

QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2025 Edition – Part B

Section 1: Learner Admissions

2025

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Access, Transfer and Progression

Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.


ENQA (2015)¹

This section of the *Quality Assurance Handbook* lays out the processes overseeing the admissions processes and for learners including.

- Standard Entry
- Non-Standard Entry
- CAO Applications
- Direct Applications
- Mature Applicants
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Advanced Entry
- Transnational
- Online

¹ ENQA (2015) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, Part 1, Standard 1.4 Guidelines, Student Admissions, Progression, Recognition and Certification', https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

1.1 Information for Applicants Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B 	
Document Name	Information for Applicants Policy
Policy Document Number	008
Version Reference	Version 2.0
Document Owner	Chief Operating Officer & Registrar
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	Chief Commercial Officer, Admissions Manager, Assistant Registrar
Applicability	All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online, Transnational Programmes
Approved by	Academic Board & QQI
Approval date	23/07/19
Date Policy Becomes Active	18/09/19
Revision Cycle	A minimum of every 5 years
Revision History/ Amalgamation History	Reviewed – 06/06/25
Additional Information	Active date will be following approval by QQI
References/Supporting Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QQI (2016) <i>Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines</i> Section 2.9 ‘Public Information and Communication’.² • Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes & Joint Awards (2012) • Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners (QQI, 2023) • QQI (2023) <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023</i>.

1.1.1 Policy Overview

As per the QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* Section 2.9 (QQI, 2016), and the QQI *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners* (QQI, 2023), at all times DBS seeks to ensure that ‘*Information for prospective learners is honest, transparent and facilitates comparison*’. This includes all DBS marketing material and the marketing material relating to any collaborative arrangement for which DBS is responsible.

DBS is committed to promoting a clear and consistent message. This section advises on the production of publicity and promotional materials, which enables the College to manage the messages communicated to the public, prospective applicants, enrolled learners and other stakeholders.

The DBS policy on marketing materials ensures that:

- The consistency of marketing and publicity materials using the College’s name is maintained.
- The message communicated is correct.
- The College’s corporate image is maintained.

² <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>

- Marketing and publicity materials do not compromise, but rather enhance the image of the College.
- Messages are complementary and not contradictory.

1.1.2 Policy Statement

All programme content is reviewed by the relevant academic and administrative departments to ensure alignment with college offerings and legal requirements. It is the responsibility of the Assistant Registrar, or designate, to ensure that all academic information is provided to the Chief Commercial Officer and Admissions for review and approval on behalf of DBS.

At DBS we adhere to ethical marketing standards, ensuring that all promotional materials accurately represent our programmes, facilities, and services. We ensure that all marketing and promotional materials accurately represent the College, its courses, its facilities and student support services by:

Consistency: Using a centralised marketing team that manages all official materials, ensuring consistency in messaging across all platforms.

Transparency: Clearly outlining the facilities, courses, and support services offered to students, including virtual events, testimonials, and detailed course descriptions.

Verification: Content is reviewed by relevant academic and administrative departments to ensure alignment with college offerings and legal requirements.

To maintain accuracy and compliance in marketing materials, DBS has developed Standard Operating Procedures around approvals for marketing materials and web change requests.

Key elements of DBS marketing material and communication is developed in-house by the College's marketing team, including:

- Website content and updates.
- Social media campaigns and management.
- Email newsletters for prospective and current students.

This in-house approach allows DBS to:

- Maintain control over the messaging and branding.
- Quickly update content as needed.
- Seamlessly align communication with the College's values and compliance standards.

Outsourcing is used for specialised tasks, including:

- Creative design and production
- Recruitment Agents: Supporting recruitment by providing DBS assets to external agents to represent DBS in international markets.
- SEO, PPC: Outsourcing PPC campaigns and SEO investment digital marketing agencies

DBS ensures that all outsourced marketing materials are accurate and appropriate by:

- Requiring all third-party vendors and agents to use College-approved content and visuals.
- Vendors are contractually obligated to adhere to DBS branding, compliance standards and ASAI regulations.
- Outsourced materials are reviewed rigorously by 1) the marketing team - at every stage of the development from brief to draft to route selection to production; 2) other internal commercial stakeholders, academic staff, and compliance officers where relevant; to ensure they meet College expectations and statutory requirements.

