment, with appropriate availability and accessibility to all the College's staff and learners. The department attempts to cater, and provide adequate resources, for the many different learning and teaching requirements of the College. The department is also responsible for ensuring that all current Irish health and safety legislation is strictly adhered to.

To maintain quality in the physical environment, all materials and equipment are sourced from reputable suppliers based on satisfactory references or prior experience. Supplier contracts are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the College obtains quality products and services that represent good value for money. Equipment audits are periodically carried out on all teaching-related equipment to ensure optimum performance. Defective or poorly performing equipment is repaired or replaced.

Communication with learners is facilitated by a series of notice Boards each of which is dedicated to particular learner groups. All learners are made aware of which notice Board relates to their

programme and are actively encouraged to check it regularly. Additionally, there are dedicated learner notice boards in the reception areas of Aungier Street and Castle House where urgent or last minute room changes or other relevant information is posted. Web texts are also used to ensure learners become aware of room changes or other facilities issues at the earliest opportunity.

In common with other service areas in DBS, the Facilities Department gathers feedback from learners as part of the process of quality monitoring and enhancement. This is seen as most important to ensure quality is maintained in the provision of physical teaching and learning facilities.

Feedback from learners is gathered via the student surveys carried out towards the end of first term. The survey results are tabulated and forwarded to the Facilities Manager. Issues raised are addressed as a matter of priority and where necessary budget approval is sought for any more extensive and costly improvements.

An ongoing refurbishment and redecoration programme is in place to ensure that the physical environment remains conducive to the learning and studying process. DBS remains committed to its policy of continuous improvement of the physical College environment and all associated teaching and learning facilities.

## **9.7 Careers and Student Services**

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Careers and Student Services provides the many support services available to learners ensure that that they have an excellent student experience, settle into college life and maximise their potential. The department is arranged into Student Experience and Careers Development and arranged across two main buildings.

Student Experience Office:

- Education, Welfare & Learning Support
- International Student Officer
- Accommodation Officer
- Sports & Societies Development Officer
- Study Abroad Student Officer

DBS Careers Development Office:

- Careers Advisor
- Placement Officer
- Employer Liaison Officer

#### **9.7.1 DBS Careers Development Office**

The office offers an extensive range of services to develop employability skills. The team publicise recruitment campaigns, internship opportunities and current vacancies via social media channels, email job alerts and on campus vacancy boards. Downloadable career management tools, templates and resources are available via the careers and student services Moodle page. The team also features an Employer Liaison Officer who focuses on employer relations and work placement opportunities.

The Careers Department host a number of Careers Fairs on campus throughout the academic year. These events present ideal opportunities for our learners and graduates to access a range of personal and career development options and to network with recruiters.

External career and networking events are also promoted to the student body via social media channels and careers e-newsletters. DBS is focused on creating a three-way partnership relationship between our learners, employers and DBS staff.

Services offered include:

- One to One Career Consultations
- Career Management Tools and Resources
- Jobs, Internships and Work Placement Opportunities
- Drop In Career Planning Clinic
- Interview Coaching Services
- Career Skills Seminars and Resource Publications

The careers team design and deliver career skills related workshops and seminars on a regular basis. Key relationships have also been developed with employers and industry guest speakers. This provides a variety of opportunities for learners to connect with the graduate labour market.

A wide variety of publications, guides and career skill related fact sheets and online resources have been developed by the team for the student body. Examples of resources include the following:-

- Quick Guide to Part Time Work
- C.V Guide
- Careers 3 Easy Steps to Getting LinkedIn
- C.V and Cover Letter Templates
- The Effective C.V. Quiz
- Social Media and Your Career Guide
- Career Decision Making Guide including Self- Assessment and Career Planning
- Sector Specific Guides including Marketing and Media, Accounting and Finance, Human Resource Management and Law
- DBS Careers LinkedIn Page
- DBS Careers Facebook & Twitter
- Jobs Vacancy Board
- DBS Vacancy Website

### **9.7.2 DBS Student Services**

The Student Services team aim to assist learners during their time in DBS through a number of support services including a counselling information service, drop-in hours for international learners, accommodation service and a welfare office.

#### *9.7.2.1 Accommodation*

The Student Services Department manage the DBS Accommodation Guide, which includes information on the various accommodation options available to learners in Dublin's City Centre, which is available on the Student Services website. There is also an Accommodation Notice-board on the ground floor of Aungier Street. The College also provide a Homestay Accommodation option for learners who wish to experience the Irish culture in depth.

#### *9.7.2.2 Welfare*

DBS employ an Education, Welfare and Learning Support Officer. The service guarantees a high level of confidentiality at all times and can point learners in the right direction to ensure that they obtain the support that they need.

#### *9.7.2.3 Counselling Options*

DBS offers a confidential referral service to Counselling and Psychotherapy and guides learners to other appropriate support services.

#### *9.7.2.4 International Student Officer*

The International Student Services Officer provides general guidance, immigration advice and support to all non-European learners. Services provided by the officer include the issuing of formal letters on behalf of learners to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) and prospective employers which include Visa related letters, eligibility to work letters and an array of general reference letters. The officer also advises learners on opening bank accounts, applying for Personal Public Service (PPS) cards and acquiring health insurance cover.

There is a dedicated Study Abroad Officer to co-ordinate and promote entertainment/sports and other activities specific to international learners as well as promoting the interests of international learners, to provide advice and assistance to help integrate international learners into the student community and the promotion of multicultural and all-inclusive events within the college.

DBS is informed by the 'Code of Practice and Guidelines for the Provision of Education to International Learners' which has been published by the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN [www.iheqn.ie](http://www.iheqn.ie)). This Code of Practice is intended to guide Irish HEIs – Universities, Institutes of Technology, other publicly funded institutions and the leading private colleges - in setting their own education provision arrangements for international learners against agreed sector wide benchmarks

#### *9.7.2.5 Sports and Societies*

The office is responsible for facilitating student led clubs and societies and arranges a range of sports and social activities. They also manage college sports teams and organises training and facilities.

#### *9.7.2.6 Learning Supports*

DBS's Learning Supports Service aims to provide support for learners with learning challenges and to assist the achievement of educational goals. Learners with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health issues, on-going illnesses or short term illness or injury should register with the Support Service to ensure they receive the appropriate assistance during their studies. Learners who require additional support register with the service who co-ordinate the examinations or teaching supports.

Supports Available

- Assistive technology
- Academic support
- In class support
- Special arrangements for exams
- Counselling.

## **9.8 Learner Responsibilities**

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Learners are ultimately responsible for their own learning and whilst the college provides learner and academic support, learners have a responsibility to engage in the college supports and maintain a positive learning environment.

9.9 Attendance

<b>Title:</b>	Learner Attendance Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Academic Systems Manager Head of Academic Programmes
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Programme Coordinators Programme Leaders International Officer Head of Careers and Student Services Head of Academic Programmes Head of Faculty and School Operations Academic Systems team
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Head of School Schools Executive Board Head of Student Services Director of Marketing and Admissions
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2019

### **9.9.1 Attendance Policy Overview**

Regular and punctual attendance is essential to successful academic achievement. Each learner is responsible for managing their time to ensure satisfactory attendance is achieved. Satisfactory attendance is deemed to be attendance that is 80% or greater of the potential attendance for any given module. In addition, where applicable, the following specific requirements must be satisfied:

- the minimum requirements of regulatory or statutory bodies
- the specific compulsory requirements of a programme or component thereof

DBS recognises that circumstances may prevent learners from consistently maintaining attendance rates of 80% or greater. However, attendance that is less than 60% of the potential attendance for any given module is considered to be a cause for concern.

Learners are also responsible for all work from the first day of class and must notify the college regarding any anticipated absences. Learners who do not maintain a satisfactory level of attendance are hindering their overall academic performance.

Priority for the provision of further support to learners will always be given to those learners with a strong attendance record, including those with authorised absence.

In order to encourage high attendance levels, the College invests substantial time and resources in tracking and following up on poor attendance. Attendance records are kept for all classes. It is each learner's responsibility to comply with attendance monitoring processes and procedures, including electronic or paper-based systems.

When absence from assessment or examinations is caused by illness or other personal mitigating circumstances, the Programme Coordinator should be informed in writing and documentary evidence (e.g. a medical certificate) should be provided. Time limits for presentation of medical certificates apply. See Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy for full information on requirements.

### **9.9.2 Compulsory Attendance**

Some aspects of College provision dictate a compulsory attendance requirement e.g. professional practice placements. In such instances, a specific policy is drawn up to manage this. The attendance policy and the consequences of failure to comply with the requirements of this policy are brought to the learners' attention in advance.

Non-attendance in compulsory elements of a programme does not entitle the learner to being offered a further opportunity and may result in the learner being deemed to have failed the programme.

It is the Programme Leader's responsibility to develop, communicate and implement any such compulsory attendance policy. Where practicable, learners must be advised of any such requirements from the outset of the programme. The policy must include details of any potential implications on a learner's enrolment status or entitlement to an award as a result of failing to satisfy attendance requirements.

### **9.9.3 International Learner Attendance Requirements**

There are strict regulations regarding the class attendance of non-EU learners. These regulations have been set by the Department of Justice and Equality, and are enforced by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). In keeping with official regulations, DBS enforces a strict attendance policy for Visa holding learners.

All international learners are required to attend classes to the levels specified by the Department of Justice and Equality and monitored by INIS. Full details of requirements can be obtained from INIS or through contacting the DBS International Office in Student Services. In addition, the following rules apply:

- If an international learner is ill for more than two days, they are required to submit a medical certificate from a qualified registered medical practitioner. This will be taken into account when calculating their attendance rate. The medical certificate must be provided within 5 working days of the period of absence. Failure to do so may have implications for the learner's status with INIS.
- Learners are required to attend meetings arranged by the college to investigate poor attendance records

Under the study visa regulations a learner is permitted to work for up to 20 hours per week. Working more than 20 hours per week can affect a learner's ability to maintain a good attendance rate and their academic performance may suffer, and is in contravention of the study visa regulations. Learners are permitted to work up to 40 hours per week during academic vacation periods only.