Arrangements with Accrediting Bodies and Collaborative Partners

Any marketing or publicity material that uses the name or logo of QQI or any Professional Bodies, must be approved, in accordance with its publicity guidelines.

Any marketing materials used to promote any DBS award, including transnational, collaborative or Joint Awards is subject to the approval of the Chief Commercial Officer. DBS is responsible for all learner information supplied on its behalf by any collaborative partner.

Personnel within the Marketing and Admissions Department at DBS liaise with relevant staff within the collaborative organisation, as appropriate, to secure this approval. Once a transnational agreement has been approved by the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC), we are required to publish the relevant information on our website.

1.1.3 Information Regarding New Programmes

When a new programme is approved for validation through QQI, the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar writes formally to notify all relevant parties within the College, including:

- Chief Commercial Officer
- Admissions Manager
- Faculty Manager
- Head of Academic Operations
- Curriculum Systems Manager


- Exams Manager
- Assistant Registrar

The following information is provided:

- Programme title and award
- Level
- Duration of programme
- Delivery Method
- PAEC date at which programme was approved
- Commencement date for first intake of learners
- Minimum and maximum number of learners
- Module titles and ECTS
- Entry requirements
- Exit awards (if applicable)
- Copy of Approved Programme Schedule

This information is used by Marketing and Admissions Department to update the DBS website and any other marketing materials. It is used by the Faculty Manager, and Head of Academic Operations for staffing and timetabling purposes.

1.2 Admission of Learners to Academic Programmes Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B	
	
Document Name	Admission of Learners to Academic Programmes Policy
Policy Document Number	009
Version Reference	v2.0
Document Owner	Chief Operating Officer & Registrar
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	Chief Commercial Officer, Admissions Manager, Exams Manager, Quality Assurance Officer, Academic Directors
Applicability	All programmes: NFQ Lv6-9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online, Transnational Programmes
Approved by	Academic Board & QQI
Approval date	23/07/19
Date Policy Becomes Active	18/09/19
Revision Cycle	A minimum of every five years
Revision History/ Amalgamation History	Reviewed - 06/06/25
Additional Information	Active date will be following approval by QQI
References/ Supporting Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENQA (2015) <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area</i>, Standard 1.4 'Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification'.³ • QQI (2015) <i>Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training, Restated 2015</i>.⁴ • QQI (2016) <i>Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines</i>, Section 2.3.2 'Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition'.⁵ • <i>Equal Status Act 2000</i>⁶ and amendments under <i>Equality Act 2004</i>⁷. • QQI (2012) <i>Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes & Joint Awards</i>. • QQI (2023) <i>Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully online Programmes 2023</i>.

1.2.1 Purpose of Policy

This section of the QAH considers all policies relating to admissions of learners to academic programmes of study, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning and procedures governing recruitment and marketing materials. All programmes have specified entry requirements agreed at validation and recorded in the Approved Programme Document. These requirements are binding.

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

⁴ <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html>

⁷ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/24/enacted/en/html>

The Admissions Policy and related procedures cover all elements of admission, including all activities to attract, select, admit and register learners to DBS programmes. The fair and consistent implementation of these policies and procedures is the responsibility of the Chief Commercial Officer, overseen by the Admissions Committee.

DBS welcomes all applicants and operates a fair and transparent admissions process in accordance with the *Equal Status Act 2000* and amended by the *Equality Act 2004*. Applicants are selected on the basis of merit, ability and potential. The admissions procedures ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all applicants without exception. DBS implements the NFQ and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, as determined by QQI.

1.2.2 Policy Statement

The DBS Admissions Policy supports the philosophy that admission is focused on the outcome of the programme – the achievement of the award by the learner. All applicants who can demonstrate that they meet the entry requirements should be eligible to enter a programme.

DBS is committed to:

- Fair and equal treatment of all applicants.
- Reducing barriers to access or progression.
- Fair, transparent, timely, and appropriate admissions procedures, implemented consistently.
- Supporting access, transfer and progression opportunities for learners to facilitate educational opportunity.
- Timely notification of the outcome of an application.
- Communicating clear and valid reasons for refusal.
- Supporting applicants with disabilities or special needs.
- Responsible marketing of its programmes, with accurate, reliable, transparent and complete information provided to learners.

Admission to DBS is governed by the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012)* and the *QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training, Restated 2015*.

Definitions

Access: access is gaining entry to and participation in education and training institutions or programmes.