#### **9.9.4 Learner Entitlements**

Learners are entitled to the appropriate opportunities to enable them to succeed in their studies. DBS ensures the appropriate teaching, learning and support facilities are in place to satisfy this. However, it is each learner's responsibility to avail of these. Attendance is a key contributor to learner success.

Whilst DBS doesn't impose compulsory attendance, except where specified or where an external agency imposes regulations, attendance is monitored and will be followed up where there is cause for concern.

It is acknowledged that it is each learner's responsibility to notify the College of any circumstances that are impacting on their programme of study. However, should the College observe attendance levels that give cause for concern efforts will be made to contact the learner concerned. In the case of personal mitigating circumstances affecting attendance, DBS will seek to support the learner and identify the options available to them.

Learners are entitled to classes and tutorials, which start and end punctually and last for the duration of the time scheduled. In the event of lecturer absence, DBS will make every effort to arrange an alternative lecturer. Where this is not possible, the class will be rescheduled.

#### **9.9.5 Learner Responsibilities**

Learners are required to arrive for classes punctually and remain present for the duration of the class.

Learners are required to actively participate in the class and follow the reasonable instruction of their lecturer.

Learners should not miss class except in extenuating circumstances such as illness or bereavement. In the event of any absence, the learner is required to notify the Programme Coordinator via email. In the event of any absence, it is each learner's responsibility to make arrangements to catch up on work missed.

If a learner is absent without explanation for a period of greater than one calendar month and there has been no response to attempted contact by the College, or reasonable explanation for absence, the learner will be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme and will be notified of this.

If a learner's pattern of attendance or participation gives cause for concern and has not been deemed as authorised absence through the presentation of PMCs, it may affect their entitlement to progress on their programme. DBS reserves the right to prevent a learner from progressing where it is felt they are not sufficiently and appropriately engaging with the programme. The specific requirements will vary depending on the nature and level of the programme concerned.

It is each learner's responsibility to ensure accurate and honest recording of their attendance. Attendance is recorded on Moodle for each individual learner to view their record. This should be checked by the learner, ideally on a daily basis, and any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the relevant lecturer and or the Programme Coordinator. Any attempts to falsify attendance records including but not restricted to scanning cards of fellow learners or requesting a fellow learner to scan your card when absent, is considered a disciplinary offence and will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee where penalties up to an including dismissal from the College may be applied.

#### **9.9.6 College Responsibilities**

In this context, the responsibilities of the College are carried out by different members of the College including academic lecturing staff, administrators and managers.

The College is required to:

- Notify learners, through the Academic Affairs Department, of its attendance policy including attendance monitoring and any compulsory attendance requirements
- Notify learners, through the Academic Affairs Department, of potential implications of poor attendance or failing to satisfy specific requirements
- Ensure effective attendance monitoring and recording arrangements are in place
- Record learner attendance through the electronic recording system provided or via paper based recording undertaken by the lecturer in the event of system failure
- Ensure Programme Coordinators monitor learner attendance and attempt to contact those absent without notice and notify Level Managers and Programme Leaders of those learners whose attendance levels or patterns are of concern for further follow up

- Ensure lecturers and Programme Coordinators provide advice and guidance to those learners who give evidence of personal mitigating circumstances impacting their attendance and participation
- Ensure classes start and finish punctually and last for the duration scheduled
- Where practicable, provide advance notification to learners when a class is moved or rescheduled, through issuing of emails and text alerts from the Academic Affairs Department
- Submit notification from the International Office to the INIS of any visa holding learner who fails to satisfy the attendance regulations as stated.

#### **9.9.7 Advance Information to Learners**

From the outset of their studies, as part of the orientation and induction, learners should be alerted to the attendance policy and recording and monitoring arrangements in place.

Visa holding learners should be notified of the specific requirements for their attendance and the communication of their attendance to INIS as well as the intent of the College to notify where attendance falls below the required level.

All learners should be provided with access to their timetable for the semester ahead. This should detail all classes including the location. Further to this, learners should be notified of other key programme activities such as examination periods.

Learners are advised that timetables are intended to run as scheduled but may change due to unforeseen circumstances in which case, where practicable, the learners will be notified at the earliest opportunity by text and email to their DBS email account.

#### **9.9.8 Recording Attendance**

The academic systems team will provide each lecturer with details of all learners registered to attend their class.

Each learner is required to use their student card and the scanning device located in each classroom to scan in for each class they attend.

In the event of a fault with the scanning device or absence of a student card, the learner must notify the lecturer immediately so a manual attendance can be recorded.

The learner is responsible for monitoring their attendance record on Moodle and immediately notifying the relevant lecturer where there is an error in their attendance. Where the lecturer is able to verify the inaccuracy the attendance record will be updated.

The lecturer should make all reasonable attempts to ensure the accuracy of attendance records. This includes reminding learners of the requirement to have signed in. Depending on the size of the class, additional checks may include ensuring the class count correlates with the attendance register and undertaking periodic sign-in registrations to ensure no learner is scanning more than their own student card. A lecturer may opt to complete a sign in registration regularly in addition to the electronic card scanning system should they wish to do so.

DBS recognises there may be instances where a learner is unable to attend class. The learner is required to notify the Programme Coordinator of this by email at the earliest opportunity. DBS reserves the right to request evidence of reason for absence e.g. medical certificate.

Where the Programme Coordinator is notified of absence he/she will record the reason for absence and date of notification on the student information system.

#### **9.9.9 Implications of Absence**

Programme Coordinators will initiate contact with any learner that shows unauthorised absence for a period of greater than one week.

In instances of ongoing or recurring absence without notification the Programme Leader or Level Manager will attempt to contact the learner concerned to establish the continued intention to complete the programme and whether or not there are any circumstances which may be preventing improved attendance.

Attempts will be made to support the learner to improve their attendance or alternatively, appropriate options such as deferral, programme change or transfer of study mode may be discussed.

The learner may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the implications of their non-attendance or non-participation.

All absentee learners will be advised that continuous or recurring absence may impact on their potential to succeed and could prevent their progression on the programme.

Where professional body, academic validation, or a government agency regulations have implications for a learner's potential progression, enrolment, award, or residency status this will be communicated to the learner. Visa holding learners will be advised of the intention to notify INIS and the potential implications this may have on their residency status.

Where applicable, DBS reserves the right to prevent a learner undertaking a professional practice placement where it is felt that poor attendance or participation is demonstrating a lack of commitment to the programme or has prevented the learner from being adequately prepared for the placement requirements.

While a learner may be withdrawn for non-attendance without communication for a duration greater than one calendar month, a learner will not be withdrawn for poor attendance in itself. However, if a learner fails an assessment, a module, a stage or a programme and has a track record of poor attendance, without accepted mitigating circumstances, this apparent lack of commitment to the programme will be a factor taken into account by the Committee in the event of any appeal.

#### **9.9.10 Personal Mitigating Circumstances Impacting Attendance**

Where PMCs are impacting on a learner's attendance DBS will advise the learner of options available to them including but not limited to:

- Additional learner supports in place
- Deferral
- Extension requests
- Submission of PMCs for consideration by the Board of Examiners
- Change of programme
- Transfer of mode of study

In each case, the learner will be required to follow the procedure associated with each instance outlined above and the associated policy will apply.

#### **9.9.11 Failure to Respond to Communication from DBS**

Learners who are absent for an extended period, greater than one calendar month, and fail to respond to a minimum of two attempts by DBS to make contact with them will be assumed to have

withdrawn. The final attempt at communication will notify the learner of the imminent withdrawal and the requirement to make contact within 5 working days in order to prevent this.

Visa holding learners will be notified of the intention to advise INIS of their absence and non-engagement and the implications this may have on their residency status.

Should the learner fail to respond by the deadline, the Programme Coordinator will confirm the withdrawal of the learner, including issuing a withdrawal letter to the learner, and update the student information system.

In the event of withdrawal, the Assessment and Regulations Manager will ensure any completed modules are put through the Examination Board as scheduled and a transcript of results will be issued to the learner as applicable.

Withdrawal does not entitle a learner to any full or partial refund of fees.

Where a learner is withdrawn due to non-attendance and failure to communicate with the College, any return to study will normally only be facilitated through the standard admissions process at the next programme intake point. Fees paid on previous admission will not be carried forward.

**9.10 Deferral Policy**

<b>Title:</b>	Deferral Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Director of Admissions and Marketing Head of Academic Affairs
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Admissions staff Programme Coordinators Exams Officer and Administrator
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Director of Admissions and Marketing Schools Executive Board
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2019

### 9.10.1 Deferral Policy Overview

A deferral refers to a break or delay in the completion of a programme of study or component thereof. It includes any one of the following:

- A pre-registration deferral of an offer
- A pre-programme deferral of a place, within 2 weeks of registration
- A full programme deferral, during the programme of study
- A module deferral, during the programme of study

In considering deferral requests DBS will consider the best interest of the learner but will only implement decisions that ensure the academic integrity of the programme and the College and will not provide personalised learning arrangements that create an unfair advantage for a learner over other learners. The completion of a programme through its natural progression is paramount, and DBS will not facilitate completion of the programme more quickly than the validation permits.

Learners are responsible for their registration status and maintaining communication with the College in relation to any factors that may impact that status. DBS provides clear guidance and opportunity for learners to communicate any circumstances impacting their studies at the time they arise and in the immediate period following same. DBS will not normally authorise retrospective deferrals where the request stems from academic under-performance or failure or non-participation in the programme due to circumstances that arose some time previously.

DBS will seek to consider and respond to deferral requests as quickly as possible. Learners are advised that a deferral should not be assumed and therefore wherever practicable should continue as an active student, including the completion of all assessments, until the deferral outcome has been confirmed. Where there are extenuating circumstances that prevent this, the deferral will be backdated to the date of first notification to the College or the date indicated on supporting evidence provided.

Deferring studies may also result in the requirement to repeat programme components or assessments that have already been satisfied, except where a complete module has been successfully completed and this module remains current within the programme. Failure to do this can constitute failing an assessment attempt and will be subjected to the implications this carries in line with QQI HET *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013*.

DBS reserves the right to impose a programme deferral on a learner where it is felt it may be detrimental to the learner, the College, or the individuals or groups with whom the learner is required to engage to complete their studies.

DBS will retain all records confidentially in line with data protection requirements and will only share information on a need-to-know basis.

### **9.10.2 Pre-registration deferral of an offer of a place**

A pre-registration deferral of an offer of a place on a DBS programme is available to all applicants in receipt of an offer of a place. In such cases the applicant may defer the offer for a maximum of two years. Requests for a pre-registration deferral should be submitted to the Admissions Team.

#### **9.10.2.1 Conditions of deferral of an offer of a place**

Deferral of an offer is accepted and confirmed subject to conditions which the Admissions Team must communicate to the applicant at the time. The following conditions apply:

- a. The deferral is granted for a maximum of two academic years
- b. The deferral is granted subject to the programme continuing to be offered and in its current format and structure. DBS reserves the right to amend the programme format and structure without notice and further reserves the right to no longer offer the programme without notice
- c. DBS reserves the right to amend the entry requirements and standards without notice and all deferred offers will be subject to these revised requirements which may include the offer being withdrawn
- d. Deferred applicants will be subject to the fees applicable at the time they commence the programme of study.

### **9.10.3 Pre-programme deferral of a place, within 2 weeks of registration**

Pre-programme deferral is only available to those learners who are within 2 weeks of having completed registration. In such cases the applicant may defer for a maximum of one academic year subject to specific conditions. Requests for a pre-programme deferral must be submitted to the Programme Coordinator.

#### **9.10.3.1 Conditions of a pre-programme deferral of a place, within 2 weeks of registration**

A pre-programme deferral is accepted and confirmed subject to conditions which the Programme Coordinator must communicate to the applicant at the time. The following conditions apply:

- a. The deferral is granted for a maximum of one academic year

- b. The deferral is granted subject to the programme continuing to be offered and in its current format and structure. DBS reserves the right to amend the programme format and structure without notice and further reserves the right to no longer offer the programme without notice
- c. DBS reserves the right to amend the entry requirements and standards without notice and all deferred learners will be subject to these revised requirements which may include the offer being withdrawn
- d. Deferred learners will be subject to the fees applicable at the time they commence the programme of study
- e. Fees paid will be deferred for the duration of the deferral. There is no entitlement to a refund of fees paid in the event of the learner no longer wishing to pursue the programme of study or in the event of programme changes made by DBS.
- f. It is the learner's responsibility to contact DBS in order to recommence their studies at the end of the deferral period. Where a learner fails to return at this point, and up to a maximum of one month post this point, they will be deemed to have withdrawn. In such cases return to DBS will only be facilitated through the standard admissions process at the next programme start point.

#### **9.10.4 A full programme deferral during a programme of study**

A full programme deferral is an option available to learners who are undertaking a programme of study at DBS and who, for reasons beyond their control, can no longer commit to completing the programme in the original intended timescale. DBS does not encourage learners to defer their studies except in extenuating circumstances that provide no other option. Learners are advised to speak with their programme leader in the first instance to establish alternative arrangements that may suit their needs. Where a full programme deferral is required, the learner should submit their request to the Programme Coordinator.

A full programme deferral may also be imposed on a learner where the Programme Leader believes their continuation may be detrimental to the learner, the College, or the individuals or groups with whom they must work in order to complete their studies. In such cases the Programme Leader will discuss the concerns and the recommendations with the learner concerned. The additional requirements to confirm fitness to return will also be outlined to the learner.

#### **9.10.4.1 Conditions of a full programme deferral during a programme of study**

A full programme deferral is only granted to those learners who are able to evidence extenuating circumstances which prevent them from completing their programme of study in the intended original timescale. Full programme deferrals are only normally offered at a complete stage point in the programme. Where learners defer mid stage, they may be required to repeat modules and / or assessments previously completed and recommence the stage on their return. Where a full programme deferral is granted it is subject to conditions which the Programme Coordinator must communicate to the learner at the point of the deferral being confirmed. The conditions apply as follows:

- a. The deferral is granted for a maximum of one academic year
- b. DBS reserves the right to discontinue the programme without notification to deferred learners
- c. DBS reserves the right to change the format and content of the programme without notification to deferred learners
- d. A deferral may result in a learner being required to undertake additional modules and or assessments upon their return
- e. A deferred learner will be subject to the fees applicable to the academic year into which they return
- f. Fees paid will be deferred for the duration of the deferral. There is no entitlement to a refund of fees paid in the event of the learner no longer wishing to pursue the programme of study or in the event of programme changes made by DBS
- g. It is the learner's responsibility to contact DBS in order to recommence their studies at the end of the deferral period. Where a learner fails to return at this point, and up to a maximum of one month post this point, they will be deemed to have withdrawn. In such cases return to DBS will only be facilitated through the standard admissions process at the next programme start point.

#### **9.10.5 A module deferral during a programme of study**

DBS operates on the principle of fit to sit or submit and therefore does not normally facilitate the deferral of an individual module or modules (where these have been signed up to at the point of registration), including the deferral of a module assessment, whilst other modules are being undertaken, except in extreme extenuating circumstances. In such cases DBS is entitled to apply

discretion. This does not remove the right of part time learners to deviate from the recommended learning route.

Independent evidence alone e.g. medical certificate, is not sufficient to warrant a module deferral. DBS will always recognise the expertise of independent third parties in the evidence they provide but all deferral decisions will be made based on the requirements of the programme and the need to retain academic standards and integrity. DBS reserves the right to deny a module or assessment deferral where it is felt this may negatively impact of the academic integrity of the programme or the individual learner experience and requirements. A full programme deferral may be offered as an alternative. All such decisions are made by the Programme Leader.

#### **9.10.5.1 Conditions of a module deferral, including assessment only**

In the rare and extreme circumstances where DBS approves a module deferral, including an assessment only deferral, the conditions of the deferral must be communicated by the Programme Coordinator to the learner at the point of acceptance. The following conditions apply:

- a. The deferral is granted until the next sitting only
- b. DBS reserves the right to discontinue the module without notification to deferred learners
- c. DBS reserves the right to change the format and content of the module and assessment without notification to deferred learners
- d. A deferral may result in a learner being required to undertake an alternative module and or assessment
- e. A deferred learner will be subject to the fees applicable to the academic year in which they undertake the module
- f. Fees paid will be deferred for the duration of the deferral. There is no entitlement to a refund of fees paid in the event of the learner no longer wishing to pursue the programme of study or in the event of programme changes made by DBS
- g. It is the learner's responsibility to contact DBS in order to recommence their studies at the end of the deferral period. Where a learner fails to return at this point, and up to a maximum of one month post this point, they will be deemed to have withdrawn. In such cases return to DBS will only be facilitated through the standard admissions process at the next programme start point.

#### **9.10.6 Procedure for seeking a Deferral**

Applicants and learners wishing to apply for a deferral must follow the appropriate procedure for the deferral type being sought. Where required, independent supporting evidence must be provided as part of the deferral request. Where evidence is required and not provided the deferral request will be denied.

#### **9.10.7 Requesting a deferral of an offer of a place**

An applicant wishing to hold an offer of a place may do so upon applying to the admissions administrator.

The admissions administrator will consider the request and confirm approval of same, except where it is known to be the final intake of a programme.

In confirming agreement of the deferral, the admissions administrator must advise the applicant of the relevant conditions as outlined in section 1.1.

Where a deferral is denied, the applicant must be advised of the rationale for the decision.

An appeal against the deferral decision may be made in writing to the Director of Admissions and Marketing.

An appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of the date of the decision being communicated. An appeal submitted beyond this point will not be considered.

Disagreement with the original decision is not considered grounds for an appeal.

The outcome of the appeal is final and there is no further right of appeal.

#### **9.10.8 Requesting a pre-programme deferral, within 2 weeks of registration**

A learner wishing to defer their place on a programme within two weeks of the registration may do so upon applying to the relevant programme coordinator.

The programme coordinator will consider the request and confirm approval of same, except where it is known to be the final intake of a programme.

Where it is known to be the final intake of the programme, the Programme Coordinator must refer the learner to the Programme Leader to discuss alternative programmes they may defer on to. The

Programme Leader will notify the Programme Coordinator of the appropriate programme alternative in order to facilitate the deferral offer.

In confirming agreement of the deferral, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner of the relevant conditions as outlined in section 2.1.

Where a deferral is denied, the learner must be advised of the rationale for the decision.

An appeal against the deferral decision may be made in writing to the Head of Academic Affairs.

All such appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the decision being communicated.

Any appeal submitted outside this timeframe will be denied.

The following are the only grounds for appeal:

- Failure on the part of the College to consider information made available to the College that would have influenced the deferral outcome
- An irregularity in the application of the procedure for considering a deferral

Disagreement with the original decision is not considered grounds for an appeal.

The outcome of the appeal is final and there is no further right of appeal.

#### **9.10.9 Requesting a Programme Deferral**

A learner wishing to defer their place on a programme must submit a formal request to the relevant Programme Coordinator.

A learner wishing to defer a programme should normally have completed a stage and be in good academic standing i.e. be up to date with all assessments. It is expected that there are circumstances present which prevent the learner from progressing as part of the programme as scheduled.

The programme coordinator will draw the request to the attention of the Programme Leader who will consider the request and confirm approval of same, except where it is known to be the final intake of a programme.

Where it is known to be the final intake of the programme, the Programme Leader must discuss alternative programmes they may defer on to. The Programme Leader will notify the Programme Coordinator of the appropriate programme alternative in order to facilitate the deferral offer.

In confirming agreement of the deferral, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner of the relevant conditions as outlined in section 3.1.

Where a deferral is denied, the learner must be advised of the rationale for the decision.