Transfer: the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another having received due recognition for that knowledge, skill or competence acquired.

Progression: the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another where each programme is of a higher academic level than the preceding programme.

1.2.3 Admissions Committee

Adherence to the admissions policy and procedures is assured through the Admissions Committee. The Admissions Committee issues a number of reports annually to the Academic Board.

The Admissions Committee has responsibility for reviewing admission standards, processes and procedures and for considering amendments or modifications and for academic oversight of the administration of the admissions system.

This committee is a sub-committee of the Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Sustainability Committee with the following responsibilities in relation to the admission of learners to DBS:

- Monitoring and developing, as appropriate, the College's Admissions Policy in relation to selection procedure.
- Monitoring the College's advanced stage admissions and transfer policy and developing methods for facilitating learners from other institutions transferring onto undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at DBS, with due regard to maintenance of academic standards and quality.
- Evaluating new or alternative qualifications as a basis for determining admission to DBS, while having regard to the College's admissions policy and the standards and procedures in other institutions, while supporting the access, transfer and progression procedures as defined by QQI.
- Monitoring the College's admissions system and preparing such reports as may be considered appropriate or as requested by the Board of Studies or Academic Board in relation to its operations.
- Carrying out such other functions as may be considered appropriate, subject to the approval of the Academic Board.

The Admissions Committee will provide three Admissions Reports per year: one in April, one in October (comprising the admissions data to the Board of Studies), and a final annual report to the Academic Board (to review and ensure that the admissions process is working effectively, and all entrance criteria are properly adhered to and standards are being maintained).

1.2.4 Membership

Membership of the Admissions Committee comprises:

- Chief Operating Officer & Registrar (Chair)
- Chief Commercial Officer
- Admissions Manager
- Chief Academic & Innovation Officer
- Admissions Quality Assurance Officer
- Academic Directors by invitation as required

1.2.5 Monitoring and Reporting

As part of the academic governance process, all quality assurance policies and procedures are routinely monitored for effectiveness. This role is undertaken by the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar, with the support of the Admissions Committee. The Chief Commercial Officer prepares an Admissions Report at the end of each admissions cycle. The report presents an overview of the admissions process and provides both a statistical summary and an analysis of our admissions.

The report includes data on admissions type such as standard, non-standard admissions, advanced entry and the admission of mature learners. The report is presented initially for review by the Admissions Committee and ultimately to the Academic Board.

Any issues identified or recommendations made are considered by the relevant department and overseen by the Admissions Committee.

1.3 Admission Procedures

The Chief Operating Officer & Registrar is Chair of the Admissions Committee, which provides academic oversight and review of the admissions procedures and processes.

1.3.1 Admissions Department

The Admissions Department admit all domestic, international and transnational admissions and is overseen by the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar.

The role of the Admissions Department is to manage the admissions process, to ensure that all applications are properly assessed in accordance with the DBS admissions procedures. The Admissions Department holds all relevant admissions data and is responsible for supplying current and accurate information regarding admissions and policies or legislation relevant to the admissions process.

1.3.2 Role of Academic Review Team

The Academic review team, typically comprising the Academic Directors, Assistant Academic Directors, Programme Level Managers and Subject Matter Experts are responsible for evaluating applications for admissions to academic programmes. The training of the review team is overseen by the Admissions Committee. They are expected to stay fully informed and up-to-date with all DBS admissions processes and procedures.

1.3.3 Role of the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar

The Chief Operating Officer & Registrar is responsible for ensuring the Academic Board that all learners admitted to DBS are admitted in accordance with DBS admissions procedures and that all have attained the required standard for entry to their programmes. This is achieved by monitoring the process, making recommendations to the Admissions Committee and preparing an Annual Report to the Academic Board.

1.3.4 Programme Entry Requirements

The entry requirements for admission to an academic programme are set out and agreed at validation.

1.3.5 Standard Entry Requirements

Applicants presenting standard entry requirements include:

- All applicants who achieve the minimum entry requirements as set out at validation in the Approved Programme Document.

All applicants with standard entry requirements are processed and approved for admission by the Admissions Department. A standard admissions decision is defined by the Admissions Committee as a decision that can be made by the admissions team without reference to an Academic.