An appeal against the deferral decision may be made in writing to the Head of Academic Affairs.

All such appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the decision being communicated.

Any appeal submitted outside this timeframe will be denied.

The following are the only grounds for appeal:

- Failure on the part of the College to consider information made available to the College that would have influenced the deferral outcome
- An irregularity in the application of the procedure for considering a deferral

Disagreement with the original decision is not considered grounds for an appeal.

The outcome of the appeal is final and there is no further right of appeal.

#### **9.10.10 Requesting a Module Deferral, including assessment only**

DBS does not encourage deferring individual modules when continuing studies of other modules.

Such requests will only be accommodated in exceptional circumstances. Deferral of assessment for a module or modules will normally be denied except where there are extreme extenuating circumstances beyond the learner's control. Scheduling of assessments over a longer period of time to the specified learning route may provide an unfair advantage and impact on the academic integrity of the programme.

Module deferrals, including assessment only, will only be considered where it is evidenced that the learner is unable to participate or that their ability to perform to their academic potential is diminished due to circumstance beyond their control. Such circumstances are expected to be beyond the normal stress associated with the completion of assessments and programmes of study. Such circumstances include illness and bereavement and in both cases DBS reserves the right to request evidence.

Employment demands or commitments are not normally considered as grounds for deferral, including assessment only deferrals. Learners are reasonably expected to manage their employment commitments to facilitate the completion of their studies.

Where appropriate evidence of extenuating circumstances is submitted to the Programme Coordinator, this is brought to the attention of the Programme Leader who may approve the request, deny the request or deny the request but recommend a full programme deferral.

DBS operates on the principle of fit to sit or submit and therefore reasonably expects that learners are fit for all assessments or for no assessments. As a result, deferral of modules or assessments will normally be denied but may result in a programme deferral being offered.

In confirming agreement of the deferral, the Programme Coordinator must advise the learner of the relevant conditions as outlined in section 4.1.

Where a deferral is denied, the learner must be advised of the rationale for the decision.

An appeal against the deferral decision may be made in writing to the Head of Academic Affairs.

All such appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the decision being communicated.

Any appeal submitted outside this timeframe will be denied.

The following are the only grounds for appeal:

- Failure on the part of the College to consider information made available to the College that would have influenced the deferral outcome
- An irregularity in the application of the procedure for considering a deferral

Disagreement with the original decision is not considered grounds for an appeal.

The outcome of the appeal is final and there is no further right of appeal.

#### **9.10.11 Returning to study post deferral**

It is the learner's responsibility to return to College at the expected time. All learners who defer are required to familiarise themselves with the DBS academic calendar, and the examination timetables where applicable, as published, and make themselves available for their return to study and or assessment.

Failure to return to study within one month of the expected return date will result in the learner being withdrawn. The Programme Coordinator will notify the learner of the withdrawal. In such cases fees paid will not be refunded.

Returning to a programme of study at DBS following a withdrawal will only be facilitated through the standard admissions process for the next programme start point. In such cases any fees previously paid will no longer be available as deferred payment and the learner will be liable for all fees applicable to a new learner.

Failure to return to complete an assessment, including examinations, at the scheduled return point will be considered as an assessment attempt having been offered to the learner. A mark of 0% will be recorded. The implications of this are as outlined in QQI HET Assessment and Standards Revised 2013, and specifically sectoral convention number 3 which outlines learners who fail a module at the first attempt (including where the opportunity provided was not attempted) will no longer be entitled to an honours award.

Depending on the reason for deferral, a student might be required to provide the College with documentation on return to the programme that confirms their suitability and or fitness to return, in line with the deferral offer, before recommencing the programme.

#### **9.10.12 Timescales**

It is the applicant / learner's responsibility to submit a request for a deferral in a timely manner. Delays in deferral requests may result in DBS assuming the learner has withdrawn due to non-communication and failure to engage with the College.

Where a deferral request is submitted through the proper channels as outlined, the applicant / learner may reasonably expect a response within 10 working days.

Where an appeal is submitted through the proper channels, the applicant / learner may reasonably expect a response within 20 working days.

#### **9.10.13 Fees**

Students availing of a whole programme deferral who are on payment schedules agreed upon acceptance of their place on the programme are entitled to defer their scheduled payments during the deferral period.

Students withdrawing from a programme of study have no entitlement to a full or partial refund of fees paid as per the terms and conditions outlined at the point of payment.

**9.11 Personal Mitigating Circumstances**

<b>Title:</b>	Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Head of Academic Affairs
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Programme Coordinators Programme Leaders Exams Officer and Administrator
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Schools Executive Board
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2021

### **9.11.1 PMC Policy Overview**

Undertaking a programme of studying and completing all attendance and assessment requirements is physically and mentally challenging for many learners and can result in feelings of increased stress. There is a strong correlation between attendance and achievement and therefore DBS encourages all learners to attend all of their classes in order to assist them in succeeding in their studies and in receiving the maximum support available to them.

Learners who feel under pressure as a result of their studies and whilst preparing for assessments should continue to make all reasonable efforts to meet the programme requirements and deadlines and avail of the support provided by the lecturers, programme leader, DBS Library Service and DBS Student Services.

Learners who feel this way whilst preparing for or undertaking assessments should make all reasonable effort to comply with programme assessment requirements. Symptoms typically associated with assessment stress, for example, anxiety, nervousness, upset, feeling sick, loss of sleep, are not normally considered to be extenuating circumstances warranting absence, failure to submit or underperformance in an assessment or examination.

DBS does recognise that there are additional circumstances in a learner's life that may diminish their ability to satisfy programme requirements or to achieve their academic potential. These are known as personal mitigating circumstances and can be requested to be taken into consideration when seeking an extension to a submission deadline or in assessing the learner's performance in an assessment.

Whilst this policy applies to learners who require a short-term extension to the submission deadline for an assessment. A student cannot normally seek and obtain an extension and subsequently ask for the same extenuating circumstances to be taken into account after the fact.

This policy is not for the purpose of taking into consideration a diagnosed chronic medical condition, disability or specific learning need. Learners who wish for such circumstances to be considered in order for appropriate reasonable accommodations to be made for teaching, learning and assessment, need to consult the Learner Support Policy.

### **9.11.2 Personal Mitigating Circumstances Preventing Completion or Submission of a CA**

When, owing to personal mitigating circumstances, a learner is unable to complete or submit a piece of continuous assessment, the learner must complete the Extension Request form and submit it to the relevant Programme Coordinator.

The form is available on the student website and must be submitted electronically. The form should normally be submitted at least 3 days in advance of the CA submission date or in class assessment. Where it is not practicable to do so, the Extension Request Form may be submitted up to 7 calendar days after the submission deadline or date of in class assessment.

The form should normally be supported with independent documentary evidence e.g. medical certificate, bereavement notice, travel advisory.

All records are retained confidentially in accordance with data protection requirements and information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

The Programme Coordinator will forward the extension request to the Programme Leader who will review the form and supporting evidence and will determine an appropriate decision.

The decisions available are:

- a. Deny the request (usually due to absence of evidence or insufficient cause)
- b. Approve the request
- c. Require further information

The Programme Leader will notify the learner and the Programme Coordinator of the outcome.

In the case of a. the learner will be notified of the outcome and the reason for same. The Programme Leader will also advise the learner of the penalties and implications of failing to meet the required deadline or complete the assessment concerned.

In the case of b. the learner will be notified of the outcome and the revised arrangements for completion or submission of the CA. It should be noted that any period of extension will not normally be for greater than 10 working days and will typically reflect the period of the duration of the PMCs i.e. a 3 day illness will warrant a 3 day extension.

In the case of c. the Programme Leader will contact the learner for further information in order to facilitate a fully informed decision being made.

Upon approving an extension or alternative date for an in class assessment, the Programme Coordinator will advise the learner that failure to submit by the revised deadline or to attend on the date for the rescheduled in class test will result in appropriate penalties being applied.

It is the learner's responsibility to ensure they satisfy the arrangements for assessment. Failure to do so may have implications for their enrolment and entitlement to an award.

Learners are advised not to assume that PMCs will be accepted and an extension granted.

DBS reasonably expects that learners who encounter PMCs close to the assessment submission deadline would normally have the significant majority of the assessment completed and therefore only a minimal extension period may be granted.

Learners are advised to be aware of penalties for late submission should an extension not be granted or the extended submission date be missed.

Where an extension is granted the Programme Leader needs to ensure the relevant lecturer is notified and that the necessary arrangements are made on Moodle to facilitate the extended submission date.

### **9.11.3 Personal Mitigating Circumstances Impacting Performance during an Assessment (excluding examinations)**

DBS operates the fit to sit or submit principle which means that learners who undertake an assessment declare themselves fit to take that assessment. Normally, any subsequent claim for personal mitigating circumstances in relation to that assessment will not be considered. The exception to this is in the case of a learner who becomes unwell during the course of an assessment such as an in class assessment or professional practice placement. In this instance, independent evidence must be communicated to the College within five working days in order to be considered.

The PMC form is available on the student website and must be submitted electronically.

The PMC form should normally be submitted to the relevant Programme Coordinator supported with independent documentary evidence e.g. medical certificate, but may also refer to College based evidence such as a report from the relevant lecturer, Programme Leader or member of Student Support Services.

All records are retained confidentially in accordance with data protection requirements and information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

Where the PMC form and evidence submitted relates to an in class assessment or professional practice placement, the Programme Coordinator will notify the Programme Leader and a decision will be reached to determine whether or not the learner should be afforded a further assessment opportunity as the current attempt and the arrangements for this.

The Programme Leader will advise the learner and the Programme Coordinator of the decision and of the implications of this in respect of their enrolment status and entitlement to an award.

#### **9.11.4 Right of Appeal**

A learner wishing to appeal a PMC decision relating to continuous assessment, excluding examinations, may do so in writing to the Head of Academic Programmes.

Grounds for appeal are as follows:

- a. The learner believes there was a procedural irregularity in the original decision making
- b. The learner believes information made available to the College was not taken into consideration in the decision making process

Disagreement with the original decision is not in itself grounds for appeal.

Failure on behalf of the learner to provide the necessary evidence in the relevant timeframe is not normally considered grounds for appeal, except where the evidence itself provides justification for not being able to do so.

The Head of Academic Programmes will determine if there is evidence of grounds for appeal and will advise the learner of the outcome.

Where there are no grounds present, the matter is considered closed and there is no further right of appeal.

Where grounds are present, the Head of Academic Programmes will convene a PMC Appeal Committee comprising:

- The Assessment and Regulations Manager
- A Programme Leader (not previously involved in the case)
- A student services representative

The PMC Appeal Committee will determine a decision based on the evidence provided. The Appeal Committee is not a re-hearing of the original PMC submission but determination of whether there was a procedural irregularity or information not considered. In determining the presence of either

circumstances, the PMC Appeal Committee may make a revised decision which can be applied retrospectively if applicable.

#### **9.11.5 Personal Mitigating Circumstances Impacting Performance during an Examination**

DBS operates the fit to sit or submit principle which means that learners who undertake an examination declare themselves fit to do so. Normally, any subsequent claim for personal mitigating circumstances in relation to that examination will not be considered. The exception to this is in the case of a learner who becomes unwell during the course of an examination. In this instance, independent evidence must be communicated to the College within five working days in order to be considered.

The PMC form is available on the student website and must be submitted electronically.

The PMC form should normally be submitted to the relevant Programme Coordinator with independent documentary evidence e.g. medical certificate, but may also refer to College based evidence such as invigilator's report.

All records are retained confidentially in accordance with data protection requirements and information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

The Programme Coordinator will notify the Assessment and Regulations Manager who will convene a PMC Committee in advance of the relevant Board of Examiners.

The PMC Committee will determine whether or not there is evidence that PMCs are present. This will be determined on the evidence submitted. The PMC Committee does not determine the impact of PMCs.

Internal Examination Board will be notified of which students have PMCs approved for which examinations. The Board will not be notified of the nature of the PMCs but will be required to determine if there is evidence that learner performance has been impacted.

In determining evidence of impact, the Board is required to consider the learner's overall profile and compare performance in other modules and assessments in that programme stage. Particular consideration should be given to similar assessment types i.e. examinations.

Upon reaching a decision, the Internal Board is required to make a recommendation to the External Board of Examiners. Where the decision is that there is evidence of performance being impacted i.e. the percentage of marks out of sync with the profile of performance, it is reasonably expected that

the evidence will also indicate the extent of the impact and therefore the grade increase to be recommended. Where the Board feels there is no evidence of impact, this should also be recorded with a recommendation that the grade remains unchanged.

The External Board of Examiners will be asked to ratify the recommendation.

The decision of the Board of Examiners will be communicated to the learner 5 working days after the Board.

#### **9.11.6 Right of Appeal**

An appeal against a decision of the Board of Examiners may be initiated in accordance with the Academic Appeals Policy.

#### **9.11.7 Provisions in respect of Academic Judgements**

The following provisions apply to the exercise of academic judgement in relation to the assessment process:

- The assessment of a learner's work is a matter of judgement, not simply of computation
- Marks and percentages are not considered definitive absolute values but a means of an examiner communicating their judgement on different aspects of a learner's work to enable the determination of a learner's fulfilment of programme outcomes.
- The academic judgements of examiners cannot, in themselves, be questioned or overturned.

The PMC process may result in an amendment to the decisions of an examiner. Where this is the case, it should be clearly understood that this is not a review of the soundness of the original academic judgement made in respect of the assessment or assessments in question.

An amendment to a decision of an examiner is a recognition that while extraneous or more recently disclosed circumstances make it appropriate to change the final decision in respect of a student, the integrity and soundness of the initial academic judgement itself is not thereby questioned.

#### **9.11.8 Personal Mitigating Circumstances Preventing a Learner Sitting an Examination**

In line with the fit to sit principle, learners are reasonably expected to sit all exams or defer all exams as opposed to selective sitting of some and not others.

A learner who is unable to sit an examination is required to request a deferral. Deferral of selected exams in a sitting will not normally be allowed, unless specific supporting documentation is provided. Learners should consult the Deferral Policy and follow the relevant procedure.

#### **9.11.9 Limitations of PMCs**

When instances arise where a learner's performance has potentially been impacted during an examination or assessment, in order to determine the impact of PMCs on learner performance it is necessary to compare performance in affected assessments and modules with unaffected assessments and modules within a programme stage. Therefore, DBS will not accept PMCs for a complete programme or stage. It is understood that completion of the assessments and continuation of the programme is a declaration of fitness to do so.

#### **9.11.10 Retrospective PMC applications**

DBS recognises that instances arise where learners fail to notify the College of PMCs until such a time as the learner is notified of their failure and withdrawal. It is essential that learners notify DBS of the circumstances at the earliest opportunity. Failure to do so may result in all fail grades standing and the withdrawal status of the learner being considered final. DBS provides sufficient opportunity to communicate PMCs and therefore will not normally accept post failure or post withdrawal PMC applications except in extreme cases where the evidence itself provides justification for previous non-communication.

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's academic performance, and there were substantial and grave reasons why the learner was unwilling to disclose them at the time. Simple unwillingness to disclose or lack of appreciation/awareness of potential impact of personal circumstances is insufficient for acceptance of late submission of extenuating circumstances.

Learners who are deemed to have failed and withdrawn are entitled to avail of the Academic Appeals process.

9.12 Code of Conduct

<b>Title:</b>	Learner Code of Conduct
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Head of Faculty and School Operations
<b>Implemented by:</b>	<p>Programme Coordinators</p> <p>Programme Leaders</p> <p>Academic Lecturing staff</p> <p>Head of Student Experience</p> <p>Careers and Student Services staff</p> <p>DBS Library Service Staff</p> <p>Head of Academic Programmes</p> <p>Disciplinary Committee</p>
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	<p>Programme Leaders</p> <p>Head of Academic Affairs</p> <p>Head of School</p> <p>Schools Executive Board</p> <p>Head of Student Experience</p>
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2019

### **9.12.1 Overview**

Each learner at DBS is required to comply with the College's Code of Conduct. The aim of the DBS Learner Code of Conduct is to ensure that an appropriate academic environment in which mutual respect for all College staff, learners, visitors and guests is promoted. The Code requires reasonable behaviour and consideration for others and is intended to assist learners in spending a fulfilling and rewarding time at the College.

The Code of Conduct is intended to set and maintain acceptable standards of behaviour within the college community, to encourage individuals to accept their obligations and to maintain the College's good standing. The code applies to all learners regardless of their study location. In the case of learners undertaking a programme that is a collaboration between DBS and others, this code shall apply except where a specific alternative is identified.

This code is not exhaustive. Other regulations concerning expected norms of behaviour and communication are documented throughout the College Quality Assurance Handbook.

The enforcement of the code is a shared responsibility. The Disciplinary Committee is called to review cases of suspected or alleged breaches of this code.

### **9.12.2 Commitment to Code of Conduct**

In registering for a programme of study at DBS all learners are accepting the Code of Conduct and agreeing to adhere to the requirements and expectations identified within it.

### **9.12.3 General Behaviour**

All learners are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner throughout their interactions with and on behalf of DBS and will not engage in any activity that may negatively impact the name of the College, its staff or learners.

Learners are expected to conduct themselves legally, ethically and responsibly in all interactions and communications in all mediums, including those interactions through technology and social media, within and outside their programme of study.

All communications and interactions with the College or any of its stakeholders, and on behalf of the college as a DBS learner, are expected to be conducted in a respectful manner based upon dignity, equality and inclusion.

Any act or omission that affects adversely the rights of any other member of the College community, including partners or external stakeholders, or that disrupts the conduct of any College activity will be considered a breach of discipline and may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

#### **9.12.4 Satisfaction of College and Programme Requirements and Regulations**

Learners take personal responsibility for their studies and their progression through their chosen programme of study and for the consequences and implications of their actions and inactions in this regard.

Learners are required to attend scheduled classes punctually and conduct themselves in an appropriate manner throughout the class.

Learners are responsible for the accurate and honest recording of their attendance. Any attempt to falsify College records will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Learners are required to maintain communication with DBS in all instances where they are unable to attend or engage with their studies. Failure to do so may impact on a learner's enrolment status.

It is the responsibility of each learner to familiarise themselves with the regulations, policies and procedures of DBS, including assessment regulations governing their programme, and any implications that failure to comply or adhere to specifics outlined within same may have on their enrolment status and potential entitlement to an award.

Each learner is required to produce their learner i.d. (student card) upon request by any member of DBS staff.

#### **9.12.5 In-class Conduct**

Learners are required to adhere to the reasonable and lawful instruction of DBS staff during class and whilst on DBS premises.

Where any learner is responsible for disruption or acting in a manner that fails to display dignity and respect, including failing to follow the instructions of DBS staff, the staff member is within their rights to ask the learner to withdraw from the particular activity and report them for a breach of this code.

#### **9.12.6 Use of Social Media and Technology**

DBS encourages learners to engage in groups and societies and establish informal networks, including through the use of social media and technology, to promote the development and enhancement of the learner community. Participation, whilst often informal and social in nature, must be appropriate, inoffensive and respectful at all times. Learners are required to be mindful of their terminology and images they may share.

#### **9.12.7 Premises, Property and Staff Associated with DBS or its Programmes**

Learners are required to respect the staff, premises, property and fellow learners of DBS and any associated venue or partner, including local residents and businesses. Conduct that might be deemed in breach of this requirement will normally be considered a disciplinary matter.

Learners who undertake part of their studies in locations outside of DBS are required to familiarise themselves with any specific codes of behaviour or conduct belonging to those locations and adhere to them during their time there.