1.3.6 Non-Standard Entry Requirements

In certain cases, applicants may not meet the standard entry requirements. These applicants are classified as non-standard applicants, and their application must be reviewed by the relevant Academic Director (or nominee) to determine their suitability for admission to the programme. Non-standard applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis and the process is overseen by the Admissions Committee.

The admission of a non-standard applicant is determined through a considered review of the candidate's qualifications and experience and other relevant data. This evaluation is guided by the following criteria:

- Alignment with the DBS Admissions Policy.
- A reasonable expectation that the applicant can successfully engage with the programme and achieve the required standard for the award.
- Evidence that the applicant meets the minimum entry requirements for the intended award.
- Fulfilling the specified entry requirements for the programme of study.

A non-standard admission is defined and recorded by the Admissions Committee as an admission without precedent where the school have been asked to assess the candidate for entry using a defined process. All non-standard admissions are subject to scrutiny after 12 months, and based upon criteria agreed by the Admissions Committee, may be formally recognised as standard admissions decisions.

To assess eligibility of applicants from Europe, DBS reference the "Agreed entry requirements criteria for EU/EFTA applicants" which is a joint document of Institutes of Technology Ireland and Irish Universities Association in their evaluation decisions. (<http://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/Guidelines-EU-EFTA.pdf>)

The purpose of this document is to provide a central scoring system for applicants presenting school leaving qualifications other than Irish Leaving Certificate and QQI Level 5/6 examinations. The NARIC Ireland system is initially used to assess the eligibility of applicants with qualifications from overseas institutions.

1.3.7 English Language Entry Requirements

Regardless of the mode of entry, all English language requirements agreed at programme validation must be verified and adhered to in line with DBS English Language Policy. DBS accept approved standardised tests such as Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR),

International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Duolingo, Test of English Language (TOEFL iBT) and Pearson English Language Test (PTE), to determine the English language proficiency of prospective learners enrolling onto our programmes from level 6 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The required minimum scores for each programme will be clearly defined and published on the DBS website and in admissions materials.

DBS offers the Kaplan Test of English (KTE), an online English language test administered in collaboration with colleagues in Kaplan International Pathways, to meet the English proficiency requirements of international applicants based in Ireland.

Note: Proof of English language proficiency can apply to all categories of learners including domestic where appropriate.

1.3.8 Admission to Stage One of a Programme

The majority of applicants to academic programmes apply for access to Stage One. These applicants are assessed for access to Stage One based on their achievement of the entry requirements or equivalent. Learners are classified as Domestic, EU and Non-EU (including Transnational) based on residency rather than nationality. This will include online. For Admissions Reports, domestic and EU are reported as EU.

The Central Applications Office (CAO)

All Domestic and EU applicants seeking admission to the first stage of a QQI accredited undergraduate programme must apply directly to the CAO as outlined in the CAO Handbook for the year of admission (see www.cao.ie for details). The CAO processes all applicants to the first stage of an undergraduate programme only. The CAO Admissions Officer is responsible for managing the admissions process for these programmes and follows procedures according to the CAO Handbook. The Points requirements for different programmes are based on supply and demand. The cut-off Points threshold is equal to, or above, those Points accruing to the minimum entry requirements for the programme.

Direct Applicants

All applicants other than Domestic/EU applicants seeking admission to a first stage of a QQI accredited undergraduate programme must apply directly to DBS. They must firstly satisfy the minimum entry

requirements for the relevant programme, and must use the appropriate DBS Application Form or apply online at <https://www.dbs.ie/application-form>

Applications to professional programmes or programmes not on the National Framework of Qualification should also apply through the above link. All applicants are required to submit documents via the application portal and must submit soft copies of official academic transcript, passport and evidence of proof of English language (if required) and a Curriculum Vitae.

Applicants to Springboard programmes or the ICT Conversion Programme should apply online via the Springboard portal www.springboardcourses.ie

Admission to all programmes is subject to availability and capacity.

Mature Applicants

Mature applicants are defined as those applicants applying under the mature learner's entrance criteria. They are applicants over the age of 23 years on or before the 1st January of the proposed year of entry. Mature applicants are not subject to the standard entry requirements. Such applicants are required to supply an appropriate proof of age such as driver's licence or passport. Suitability for admission is assessed on the basis of age, motivation and commitment to the proposed programme of study, and work experience. Mature applicants are also required to supply copies of supporting documentation, which form part of their applications, such as relevant academic transcripts and up-to-date Curriculum Vitae.