Where the College is notified of an allegation of a breach of a code of conduct belonging to another location associated with the completion of a DBS programme of study, the learner can be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

#### **9.12.8 Enforcement**

For the purpose of enforcing this code, DBS is entitled but not obliged to investigate any allegation of misconduct and following appropriate disciplinary procedures may impose a penalty where the allegation is upheld.

Any breach of this code is normally considered a breach of discipline and will be considered under the Disciplinary Procedure. A range of penalties can be applied up to and including the requirement for the learner to withdraw from the College and programme with no entitlement to a refund.

#### **9.12.9 Rights of DBS**

DBS reserves the right for any member of staff to request and, where a conduct breach is alleged, retain the student card of any individual learner.

DBS reserves the right to suspend a learner from their programme of studies and from accessing any

facilities and resources of DBS pending investigation into any allegation of a breach of a code of conduct.

Where deemed appropriate, for ensuring the continued fitness for the programme of study concerned, the College reserves the right to request a learner attends an independent assessment by a relevant professional, for example, a medical or psychiatric assessment. Failure to meet with this request will result in the learner not being permitted to continue with their programme of study.

The College reserves the right to refuse to provide a reference for the purpose of professional registration, employment or further study for any learner who has breached the code of conduct.

The provisions of this Code are without prejudice to the legal rights of learners. However, where DBS deems it appropriate or necessary DBS reserves the right to notify the Gardai of any allegation of a crime having been committed or other such threat of a crime.

#### **9.12.10 Major Offences**

Criminal Offences (including theft) shall be referred to the authorities.

Major Offences include but are not limited to:

- Academic Impropriety, including but not limited to plagiarism.
- Furnishing false information to the College with intent to deceive.
- Forgery, alteration or misuse of College documents, records or student identity cards. This includes, but is not limited to, attendance records, reference letters, registration status letters, certificates, assessment results and transcripts.
- Physical or verbal harassment, bullying or abuse of any learner or member of staff of the College.
- Malicious destruction, damage or misuse of College property, including Library materials and computer equipment, or of private property on the campus (over €50 replacement cost).
- Unwarranted interference with College's safety equipment, fire-fighting equipment and alarm systems or failure to observe fire drill procedures.
- Use of alcohol or other substance use on the campus or the premises of any partner or organisation utilised for the completion of the programme of study.
- Forcible occupation of College buildings.

- Activities by learners outside the College while engaged in work experience, placement, co-curricular events, volunteer placement, study tours, assignments organised by the College or while representing the College, its Clubs or Societies, which would breach the regulations of the College.
- Incitement or encouragement of any other person or persons to do any of the above.

#### **9.12.10.1 Penalties for Major Offences**

Where a learner is found to have committed any of the offences outlined above, the Disciplinary Committee is permitted to impose any of the following penalties, either separately or in combination:

- Expulsion from the College
- Suspension from the College for a stated period, or until such time as any requirements laid down by the Committee, such as payment of a fine or the restitution of damage or loss, are fulfilled.
- Exclusion from specific College facilities.
- Disbarment from examinations for a specific period.
- A fine not exceeding 50% of the annual full time fee of the course being undertaken.
- In the case of the offence of academic impropriety a range of penalties may be applied, up to and including dismissal from the College with no right of return, as outlined in the academic impropriety policy.
- An order for reparation of any damage or loss caused to the College or any of its staff or learner members or members of the public.
- Deprivation of award of degree, diploma, certificate, prize or other academic award.

#### **9.12.11 Minor Offences**

Minor Offences include but are not limited to:

- Littering
- Disorderly Conduct
- Causing minor damage to College property or private property on the campus (involving up to €50 replacement cost).
- Being in unauthorized areas without permission
- Failing to establish identity on request.

- Conduct, which disrupts or is likely to disrupt lectures, research, study, examinations, use of College facilities or the administration of the College.
- Conduct which obstructs or is likely to obstruct a member of staff of the College, or a person authorized by the College to carry out specific tasks, in the performance of his or her duties.

#### **9.12.11.1 Penalties for Minor Offences**

Where a learner is found guilty of the offence charged, the Disciplinary Committee is empowered to impose any of the following penalties, either separately or in combination:

- A reprimand from the Head of Faculty and School Operations or other authorised College official.
- A reprimand and a note on the learner's record.
- An order for the reparation of any damage or loss caused to the College or to any members of staff or learners or members of the public.
- The imposition of a fine up to a maximum of 50% of the annual full time fee of the programme being undertaken.

#### **9.12.12 Right of Appeal**

A learner may appeal the outcome of the Disciplinary Committee and / or the penalty imposed. See DBS Learner Disciplinary Policy for full details.

**9.13 Disciplinary Procedures**

<b>Title:</b>	Learner Disciplinary Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Assessment and Regulations Manager
<b>Implemented by:</b>	Head of Faculty and School Operations Disciplinary Committee Academic Impropriety Committee
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	Programme Leaders Head of Academic Affairs Head of School Assessment and Regulations Manager Schools Executive Board
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2019

### **9.13.1 Overview**

DBS learners are responsible for their own actions, behaviours and decision-making. Nonetheless, DBS imposes expected minimum standards of conduct from all learners in order to ensure a respectful environment conducive to learning and development. This is reflected in the Learner Code of Conduct, hereafter referred to as the code.

Learners are advised that any breach of the code may be considered a disciplinary offence and be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in this policy.

Where an allegation of misconduct is upheld, appropriate sanctions will be applied up to and including the requirement to withdraw from the College and the programme with no entitlement to full or partial refund.

Where appropriate and feasible, the College will seek to resolve any breach of the code of conduct without the requirement to invoke formal disciplinary proceedings. In such cases, learners are required to meet with the Head of Faculty and School Operations to discuss the concerns and agree prevention of any future recurrence.

However, it is accepted that there might be instances that necessitate immediate engagement of formal disciplinary proceedings in which case the following procedure will apply.

The College will not normally engage with legal representatives or advocates as part of the implementation of this policy. However, it should be noted that on completion of the investigation, where matters of a criminal nature are discovered to have likely occurred, the College can refer the matter to An Garda Síochána or the law enforcement agency of the relevant jurisdiction.

### **9.13.2 Principles**

This procedure is based on a principle of natural justice which means that anonymous complaints will not be considered and all parties have the right of response to any allegation.

All learners subject to a disciplinary investigation are entitled to be informed of the identity of the complainant, except where it is felt this might present serious risk to the complainant or others associated with him/her. The subject of the disciplinary investigation is also entitled to receive details of the allegations made against them and afforded appropriate opportunity to respond.

DBS reserves the right to suspend a student pending investigation when it is in receipt of an allegation of a breach of the code of conduct or formal complaint. In all such cases, the investigation

will be processed as a priority. The College is not liable for any delay in the completion of a programme of study for any learner who is suspended pending an investigation where a reasonable and justifiable decision to suspend was acted on.

This is an internal procedure for the purpose of managing learner conduct and does not and will not normally include dialogue with or between legal representatives of either or all parties.

In the interest of all parties, these procedures will be invoked as soon as possible and concluded as quickly as possible. Due consideration must be given to timings of assessments and examinations and the Board of Examiners meeting.

Before any stage of these proceedings, the learner will be notified in writing (including e-mail) of the reason for their attendance and their rights. Should a learner decide not to attend at any stage, the appropriate committee or panel is authorised to proceed in their absence.

A written record will be made at each stage of this procedure. In the event of finding that no offence has occurred, all records will be destroyed.

### **9.13.3 Receipt of an Allegation of Misconduct**

An allegation of misconduct must be reported to the Head of Faculty and School Operations in the first instance.

The Head of Faculty and School Operations will review the allegation and determine whether formal action is required.

In most cases, it is expected that the meeting with the Head of Faculty and School Operations has been implemented as an attempt to address the matter informally.

The formal commencement of initial action under the disciplinary policy will only occur where the case is considered to be:

- A serious breach of the code of conduct
- An inability to resolve the matter informally
- A repeat instance of a breach of discipline on the part of the student
- Academic Impropriety

With the exception of academic impropriety, all cases, however reported or arrived at under this policy, must be forwarded for the attention of the Head of Faculty and School Operations.

The report must be made in writing, including e-mail, and should detail the allegation and include all relevant supporting information and evidence.

On receipt, the Head of Faculty and School Operations will arrange for investigatory interviews to take place and a decision will be taken with regard to the requirement to suspend a student pending the investigation.

Cases of Academic Impropriety are managed by the Assessment and Regulations Manager in accordance with the Academic Impropriety Policy which replaces the investigation stage of this policy.

#### **9.13.4 Investigating Allegations of Misconduct**

On receipt of a report of suspected misconduct, with the exception of academic impropriety, the Head of Faculty and School Operations, or nominee, will contact the learner concerned and advise them of the nature of the allegations and the intention to undertake an investigation.

The learner will normally be notified at this point if they are to be suspended. However, it is recognised that information uncovered in the course of an investigation can warrant suspension at later stage.

The investigation will involve evidence collection in the form of documentation and interviews with all relevant parties.

Any party invited to attend an interview as part of the investigation is entitled to be accompanied or represented by a member of Student Services, the class representative, or family member who isn't acting as a legal representative.

On completion of the evidence gathering stage, the Head of Faculty and School Operations will collate all evidence provided.

A copy of all evidence will be provided to the subject of the allegation with an invitation for them to respond by a specified deadline and provide any additional information to support their case.

The subject of the complaint is advised not to attempt to conduct their own investigation or to approach potential witnesses as doing so can be detrimental to their case.

### **9.13.5 Failure to Respond to an Allegation**

Failure to respond to an allegation, or response after the deadline, will result in the case proceeding without the response. The case will not be terminated as a result of non-response from the learner concerned.

### **9.13.6 Potential Outcomes from Investigatory Interviews**

Having invited a response from learner at the centre of the allegation of misconduct, the Head of Faculty and School Operations is required to compile a report summarising the allegation and all evidence obtained. On completion the Head of Faculty and School Operations is required to determine one of the following outcomes:

- A finding that no offence has occurred
- Admission of the offence by the student concerned
- Non-resolution of the matter – that is, the evidence to suggest an offence might have occurred but with no admission from the student

The outcome of the investigatory interview will be determined as quickly as possible and the learner will be informed of the outcome and the potential consequences, as outlined in this document.

Decisions will be based on the evidence presented and determined based on the balance of probability that an offence might have occurred.

### **9.13.7 Finding That No Offence Has Occurred**

If the Head of Faculty and School Operations is satisfied that there is no case to answer, that no offence has occurred, the matter will be considered closed and all records will be destroyed after 14 working days.

#### **Admission of Offence**

Where a learner admits to having carried out the misconduct alleged, the Head of Faculty and School Operations may take the following action:

- For minor offences, impose an appropriate penalty
- For major offences, refer the matter to the disciplinary committee for the purpose of imposing penalty

The Head of Faculty and School Operations must notify the learner of the intended action and the fact that a record of the offence will be retained on their file.

### **Non-Resolution of the Matter**

Where the Head of Faculty and School Operations is not able to confirm that no offence has occurred, and the learner has not admitted to any offence, the Head of Faculty and School Operations must convene a Disciplinary Committee.

The Head of Faculty and School Operations must notify the learner of this outcome, in writing.

#### **9.13.8 Disciplinary Hearing**

An appropriately convened Disciplinary Committee must be established within 10 working days of the Head of Faculty and School Operation's decision or the outcome of the Academic Impropriety investigation.

The Disciplinary Committee membership comprises:

- Assessment and Regulations Manager or nominee (chair)
- 1 x academic staff representative
- 1 x support staff representative
- 1 x member of student services

The QA Officer or School Executive Administrator will act as secretary to the Committee.

In the case of Academic Impropriety, due to earlier involvement of the Assessment and Regulations Manager, the Disciplinary Committee will be Chaired by the Head of Academic Programmes.

Any person involved in the formal complaint or with a pre-existing relationship with the learner concerned is excluded from membership of the Committee.

Once the Committee has been confirmed, the Head of Faculty and School Operations will write to the learner and advise them of:

- The date, time and location of the hearing;
- Membership of the committee
- The entitlement to be accompanied by a friend, family member or colleague who isn't acting as a legal representative

### **9.13.9 Outcomes of the Disciplinary Hearing**

The Disciplinary Committee shall hear the case and record its deliberations and finding.

The Committee is required to determine, on the balance of probability, whether or not an offence has occurred, and the appropriate sanction to be applied if applicable. In the case of the admission of a major offence at an earlier stage in proceedings, the Committee is solely required to determine appropriate penalty.

Where the Committee determines on the balance of probability that no offence has occurred, the matter will be considered closed and all records will be destroyed.

The secretary, on behalf of the Chair of the Committee, will write to the learner and advise of the finding.

Where the Committee determines on the balance of probability that an offence has occurred, or acts on admission of an offence in the investigatory stage, a penalty proportionate to the offence will be imposed.

The secretary, on behalf of the Chair, will write to the learner and advise of the outcome and sanction applied. The learner will also be advised of the right of appeal and the timeframe in which to do this.

#### **9.13.9.1 Major Offences**

Criminal Offences (including theft) shall be referred to the authorities.

Major Offences include but are not limited to:

- Academic Impropriety.
- Furnishing false information to the College with intent to deceive.
- Forgery, alteration or misuse of College documents, records (including attendance records) or student identity cards.
- Physical or verbal harassment, bullying or abuse of any learner or member of staff of the College.
- Malicious destruction, damage or misuse of College property, including Library materials and computer equipment, or of private property on the campus (over €60 replacement cost).

- Unwarranted interference with College’s safety equipment, fire-fighting equipment and alarm systems or failure to observe fire drill procedures.
- Abuse of alcohol or other substance abuse on the campus.
- Forcible occupation of College buildings.
- Activities by learners outside the College while engaged in work experience, placement, co-curricular events, volunteer placement, study tours assignment organised by the College or while representing the College, its Clubs or Societies, which would breach the regulations of Committees in the College.
- Incitement or encouragement of any other person or persons to do any of the above.

#### **9.13.9.2 Penalties for Major Offences**

Where a learner is found to have committed any of the offences outlined above, the Disciplinary Committee is permitted to impose any of the following penalties, either separately or in combination:

- Expulsion from the College
- Suspension from the College for a stated period, or until such time as any requirements laid down by the Committee, such as payment of a fine or the restitution of damage or loss, are fulfilled.
- Exclusion from specific College facilities.
- Disbarment from examinations for a specific period.
- A fine not exceeding 50% of the annual fee of the course being undertaken.
- In the case of the offence of academic impropriety a mark of 0% and the requirement to repeat the assessment where opportunities naturally remain, with or without the entitlement to an honours award as determined by the Disciplinary Committee.
- An order for reparation of any damage or loss caused to the College or any of its staff or learner members or members of the public.
- Deprivation of award of degree, diploma, certificate, prize or other academic award.

#### **9.13.9.3 Minor Offences**

Minor Offences include but are not limited to:

- Littering
- Disorderly Conduct

- Causing minor damage to College property or private property on the campus (involving up to €60 replacement cost).
- Being in unauthorized areas without permission
- Failing to establish identity on request.
- Conduct, which disrupts or is likely to disrupt lectures, research, study, examinations, use of College facilities or the administration of the College.
- Conduct which obstructs or is likely to obstruct a member of staff of the College, or a person authorized by the College to carry out specific tasks, in the performance of his or her duties.

#### **9.13.9.4 Penalties for Minor Offences**

Where a learner is found guilty of the offence charged, the Disciplinary Committee is empowered to impose any of the following penalties, either separately or in combination:

- A reprimand from an authorised College official.
- A reprimand and a note on the learner's record.
- An order for the reparation of any damage or loss caused to the College or to any members of staff or learners or members of the public.
- The imposition of a fine.

#### **9.12.10 Right of Appeal**

A learner may appeal a decision of the Disciplinary Committee in accordance with the DBS Appeals Procedure.

#### **9.13.11 Criminal Matters**

In dealing with disciplinary matters, the DBS Policy is:

- All criminal matters of which DBS staff becomes aware are reported to the Gardaí or the authorities of the relevant jurisdiction.
- DBS does not take internal disciplinary action in a criminal matter where the complainant is unwilling to press criminal charges.

- Criminal proceedings do not preclude DBS instituting its own disciplinary proceedings against a learner. To avoid prejudice, DBS avoids progressing disciplinary proceedings until the criminal processes are complete.
- DBS cannot take formal action without a written formal complaint.

#### **9.13.12 Other Regulations**

Other college regulations consistent with this Code apply in certain situations. These include policies relating to the usage of:

- the library, found at: <http://library.dbs.ie/AboutLibrary/Policies.htm>
  - IT facilities
  - General College Facilities
  - English Language Programmes – Refer to Student Handbook.
  - Examination Halls - These regulations are displayed as appropriate.
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**9.14 Learner Grievances and Complaints**

<b>Title:</b>	Learner Complaints Policy
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Head of Academic Affairs
<b>Implemented by:</b>	<p>Programme Coordinators</p> <p>Programme Leaders</p> <p>School Executive Administrator</p> <p>Head of Faculty and School Operations</p> <p>Head of Student Experience</p> <p>Executive Dean</p>
<b>Updated by:</b>	Director of Academic Affairs
<b>Circulated for consideration to:</b>	<p>Programme Leaders</p> <p>Head of Academic Affairs</p> <p>Schools Executive Board</p>
<b>Version number:</b>	2016/1
<b>Review date:</b>	2021

### 9.14.1 Overview

Standards and Guideline for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Part 2, Standard 2.7 states “Complaints and appeals process should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to institutions.”

DBS is committed to providing a learning environment that is conducive to successful study and the achievement of each learner’s target award. It is, however, recognised that, from time to time, learners may wish to raise concerns regarding the services provided and a procedure for dealing with learner complaints and grievances has therefore been put in place.

The DBS complaints procedures attempt to resolve complaints or issues to the mutual satisfaction of the complainant and the person, service or department against which the complaint is being made. DBS commit to timely, transparent and fair resolution within a supportive framework. DBS policies reflect the principles of natural justice and are aware of the dignity of the persons involved. Natural justice protects against arbitrary exercise of power by ensuring equal treatment and fair play. It ensures that no decision is valid if it was influenced by any other interest or bias and where the opposing party has not been given full right of response. For this reason, anonymous complaints will not be considered.

Learners are advised that in making a complaint, it is expected that they themselves have complied with the requirements of the student code of conduct in relation to the matter concerned. It is also expected that complaints will not be of a vexatious nature or for the purpose of personal gain.

Most complaints are capable of being resolved on an informal basis without recourse to the formal procedure. The College accepts that there might be instances that necessitate immediate engagement of formal action in response to a complaint.

This complaints procedure applies to all students of DBS in respect of any service they receive from the College with the exception of academic appeals. Academic appeals should be conducted in line with the Academic Appeals Policy. The complaints procedure is not intended as a further avenue of appeal in the event that an academic appeal is not upheld.

It is preferred that complaints or issues are resolved locally and mutually. To achieve this end the complaints policy has a series of stages to facilitate both informal and formal resolution.

### 9.14.2 Causes of Complaint

Complaints usually fall into the following categories:

- Issues regarding learning activities
- Academic or support services
- Facilities
- Difficulties with a member of staff
- Difficulties with an enrolled learner

Issues regarding assessment are covered under the Policies on Assessment chapter 8.