International Applicants

The marketing of programmes to non-EU countries and the admission of learners from such countries is the responsibility of the Admissions Office. The equivalency of qualifications is based on information determined by QQI NARIC Ireland. (<https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions>) The UK based National Recognition Information Centre for the UK (UK NARIC); (<https://ecctis.com/uk-gov/>) recommendations may be used as guidelines, particularly if the qualification is not listed by QQI. If there is an inconsistency between these agencies on equivalence, then the QQI NARIC determination supersedes UK NARIC.

For applicants from certain countries other admissions guidelines have been used, based on the industry standards of other reputable higher education institutions and on DBS's own experience and history in dealing with educational qualifications from a particular country. If an applicant is from a country not previously listed, the case is considered as a non-standard admission and goes through the non-standard application procedures.

Visa and Attendance Requirements for Non-EU Learners

Irish Government Visa Guidelines must also be taken into consideration for visa requiring learners *'Guidelines for Colleges offering courses to Full Time Non-EEA Students'* August 2011, Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service. Under the current immigration rules a person is permitted to come to Ireland as a learner on the understanding that they are engaged in full time study or, in other words, that their chief daytime occupation is study. The maximum time a learner may stay in Ireland for the purpose of attending courses at degree level is limited to seven years and learners are responsible for managing their studies to ensure compliance with this time limit.

Effective 30 June 2025, international students from countries that do not require a visa to enter Ireland must demonstrate financial resources equivalent to those required of visa-required nationals. Specifically:

- For courses longer than eight months: Proof of €10,000 in available funds for the first year;
 - For courses of eight months or less: Proof of €833 per month, totalling €6,665.
- This adjustment aims to ensure that all international students, regardless of visa requirements, have sufficient funds to support themselves during their studies.

1.3.9 Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process that allows learners to gain admission to a programme of study or to gain exemptions from modules or stages of a programme, based on demonstrated learning achieved prior to admission. Recognition is a process by which prior learning is given a value. DBS recognise that knowledge, skills and competencies can be acquired from a range of learning experiences, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. This is in line with the aims of the NFQ to recognise all learning achievements by supporting the development of alternative pathways to qualifications (or awards) and by facilitating the recognition of prior learning.

Irrespective of a candidate's entry qualifications, DBS must be satisfied that they are of the required academic standard to complete the scheme of study proposed.

Formal Learning

Formal learning takes place through programmes of education or training that are delivered by education and training providers and that are recognised on the NFQ framework. It is assessed and can lead to awards.

Informal Learning

Informal Learning, also referred to as experiential learning, applies to learning that takes place through life and work experience. This may include learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and community-based learning etc.

1.3.10 Admission via Recognition of Prior Learning

Applicants who do not meet standard entry criteria may be assessed for entry on an assessment of prior experiential learning. To maintain the integrity of the admissions process, RPL applications will require additional documentation such as a personal statement, portfolios, employer references, or professional certificates of achievement. The Admissions Office facilitates the initial screening of RPL requests, while final decisions are made by the Academic Review Team. All RPL decisions are recorded and subject to periodic review to ensure consistency with institutional policy and QQI guidelines.

1.3.11 Admission with Advanced Standing via Recognition of Prior Learning

DBS admissions procedures facilitate a variety of access and entry arrangements, including applicants transferring from similar programmes.

There are two categories of access with advanced standing:

1. Partial exemption where a learner is considered for exemption from a module or part of a stage, and
2. Direct entry where a learner is exempt from one or more complete stages.

Exempted modules are recognised for the purposes of access or transfer. Credit will not be awarded for exempted modules or stages; such modules will be denoted with EXE on the learner's transcript and Diploma Supplement.

- As standard, partial exemptions are only considered for learners on part-time undergraduate programmes (but see below on Award stage).
- All exemptions are agreed prior to an applicant's admission to the College. Retrospective exemptions are very rare and can only be sought through a formal appeal with appropriate grounds.
- No exemptions will be granted at the Award Stage.
 - The only exception is where learners are transitioning from an existing equivalent programme whereby the programme they are entering has been designed in full alignment with the previous programme for the purposes of ATP.
 - This may apply in the context of review and revalidation of an existing programme or the design of a programme to take an intake of learners with specific prior learning from a programme or programmes.