### 9.14.3 General Principles

DBS is committed to ensuring that:

- a. Complaints are handled in a fair, transparent, timely and sensitive manner, with due recognition of the dignity and confidentiality of the persons involved.
- b. Learners will not be disadvantaged by making a complaint.
- c. Complaints are to be handled in a co-operative manner, every effort will be made to arrive at a solution by consensus among the relevant parties.
- d. Complaints that impact on the assessment process, but are not directly concerned with the process, will not interfere with a learner's normal right to appeal the result of an examination.
- e. The reputation and professional integrity of DBS staff and learners will be safeguarded by ensuring that complaints are dealt with in a confidential manner and are resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both parties as far as is possible.
- f. Complaints that are proved to be malicious or vexatious may result in a disciplinary action taken against the complainant.
- g. The principles of natural justice are applied when dealing with complaints:
  - All parties to a complaint have the right to be heard and represented or accompanied by a friend, family member, DBS Student Union member or colleague at all meetings held in relation to the complaint
  - The person against which a complaint is made is entitled to a right to respond to all allegations
  - DBS does not engage with legal representatives as part of the complaints process

- Any hearings or meetings will be undertaken by an independent staff member, without bias. Minutes will be taken of all formal meetings and records are maintained in accordance with the College records retention policy.

#### **9.14.4 Stages of the Complaints Process**

Any complaint should be raised within 14 days of the alleged incident, matter or concern.

It is expected that all complaints should be considered informally in the first instance. This can be directly with the learner and relevant person or department, or facilitated by the Class Representative, Student Services, Module Leader, Programme Leader or relevant manager.

Where complaints are made as a group these should be addressed through a Class Representative or agreed spokesperson.

All complaints received will normally be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt

The person or department against whom the complaint (formal or informal) is made will normally be notified within 5 working days that a complaint has been made

Where a complaint is formal, a copy of the complaint will be made available to the person or department against whom the complaint is made. This should be redacted to remove personal information such as an address or telephone number but not the identity of the complainant

Both parties will be notified of the steps the college are taking, whether an investigation is being undertaken or meetings called for clarification

#### **9.14.5 Informal Process**

In order to initiate an informal complaint the learner is advised to directly contact the subject of their complaint or the manager responsible for the service. This can be directly with the learner and relevant person or department, or facilitated by the Class Representative, Student Services, Module Leader, Programme Leader or relevant manager.

Initial informal action can be initiated in writing but will not be considered a formal written complaint at this stage. No formal record will be retained.

The subject of the complaint should attempt to seek a satisfactory resolution through informal communication with the student and the subject of the complaint.

In some incidents, where appropriate, the Programme Leader or relevant department manager may also communicate with the learner and the subject of the complaint (if applicable) if it will assist the informal resolution.

If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily through informal discussions, the learner can seek to raise a formal complaint.

In some cases a learner may request to go directly to the formal process and contact the School Executive Administrator directly. Where this is the case the member of staff first approached will no longer be involved unless approached by the relevant complaint investigator.

#### **9.14.6 Formal Process**

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, or where the matter is considered to be of a grave or serious nature, the learner may choose to initiate a formal complaint.

In order to lodge a formal complaint the learner should contact the Schools Executive Administrator via their Programme Coordinator.

Once initial contact has been made the School Executive Administrator will advise of the following:

- The requirement to put the complaint in writing using the relevant form available on the student website
- The right of the subject of the complaint to receive notification of the nature of the allegations made, a copy of the complaint and the details of the complainant
- The requirement of the complainant to be able to stand over all allegations and provide evidence to support the complaint
- The right to representation and reassurance that there will be no detrimental impact on the student for invoking the complaints procedure

All complaints received should be evidence based and factual. The complaint must detail the complainant's name and contact details, any relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate. Any previous efforts to resolve the matter should also be noted.

All complaints should normally be made within 14 days of the alleged incident, matter or concern or 14 days of the informal process concluding.

The complaints procedure is based on the principle of natural justice. Consequently, anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

When received, the School Executive Administrator will catalogue the complaint including details of the date received, the identity of the complainant, the nature of the complaint and the individual(s) and or department(s) against which the complaint is made.

The School Executive Administrator will forward the complaint to the Head of Academic Affairs, who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and contact an appropriate manager to investigate the complaint, if appropriate.

Where the complaint relates to the actions or activities of the Academic Affairs Department, the Head of Academic Affairs will undertake the role of investigating manager.

Where the complaint is made against the Head of Academic Affairs the School Executive Administrator will forward the complaint to the Director of Academic Affairs who will investigate the matter.

The investigating manager will, where applicable, advise the person who is the subject of the complaint and provide that person with the details of the nature of the allegations.

The investigating manager can arrange to discuss the complaint with the complainant. This can take place by telephone, e-mail or face-to-face.

The purpose of any complaint discussion is to establish facts and seek clarification. The investigating manager is not authorised to give a viewpoint or decision relating to the complaint.

For the discussion, the investigating manager may be accompanied by a note taker so that an accurate record can be created.

A summary of the discussion should be documented and emailed to all members of the discussion for transparency. Matters of factual inaccuracy may then be identified and corrected. Responses should normally be received within 5 working days.

Where two parties disagree on the record of the meeting, the two versions of events should be retained.

Any party involved in a complaint is entitled to be accompanied by a friend, fellow student or family member who is not a legal representative or advocate. Where the complainant or subject of the complaint wishes to be accompanied, the discussion must take place face-to-face.

The investigating manager will hold a separate meeting with the person who is the subject of the complaint, who can also be accompanied by a friend, colleague or family member who is not a legal representative or advocate, and can also interview any material witnesses.

Records of all meetings should be documented and provided to the other parties to the meetings for record and confirmation of accuracy. Any disagreement should be noted and retained.

On completion of the investigation into the facts, the investigating manager will compile a report summarising the actions taken as part of the investigation, including a summary of the main findings and the evidence available to inform decision making.

The investigating manager must submit the report and supporting evidence to the Head of Faculty and School Operations who will convene a Complaints Committee within 10 working days.

Where the Head of Faculty and School Operations is the investigating manager or the subject of the complaint, the investigating manager will submit the report and supporting evidence to the Head of Student Experience who will convene a Complaints Committee.

#### **9.14.7 The Complaints Committee**

The Head of Faculty and School Operations or Head of Student Experience, one other departmental manager and a member of academic lecturing staff form a Complaints Committee to hear the findings of the investigation.

The investigating manager is required to present the investigation to the Complaint Committee and provide clarification on any points raised.

The complainant is not required to attend the complaint committee hearing but may be contacted by the investigating manager for further clarification where required.

Where necessary and appropriate, to ensure fair process and informed decision-making, alternative members of staff, student representatives or an external expert may be requested to sit on the committee.

The Complaints Committee will meet to discuss the findings with a view to determining a fair resolution.

The Investigating Manager will formally respond, in writing, to both parties to inform them of the findings of the investigation, any decisions made, the reason for the decisions and any subsequent action, where appropriate.

A copy of all correspondence, along with the investigation report and evidence, will be lodged with the School Executive Administrator and where applicable may be forwarded to HR.

Where the result of the complaint includes consequent action or recommendations, the Investigating Manager shall notify the appropriate person or committee, without undue delay.

It should be noted that there can be instances where it is not possible for a decision to be reached and the College will attempt to provide further clarity to the student issuing the complaint while also providing guidance to the subject of the complaint in an attempt to prevent a recurrence of such incidents.

The complainant and the subject of the complainant should each be notified of the right to appeal.

#### **9.14.8 Right of Appeal**

Any party wishing to appeal the decision of a Complaints Committee can do so by writing to the Executive Dean or appropriate nominee. Where a nominee is appointed the complainant will be notified of this and the identity of the nominee.

Any appeal should be submitted within 5 working days of the outcome of the Complaints Committee being communicated.

Grounds for appeal should be clearly outlined in the appeal submission. Valid grounds for this appeal can relate only to the processes and procedures followed at the previous stages. Disagreement with the outcome of the Complaints Committee or a request for a rehearing do not constitute valid grounds for an appeal. Thus, the appeal does not normally involve reconsideration of the original complaint and new evidence is not normally accepted at this stage.

The Executive Dean will determine whether or not an appeal shall be heard. The decision will be communicated to the appeal applicant normally within 5 working days post appeal deadline.

If an appeal is granted, the Executive Dean will appoint an appropriate hearing panel. This will be scheduled at the earliest opportunity and normally not greater than 15 working days after the Executive Dean has confirmed an appeal hearing will take place.

Any party to the complaint, including Complaints Committee members, may be invited to attend the panel meeting depending on the basis of the appeal request, where the panel deems this to be necessary. Attending parties are entitled to be accompanied by a family member, friend or colleague who is not acting as a legal representative.

The complainant and subject of the complaint are entitled to a record of the meeting and the outcome determined. Where required some information may be redacted in accordance with data protection legislation.

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the complainant at the earliest opportunity.

No further right of appeal is available.

#### **9.14.9 Reporting and Recording**

A list of formal complaints managed under this process will be maintained by the School Executive Administrator.

A summary report, detailing the number of complaints, the nature and focus of the complaint, the outcome of the investigation and any corrective action recommended will be submitted to the Executive Dean at the end of each academic year for consideration by the Senior Management Group.

The Senior Management Group is responsible for addressing areas of common concern and ensuring appropriate interventions and / or corrective actions at institution level to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

### 9.15 Data Protection

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DBS recognises the importance of effective records' management to:

- meet statutory and legal requirements
- optimise the use of space
- minimise the cost of record storage
- ensure that obsolete records which are of no further use are destroyed in an appropriately sensitive and confidential manner with due regard to the minimising effects on the environment.

The College is committed to managing and preserving records and appropriate materials, handling procedures and storage systems, devices and practices are implemented within the institute to ensure long-term security, to prevent physical damage and minimise the physical deterioration of college records.

The College is registered as a Data Controller and Data Processor under the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. The following are the eight fundamental rules of the 1988 and 2003 Acts regarding personal information:

1. Obtain and process information fairly
2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
3. Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes
4. Keep it safe and secure. All waste papers, printouts, etc should be disposed of carefully
5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date
6. Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
7. Retain it for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
8. Give a copy of his/her personal data to that individual, on request.

The College has developed a policy to ensure that a system is in place which guarantees that records are secure and cannot be altered or deleted without appropriate authority and that the privacy and confidentiality of DBS records are maintained, where appropriate. The DBS Document Retention and Management Policy is available from the Academic Affairs Office.