- Where the above applies, this must be included in the design of the new programme and specified in programme documentation as part of the validation process.
- No exemptions are granted for Minor or Special Purpose Awards.
- Where a programme includes a work placement module or stage, applicants cannot transfer directly to that stage, but must instead complete those preparatory academic modules first.

Procedures for Assessing Exemptions

Applicants holding recognised academic qualifications and applying for either partial exemptions or direct entry to stage two or three of an academic programme are assessed for exemptions based on the achievement of equivalent learning outcomes, at an equivalent volume (measured by ECTS) and level on the NFQ, or recognised equivalent (EQF etc.), to the stages or modules, from which they are seeking exemption, on that programme. The applicant is required to provide original documentary evidence of prior academic achievement.

Applications for exemption based on RPL (Informal Learning) are normally considered only for part-time learners:

- With a minimum of five years' work experience
- In relation to specific Stage 1 modules.

1.3.12 Articulation Agreements with Partner Colleges

DBS has extensive and productive relationships with a series of European and International partner colleges. Formal arrangements are in place to facilitate access, transfer and progression with the partner colleges. The process is described in an articulation agreement which lays down the criteria for admission to DBS programmes by applicants with qualifications from those colleges. When a new arrangement is being set up the programmes are mapped with regard to learning outcomes, credit volume and level on the NFQ. Once complete and documented the qualification is recognised as a standard admissions decision. These articulation agreements are monitored by reviewing learner success and they are formally reviewed when either programme undergoes a Programmatic Review. It is the responsibility of the Admissions Department to notify the school when a standard qualification is due for review.

In all cases where DBS enters into engagements with external partners, QA procedures are in place to ensure our learners receive the appropriate learning opportunities and that our learners are safe and protected. Through its inter-institutional partnerships, DBS remains cognisant of all legislative requirements underpinning the various strands of collaboration it is engaged in. At present, DBS has a range of partnerships and collaborations of varying degrees of engagement, with the most popular being learners coming for one semester to Dublin for Study Abroad. These occur in award programmes

certified by QQI. The Study Abroad opportunities arise from Memorandum of Understanding agreements the College has with a number of Higher Education Institutions, mainly in Europe and the United States. Our QA procedures include provision for engagement with external partners and a formal due diligence stage. The College exercises due diligence in so far as partners are selected on the basis of their good reputation and standing within their geographical location. Other criteria that are considered include their programme offerings, alignment with DBS missions and values, cultural fit and any other international partnerships they hold. Learners coming from partner colleges have their admissions processed through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. Where a group of students is coming to DBS, the partner college's syllabus is submitted for review and is assessed by the Academic Director of the subject area or designate.

1.4 Applicants' Responsibilities

Applicants are required to provide DBS with all relevant supporting documentation that they wish to have considered during the admissions process. Applicants should clearly declare any special needs that they wish to have considered by DBS.

Applicants should also declare any personal information/ circumstances that may affect their performance or the performance of others at DBS.

Such information is subject to the rulings of the *Data Protection Act 1988* and the *Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003*, and the *Data Protection Act 2018*.

1.4.1 Supporting Documentation

All applicants must produce the original or notarised soft copies of all supporting documentation, such as current identification documents, transcripts and degree parchments at application stage.

1.4.2 Fraudulent Applications

DBS reserves the right to refuse admission or cancel registration or terminate the enrolment of any applicant or learner whose application details are found to be false. This right to refuse admission may be exercised at any time during the learner's enrolment at DBS.

1.4.3 Applicants with Additional Needs

Applicants with additional needs, including applicants with disabilities, can enter DBS via the standard procedures used by all learners. Learners with disabilities applying for admission to DBS via the CAO are encouraged to disclose their disability by writing 'Medical Condition/Disability' on their CAO application form. Learners who indicate a disability in this way receive a supplementary form, which is then returned to DBS to alert the College to the particular needs of the learner. This in turn allows appropriate preparations to be made by DBS to provide the necessary supports and arrangements, where this is operationally possible. In conjunction with this, the Admissions Officer writes individually to those applicants, inviting them to visit the College and view the facilities first hand.

In the case of direct applications, candidates with disabilities are afforded the opportunity to disclose any such needs on the direct application form. They are subsequently sent a disability disclosure form again to alert DBS to their particular needs. Such disclosure is, however, entirely discretionary. As with CAO applications, these applicants are then invited to the College to view the facilities.

For candidates who choose not to reveal a disability on the application form, difficulties may arise subsequent to their enrolment in the College. During the induction process, learners are made aware of the role of the Disability and Inclusion Officer, for whom contact details are published in the relevant Programme Handbook and on the website. The Disability and Inclusion Officer will advise and liaise with other relevant personnel should there be any issues or difficulties in practice.

Any other specific needs should be addressed to the Admissions Department during the formal application stage.

1.4.4 Registration and Learner Status

DBS reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to refuse to register a CAO or direct entry applicant where to do so might either:

- (a) Impact on the College's obligation to maintain a positive learning environment and/or
- (b) Impact on the College's duty of care toward others.

In order to be recognised as a DBS learner, an applicant must be formally enrolled onto a programme of study at the College, and by completing the registration process at a time and place agreed by DBS. A non-enrolled applicant is not entitled to use DBS facilities nor may the applicant sit any examinations.

Learners may not register if they have missed more than the first two weeks of the programme, or in the case of accelerated programmes more than one week. An accelerated programme is defined as a programme in which a module worth more than 5 ECTS is delivered within one semester or academic term. In exceptional circumstances a further week may be allowed at the discretion of the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar. Where a student is late registering but can provide evidence of attendance, late registration may be considered. Where a student is too late to register, they will be set at a deferred enrolment status as below.

1.4.5 Deferred Enrolment

An applicant may hold an offer for one intake only. However, an applicant can defer and can be considered for a future intake. An enrolled learner who is not in a position to embark on a programme may apply for a deferred entry on an annual basis for up to two academic years, subject to the programme being available and a fees agreement.

1.4.6 Requesting a Deferral of an Offer of a Place

An applicant wishing to hold open an offer of a place may do so by applying in writing to the Admissions Office. The Admissions Administrator will consider the request and confirm approval of same, except where it is known to be the final intake of a particular programme.

In confirming DBS's agreement of the applicant's deferral request, the Admissions Administrator must advise the applicant of the relevant conditions. 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, again in writing, to the Chief Commercial Officer. Any such appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of the date of the Deferral Request

decision having been communicated to the applicant. 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 an appeal is final and there is no further right of appeal.

1.4.7 Appeals and Complaints

Appeals and complaints regarding the admissions procedures should be addressed to the Chief Commercial Officer in the first instance.

1.5 English Language Policy

Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) Part B Section 1	
Document Name	English Language Policy
Policy Document Number	047
Version Reference	Version 1.0
Document Owner	Chief Operating Officer & Registrar
Roles with Aligned Responsibility	Chief Commercial Officer, Admissions Manager, Assistant Registrar
Applicability	All programmes: NFQ L6–9, Professional Programmes, Study Abroad, DBS Online
Approved by	Executive Board
Approval date	25/3/2025
Date Policy Becomes Active	2/4/2025
Revision Cycle	A minimum of every 5 years
Revision History/ Amalgamation History	Updates to policy to includes details of English language proficiency entry requirements, including details on the in-house online English language test, and to outline the quality assurance and credit awarding arrangements.
Additional Information	N/A
References/Supporting Documentation	N/A

1.5.1 Policy Overview

Purpose

This policy outlines DBS's approach to ensuring that all learners possess the necessary English language proficiency to succeed in their academic programmes. It establishes guidelines for assessing, supporting, and developing English language skills for non-native English speakers.

It is also to demonstrate compliance with the 2023 HE Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education for International Learners. The policy also aligns with the requirements of TrustEd Ireland, a statutory quality mark launched in September 2024 as part of legislative measures to protect international learners.

Scope

This policy applies to all academic programmes at Level 6-9 on the National Framework of Qualifications offered by DBS and pertains to all prospective and current learners whose first language is not English. DBS does not currently offer any pre-sessional programmes for English for Academic purposes (EAP).

1.5.2 Policy Statement

DBS is committed to:

- Maintaining rigorous academic standards that require adequate English language proficiency.
- Providing fair, clear and transparent processes for assessing English language proficiency.
- Offering comprehensive support and development opportunities for English for Academic Purposes (EAP).
- Ensuring that all non-native English speakers have access to appropriate English language support services.
- Ensuring that English language proficiency is considered at programme design and at each programme revalidation stage.

1.5.3 Assessment of English Language Proficiency Entry Requirements

DBS accept approved standardised tests such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Duolingo English Test, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) iBT, Pearson English Language Test (PTE), University of Cambridge and Oxford Test of English, to determine that the English language proficiency of prospective students enrolling onto all programmes from level 6-9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is equivalent to B2+ or above on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR).

The required minimum scores for each standardised test as set out below will be clearly defined and published on the institution's website and in admissions materials.

For applicants who do not require a study visa (Irish and EU-based students), DBS offers an English language proficiency test free of charge. It is delivered online in partnership with Kaplan and is available to students who have already submitted an academic application and meet the initial entry criteria. The passing score required is equivalent to CEFR B2+.

If prospective students have previously studied through English, they may be eligible for a waiver (depending on whether they are coming from a visa required country).

No credit is awarded for any English language testing, other than acceptance onto programmes subject to meeting requirements. English language competency is an essential entry criterion for all programmes. All proficiency results are subject to a quality assurance check during the application review process

Currency of results: For all proficiency tests the results must be dated within two years of course commencement.

English Language Proficiency Test	Score Requirements
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) – Academic *	Overall score with a minimum of 6.0
Duolingo English Test (DET) *	Overall score with a minimum of 105
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) iBT	Overall score with a minimum of 76
University of Cambridge	Overall score ranging from a minimum of 169 to 175
Pearson English Language Test (Academic) *	Overall score with a minimum of 52
Oxford Test of English *	Overall score ranging from a minimum of 126–140

* There may be additional requirements for some visa required countries

1.5.4 Provision, Support and Development of English Language for Academic Purposes (EAP)

DBS recognises the importance of EAP in supporting learner success but does not currently provide dedicated EAP support.

The institution does offer a range of EAP classes and services tailored to the specific needs of our learners.

EAP classes focus on developing the academic language skills necessary for success in higher education, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Individualised one-to-one sessions are provided through our library service and can be booked via their [website](#).

Supports are promoted at inductions, in-class (both online and on campus). Information on supports is available via the Library desk, the Academic Support Community newsletter, social media, Student Council Meetings and promotion boards in the college.

1.5.5 English Language Supports for Non-Native English Speakers.

Pre-Commencement Support:

DBS offers pre-arrival and induction sessions specifically tailored to meet the needs of international learners. All learners must meet the minimum English language requirements as stated on our website per programme.

Ongoing Support:

DBS recognise the need for support of Non-Native English speakers during the course of their studies.

Primarily, DBS ensures learners enrolling on programmes meet our English Language minimum requirements. However, support can take a number of forms;

- The majority of classes are recorded and made available for playback immediately after class with captions if required.
- Learners who present with difficulties are referred to our Academic Support Community who can provide support depending on the need.
- DBS also offers a range of Academic Support classes and services tailored to the specific needs of our learners.
- Academic Support classes focus on developing the academic language skills necessary for success in higher education, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Classes are provided through our library service and can be booked via their [website](#).

1.5.6 Arrangements for Different Types of EAP programmes

DBS does not currently offer pre sessional or in sessional programmes for EAP other than what is noted above.

1.5.7 Responsibilities

Applicants are responsible for submitting the relevant certified documentation against the published entry requirements.

The Admissions Department is responsible for evaluating English language proficiency entry requirements and ensuring that the English language requirements are published in a transparent and accessible manner for all applicants. They will also liaise with the applicants and ensure all appropriate documentation is kept on file for the applicants.

The Academic Support Community (ASC) is a collaboration between the Library, the Student Engagement and Success Unit (SESU), the Learning Unit, and student-led support (student leader and mentor programmes). It is responsible for providing additional academic support to students, in particular targeting and assisting those who are at risk academically.

Academic Directors to ensure consistency in English Language requirements across all programmes at validation and revalidation with DBS, national and European standards and to monitor evidence of the DBS domestic and international student experience within annual and cyclical programme monitoring processes.

1.5.8 Compliance and Monitoring

Failure to meet the English language proficiency requirements may result in denial of admission.

Admissions to track the published requirements against the Programme requirements and to keep the documentation on file.

Annual review will be conducted, taking into account programme needs, learner feedback, and evolving regulatory or statutory changes. This will be done through the Admissions Committee.

Compliance with TrustEd Ireland and QQI Code of Practice requirements will be reviewed periodically.

[END OF PART B SECTION 1]